

In this fifth and final volume of the *Military Writings*, Trotsky deepens his analysis both of the international situation facing the Russian Revolution, and of the experience of building the Red Army. In the discussions on Marxism and military affairs, he draws important theoretical conclusions concerning the relationship between the Revolution and the forces such as the military specialists with which it had to work. These writings, now complete in the first English edition ever, represent an imperishable record of the struggles of the Bolshevik leaders, and enrich present-day knowledge of the Russian Revolution. Suppressed for decades in the Soviet Union, they are now available to the international audience for which Trotsky first intended them.

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Editorial Note

Presentation of the documents in these volumes follows as closely as possible the style of the original Russian publication. Notes by the Soviet editors follow the main text. The author's footnotes have been retained; footnotes not attributed to the author are explanatory points added to the present edition.

In the original Moscow edition the present volume is bound together with the preceding one to form Volume III of that edition. Since each of the five books in the work is bound separately in this English edition, they are numbered here from one to five. This volume contains the chronology of events in the period covered by both Volumes Four and Five; for the maps relating to this period, see Volume Four.

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Foreword [\[1\]](#)

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The third volume covers the period of demobilisation, curtailment of rear institutions and constant re-structuring of the army, adapting it to peacetime conditions. Whereas in the first three years the workers' state had managed to operate, in the military sphere, mainly by means of broad measures of a heroic and therefore 'chaotic' nature, in the second period what came to the forefront were economic and organisational-educational measures of an everyday nature. A phase opened for bringing order into organisation and for persistent study, military and political. 'Attention to trifles' became one of the basic slogans for constructive work. This work, improving in quality and becoming more precise, had the aim of leading us into planned construction of the army, broadly conceived, that is, looking several years ahead.

On the other hand, however, in the period when the armed forces were making the transition to a peace footing, the army and the navy fell into the most direct dependence upon the general economic condition of the country, which was going over from War Communism to the New Economic Policy. Of course, in the first three years of Soviet power, too, that is, in the years of civil war, the army's life and struggle were closely bound up with the Soviet economy. But at that time this link I has been transferred to the second book of this volume. (Note by Soviet editors.) was quite different in character. It can be said that, in wartime, it is not so much that the army 'dresses by' the economy as that the economy 'dresses by' the army. The situation altered abruptly as soon as the peace treaty of Riga was signed and the Wrangel movement liquidated. Further work at building the defence of the state could be undertaken only on the basis of a developing economy: otherwise, everything was in danger of collapse. Furthermore, the first post-war period did not so much heal as reveal the economic wounds which had been inflicted by the war. At the beginning of the new period stood the Kronstadt rebellion, a terrible echo of the unbearable burdens that the preceding years of civil war had imposed upon the masses of the people. A few months later, the famine broke out. The ruling classes of Poland and Romania made every effort, by means of banditry, to hold back our recovery. Owing to the country's very great economic difficulties, the needs and demands of the army, now reduced in size, inevitably fell into the background. The attempt to provide 'one hundred per cent' for the army and the navy stumbled at every step against our state of poverty and ruin, and the lack of co-ordination between the different elements of the economy. We resorted to such an exceptional, not at all 'planned' measure as material patronage by the local executive committees and various state and public organisations over particular units of the Red Army. There was no other way. The barracks were hungry and cold. The situation of the commanders and political workers in the army had become exceptionally difficult. As a result of the drift of military workers away to the economic and political 'fronts' an undoubted decline was observable at that time in political work in the army.

It is possible to understand the significance and character of military work in the second three years, its achievements and failures, only if one realises the conditions in which this work was carried on. The army and the War Department suffered most of all from their excessive numbers, from the unwieldiness of their institutions, which had been hastily constructed during the war. The pace of demobilisation failed

to keep pace with the need to relieve the country as quickly as possible of its unbearable military burden. Where reduction of the army was concerned it was hard to decide in advance at what point to draw the line. The degree of security which had been achieved was only gradually appreciated. Accordingly, the reduction in the army's size proceeded in a series of stages. This meant a continual succession of reorganisations and, as the principal consequence and misfortune of the transition period, extreme instability in the army's personnel. To this must be added that the country's entire economy – above all, the Soviet rouble – was in this same state of reorganisation, restructuring and fluidity. Moreover, the instability of the currency came to be of more decisive importance in the life of the army in proportion as economic relations shifted on to a monetary basis. An army lives by establishments and schedules, by strict norms, and so, naturally, the ups-and-downs of the currency unit and the arbitrariness in the financing of the army which was inevitably linked with this precluded any possibility not only of planned but even of more-or-less orderly supply work. The attempt made in April 1923 to draw up a five-year plan for development of the land, sea and air forces failed, for this reason, to produce immediate practical results.

Nevertheless, already in 1922-1923, tendencies to revival contended with ever growing success against phenomena of decline. The 'military-liquidationist' mood (the drift out of the army) which, as has been mentioned, had been observable, was overcome. This was what determined the turn for the better in all our work. Under exceptionally difficult conditions, the army laid sound foundations for its subsequent studies, and prepared in a practical way the first experiments in the territorial-militia field. The administrative apparatus was gradually reduced. A course was set towards raising the level of general military and political education of the junior commanders, and through them, of the rank-and-file soldiers – a course aimed at forming a good 'section-commander'.

The beginning of the post-war period found the navy in a tragic situation. Work of complete renewal was needed here. Under most difficult conditions a new, young nucleus of sailors was knocked together and a new cadre of specialists and technicians created.

In this same period the army is being given a new tactical orientation, in connection with the strengthening of the fire-power and the group-tactics [\[2\]](#) of the infantry, with all the resultant consequences for other arms. The commanding personnel are being retrained.

The War Department is succeeding in attracting the country's attention to problems of aviation. A Society of Friends of the Air Fleet has been formed and is helping the reorganised Air Force Administration. Aircraft-construction, which had been at a standstill, has got going again. A new body of airmen is being trained. The task of building aircraft engines has been brought to the forefront.

The question of chemical warfare has been put on the order of the day for public attention. A Society of Friends of Chemical Defence has been formed.

Military-scientific thought is being nourished in this period by an incomparably better information service and by the steady influx of foreign military literature since the ending of the blockade. The military publishing house is circulating in the army and the navy a whole series of new books – translations, compilations and, to some extent, original works.

Political education work in the army and navy, which fell into decline at the moment of transition from wartime to peacetime, has livened up again and has recently achieved substantial successes.

While the drawing-up of a five-year plan failed, as has been said, to produce immediate practical results, it did not, however, remain without effect: it was, in itself, an extremely valuable school, inculcating a new approach to the tasks of army-building; and furthermore, the calculation involved in it served as a sort of first, rough approximation and a point of departure for all work in the sphere of military planning. Needless to say, it is only through planning that further lasting success will be possible.

An ever larger place in our work has been and is being taken by the building of the militia. One should not, however, view the matter as though the Red Army's field divisions and its militia divisions embodied two opposite principles. Actually, the task consists in gradually and 'from both ends' transferring the Red Army, as created by history, on to a militia basis. Here it is necessary always to keep two circumstances in mind: while the very possibility of going over to the militia system was created for the first time by the establishment of the Soviet order, the tempo of this transition is determined by the general state of culture in the country – technology, communications, literacy, and so on. The political premises for the militia have been soundly established in our country, but the economic and cultural premises lag far behind. Given the backward state of our countryside, the Red barracks constitutes an incomparably higher cultural setting than that to which the Red Army man is used at home. This is the crux of the matter. Once upon a time the Narodniks whined against the need for the peasants to be cooked in the factory cauldron. We explained to them that this cauldron fulfilled a progressive mission. The Soviet barracks is an extremely valuable educational 'cauldron' for the country youngster. The educational and cultural importance of the Red barracks can be gradually reduced to zero only through educational and cultural progress in the countryside, and strengthening its linkage with the town. In the immediate future, work at building the militia must inevitably be preparatory in character. Every successive step must follow from strict checking on the success of previous steps.

The reorganisation carried out during last year is a progressive development of the constructive work accomplished in the preceding years. Further contraction of the administrative organs, rejuvenation of the army's leading personnel, and, finally, decentralisation of administrative and supply work, are, on the one hand, based on the organisational and educational successes already accomplished, and, on the other, presuppose further intense effort at raising the military-cultural and general level of the army and navy. A soldier who is better supplied, better educated and better trained – that is the aim of the reorganisation and, at the same time, the objective test of its effectiveness.

The ending of the civil war naturally intensified the need for leading military workers to study and to generalise theoretically the great corpus of experience which had been accumulated in the sphere of army-building and of warfare. This has led to discussion, written and spoken, which has focussed mainly on the question of the relation between Marxism and military matters. Documents concerning this discussion make up a substantial part of Book Two of Volume Three [Volume V in this edition – Editor]. Today these disputes have been left behind us. The healthy need to study and to grasp established military experience – not just our own, but world-wide experience as well – so as to deduce from it the most advantageous rules for army-building and the conduct of war has, of course,

remained fully operative and is the chief mental mainspring for further military achievements. Here we can say only a few words about this difficult and complex question. In military matters, co-ordination between the means and methods employed is more imperative, perhaps, than in any other sphere whatsoever. On the other hand, it is in the military sphere that the pursuit of unity in methods and procedures has led and leads more often than in any other, to dogmatism and schematism. In other words, formal unity is frequently purchased at the price of real expediency. In epochs when the technique of war changed comparatively slowly, and the soldier's trade advanced, broadly speaking, along the line indicated by the last turning-point (usually, the last big war), schematism, though always harmful, nevertheless could not lead to irreconcilable contradictions and irreparable mistakes. Our own epoch is different. The middle of the imperialist war differed profoundly from its beginning, and by the end of that war means and methods had been brought into play which have created a completely new prospect where the next war is concerned. And we must suppose that the next war is not far off. Despite the economic stagnation of Europe, progress in military technique, which was given a fearful impetus during the war, has not ceased even in the exhausted and, drained states of Europe, not to mention the United States of America. It is enough to recall that the development of aviation and of chemical warfare is profoundly changing the nature of war, undermining many of its traditional elements, subverting the very concept of the 'front'. What is the most immediate conclusion to be drawn from this? That military schematism is nowadays a hundred times more dangerous than ever before. But this does not at all eliminate the need for uniformity in approach to military tasks and in methods for carrying them out. The essence of the matter is simply this, that such uniformity can be achieved now only at the price of acquiring incomparably higher levels of skill, theoretical and practical, in every sphere.

The link between social conditions and military matters has always existed, because the army is a copy of society. The greatest military leaders always recognised the existence of that link. The conduct of military operations means the leadership of men in the name of certain purposes, and for that reason alone it is impregnated through and through with politics.

However, under conditions of relative stability in social relations (what are called 'organic' epochs, in contrast to 'critical' ones), the irruption of 'politics' into the military sphere was far from being as obvious, striking and acute as it is in our own epoch. The socio-political premises were taken as given once and for all, so to speak, and on their foundation armies were built and wars waged. Our time is characterised above all by extreme instability in social relations, abrupt political turns and upheavals. The military sphere is most closely and directly combined with politics through civil war, which in our epoch has been put on the agenda in every country in the world. A serious military leader cannot but be a politician, nowadays. The art of war retains all its specificity and, in that sense, its independence. Moreover, it is becoming extraordinarily complicated, in connection with the growth in the diversity and power of action of the weapons of contemporary military technique, and, consequently, it calls for heightened purely-military knowledge and know-how. But, at the same time, in the wars of the future, military matters will be combined more closely and directly than ever before with revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) politics (revolts, Fascism, etc.). Therefore, in the education of our Red military leader the development of a capacity for synthetic evaluation of the co-operation and interaction of all forms of contemporary weapons must go hand in hand with the mastering of a correct socio-political orientation, which is given by the method of Marxism and pervades all the premises of purely military knowledge.

What follows from this is that the present epoch presents the revolutionary military leader with increasingly heightened demands. We must assume that, before militarism is finally consigned to the museum of human barbarity, it has yet to attain its culmination and that it will inscribe in the book of the proletariat's struggle for liberation, along with the names of theoreticians, agitators, politicians and organisers, also the names of great military leaders of the proletarian revolution.

L. Trotsky
October 15, 1924

Endnotes

[1.](#) Owing to circumstances outside the control of the publishing house, the foreword to Volume Three as a whole [Volumes IV and V in this edition – *Editor*].

[2.](#) 'Group-tactics' refers to the new infantry tactics evolved during the World War on the Western Front. The essence of these was the replacement of a continuous line of attacking infantry by small groups, which were linked with artillery, machine-guns and, later, tanks, in order to maximise support. These tactics were used by the Allies at Cambrai.

The Fifth Anniversary Of The Red Army

Articles and Orders

Toward the Fifth Anniversary of the Red Army

Order by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, February 5, 1923, No.279,
Moscow

* * *

Let us lower our banners to the memory of the fallen.

Many losses were suffered along the road we have traversed. The Red Army gave the Soviet Republic its present frontiers through a succession of heavy offensives and retreats, defeats and victories. We celebrate our festival on the blood of heroes.

On February 23, 1918, under enemy pressure, the workers' and peasants' government proclaimed the need to create an armed force. The first units were few and weak. The young army received its baptism of fire under the walls of Kazan and Simbirsk. There, on the Volga, it learnt to believe in its own strength. In the fight against Kolchak it grew and became strong, rising to a new level after each setback. The enemy tried to break up the Red Army from within, treachery made nests in the midst of headquarters and army units. The revolutionary army cleansed itself with a red-hot iron, while not for one hour ceasing to combat the overt enemy.

The southern, Denikinite front strove to join up with the eastern, Kolchakite front. From the steppes of the Don and the Kuban the counter-revolution hurled its experienced steppe cavalry against the revolutionary North. A task arose before the Red Army – to create a cavalry force of its own. The proletarian mounted on horseback. Within a few months cavalry divisions were formed which became a Red thunderbolt on the battlefield. On the shores of the Arctic Ocean our infantry fought a stubborn war of position against the British, the Americans and the Whites, in snow-filled trenches and narrow defiles. The Red Army twice saved Petrograd from White-Guard forces that consisted entirely of experienced fighters, armed with the last word in technique.

In the spring of 1920 the Red Army beat back the raid on Kiev by the Poland of the gentry, and in an incomparable breakthrough – without reserves, without rear services, without boots – reached the walls of Warsaw, seeking a revolutionary junction with the Polish working class. However, it was forced to retreat before the fresh forces of Franco-Polish imperialism, the enslaver of Poland's working masses. In the Red Army's rear, Wrangel, the Entente's last card, acted as accomplice to the Polish gentry. The Red Army dealt a crushing blow to the White traitors entrenched in the Crimea. The battle of Perekop has passed into history as an incomparable example of revolutionary heroism.

Having grown in size to more than five million men, the Red Army was quickly reduced after the rout of the White fronts. While continuously contracting and

training, it did not cease to fight. With blow after blow it liquidated the gangs of Petlyurists and Savinkovites, hired by Poland and Romania, in our western frontier zone. Chest-high in snow, often up to their knees in freezing-cold water, the Red soldiers cleared Soviet Karelia of the White-Finnish detachments. In Turkestan and in allied Bukhara the Red Army defeated the Basmachi bands formed and armed by British agents. It helped the Mongolian people to free themselves from the bands that were trying to turn Mongolia into a base for struggle against Soviet Siberia and against the independence of China. Finally, in the Far East, shoulder to shoulder with the local insurgents, the Red Army liquidated the last strongpoints of the White Guards and their Japanese protectors. From Murmansk to Sebastopol, from the walls of Warsaw to Vladivostok – such has been the scale of the Red Army's operations during these five years.

Almost everywhere – in the Baltic, in the White Sea, on the Volga and on the Dnieper, in the Sea of Azov and in the Caspian – the Red Navy operated shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. And not only on the water: the best section of the sailors often formed infantry detachments which occupied the most dangerous positions in battle.

The years of struggle and glory were also years of privation and want. Although the half-starved workers in the war industry gave all their strength to the task of supplying the Red fighters, there was a shortage of everything, from bread to cartridges. Regiments already famous for their victories marched barefoot. Positions conquered with blood often had to be given up because there was nothing with which to answer the enemy's bombardment. Only through the endurance and self-sacrifice of the revolutionary fighters could the struggle be carried on. Only the support given by the working masses ensured victory.

In such ways and to such an extent as it was able, the Red Army helped with economic activity all through these years. By ensuring the requisitioning of food it saved industry and the towns from starvation. It felled timber, sawed it into firewood and transported it, thereby saving factory premises and workers' districts from freezing up. In the intervals between two tides of the civil war it devoted its divisions wholly to tasks of labour, in the Urals, in the Donbas, in the Grozny oilfield and elsewhere.

Into this life of battles, labour and hardships burst epidemics of devastating power. Their effect was immeasurably more fearful than that of the enemy's fire. Not merely the hospitals but the barracks as well were transformed for weeks, and sometimes for months, into so many multitudes of typhus-victims. History has seldom seen such suffering. But, through the power of the revolutionary spirit of the awakened masses, the army overcame everything, mastered everything, endured everything and arrived at victory. The numbers in the Red Army and the Red Navy have now been reduced from 5,300,000 to 600,000. Millions of former fighters have been dispersed to different corners of the country, to villages and factories, to work-benches and to various institutions of the Soviet state. On the day of its fifth anniversary the Army will mentally include all of them in its family, and, first and foremost, it will press to its heart with brotherly feeling those Red fighters who bear on their bodies the harsh traces of battle and victory – our Red disabled. A few tens of thousands of them remain, in all: as a general rule, the enemy not only killed prisoners but also finished off the wounded.

Soviet Russia built its army from scratch, from among the workers and peasants. Exploiters were not allowed to join the army. To train the Red Army men and to

provide proper guidance in the building of the army, thousands of former officers were recruited. Among them the revolution found not a few honest and valiant servants, who devoted all their powers to the cause of the working people. At the same time, a new body of commanders has been educated in the military schools during these years, men intimately linked with the workers and peasants.

In being cut down to 600,000 men, our army has been increasingly transformed into an armature of cadres for the many-mullioned proletarian and peasant reserves. We are thereby entering the path that leads to wider application of the principles of the militia system. All the more important, all the more vital for the army, in consequence, is further development of pre-call-up preparation and the establishment of an unbroken bond between our armed forces and the working masses, the local Soviets, the trade unions, the Young Communist League and the Communist Party organisations.

As commissars, agitators and political workers, the advanced proletarians brought enlightenment to the army, uniting and inspiring it in the most difficult moments. The Red Army's faith in its high calling constituted an inexhaustible fund of strength: every Red Army man knew and knows that, unlike all the armies that have existed before this time, ours has as its task to fight for the well-being of the working people against their exploiters. The Red Army is the shield of the oppressed and the sword of those who rise in revolt!

People who say that there will always be wars are grossly mistaken. No, wars will disappear, just as human sacrifices have disappeared. But they will cease only along with the cessation of all forms of human slavery. The world Communist Party has as its task to rebuild the whole world on principles of solidarity and fraternity between men, regardless of nation, race or colour. The triumph of Communism will be the beginning of a new, truly human epoch, an epoch of labour, love and joy.

But, today, predatory capital is still the master in all countries except Russia. The revolutionary Communist Party is growing everywhere. But the bourgeoisie will nowhere surrender without a hard fight. It will ruin the whole world rather than renounce its profits. The exploiters look with hatred at the only country where the working class is master. Soviet Russia is the citadel of the world revolution. The hearts of all working people yearn towards Moscow. The Red Army is the shield of the oppressed and the sword of those who rise in revolt!

Remember, warriors: imperialism's hatred of us will not weaken with time, it will strengthen. In the sixth year of the existence of the Soviet Republic, world capital refuses, as before, to recognise us. It still hopes to find the moment when it can strike a mortal blow at us. That is why the Red Army is needed today, by workers' Russia and by the world revolution, no less than when it was called into being by the will of the Soviet power.

Young warriors! The five years that lie behind us will be for you a school of great heroism. Learn from the past, prepare for the future. Self-sacrifice, endurance, readiness to give your life for the cause of the working class – that is what the five years of the history of our army teaches us. While finding support and inspiration in this past, we must excel it. We want peace: but no-one knows when the enemy's ill-will may compel us once again to take the field. Let us, in the sixth year that lies ahead, meet every month and every day as though it were the last month and the last day of our preparation. The warriors of the revolution must not merely not lag behind the soldiers of imperialism – on the contrary, they must surpass them in all

things.

Red Army men, commanders, commissars! Let us bow our colours today before the memory of the fallen. Let us pay tribute to the heroic past – not in order to comfort ourselves, but in order to work ten times as hard. Our tomorrow must be and will be more glorious than our yesterday.

Study! Grow stronger! Take heart! Get ready!

The Fifth Anniversary Of The Red Army

Articles and Orders

Before the Second Five Years of the Red Army

* * *

We are entering the second five years with a big load of experience. What are the most important conclusions to be drawn from this experience? In what lay our strength and, most important, in what lay our weakness? For without recognition of one's weakness no advance can be made.

We conquered through the boundless self-sacrifice of the revolutionary vanguard and the inexhaustible numbers of the peasant reserves. Both of these fundamental advantages of ours will remain. The peasant reserves will draw ever closer to the proletarian vanguard as time goes by while the political level of the latter will, we hope, steadily rise. But both of these pre-conditions for our victories are, as is perfectly obvious, non-military: they are rooted in the social nature of the Soviet power, in the class qualities of the proletariat. The Red Army of the last five years was a rough attempt at using these very great advantages of ours for military purposes. The result is before us: we have defended ourselves. But at what price? At the price of very great sacrifices. The art of war consists, like any other, in getting results at the price of the least possible effort, or, as Suvorov put it, 'with little blood'.

Without enthusiasm and self-sacrifice there can be no struggle and no victory: but an army begins where there is proper organisation of these qualities, skilful utilisation of them. We made up for all our deficiencies in the sphere of organisation, training and supply by the numbers of our reserves or the selfless heroism of the advanced workers. Both numbers and heroism will be needed in the future as well. But we need to equip them with training and with technique.

These are the two principal channels along which our efforts will be directed in the second five years: individual and collective military *training*, and military *technique*. We have reduced the army to 600,000 men: taken in relation to the country's size, to the number of its population, to the length of our frontiers and to the number of our potential foes, these constitute, essentially, cadres rather than an army. But what follows from that is the task of bringing this army, in respect of education and training, up to cadre standard. It must be provided with outstanding section-commanders, and then with squad-leaders who have undergone all-round preparation so that, gradually, the entire mass of the soldiers may be brought up to, approximately, the level of training of a non-commissioned officer of the old army – adapted, of course, to the new conditions and new structure of the armed forces. This is not a utopian notion. Young men – not only workers but peasants as well – are entering the army with wide-awake receptivity. Old military men note with astonishment how quickly the young Red Army man of today learns to read and write, as compared with the recruit to the Tsarist Army. The awakening of an avid desire to learn, an increased mental liveliness, on the part of the masses, is, so far, the most important conquest of the revolution. Upon this conquest we shall build further, in every sphere. A properly-applied system of pre-call-up preparation,

linked with an intelligently constructed system of training and education in the army itself must bring, already in the next few years, a marked improvement in the qualifications of the entire army, and, thereby, in its ability to absorb, when the need arises, the millions of conscripts.

The second task concerns technique. What are the prospects here? Tsardom equipped its army to a considerable extent by means of foreign technique. That was in the nature of things, since Tsardom itself belonged to one of the groupings in the so-called European equilibrium. The bourgeoisie looks on us – and, perhaps, not without reason – as an intrusion that violates and undermines all and any equilibrium in the capitalist world. Consequently, we cannot count on direct help from capitalist Europe or America where our military technique is concerned. All the more important, then, are our own efforts exerted in this direction. Military technique depends on general economic technique. This means that miraculous leaps forward in the sphere of armament and, in general, of supply are precluded. All that is possible is a systematic effort and gradual improvement. But this does not at all rule out substantial successes within a short time – at least, in certain of the more important spheres. The entire economy of the Soviet Republic, after a period of severe decline, is coming to life and going ahead. The process will at first be slow, with inevitable interruptions and vacillations. Our task consists in putting war industry in particularly favourable conditions – without damage, of course, to the economy as a whole – and, within war industry itself, putting in the forefront those branches which are now acquiring exceptional importance for us.

One of these is certainly aircraft. This arm, and this branch of industry, we must place, in the coming year at any rate, at the centre of the whole country's attention. This is all the more feasible because, in the sphere of aviation, purely military needs are combined, more strongly and directly than in any other, with the economic and cultural interests of the country. Aviation is the most advanced, most up-to-date means of overcoming distance. A boundless future lies before it. And our young people must, on as wide a scale as possible, be seized with the idea of the growth and flourishing of air transport. Our technicians, teachers, poets and artists must interest themselves in this matter.

We are talking about the task of the army in the second five years. It is unlikely that anyone will, today, reproach us with trying to look too far ahead. Because it is very clear that the Red Army will be needed in one year's time and in two years' time, and in five years' time. The revolutionary development in Europe may, to be sure, after the current period of relative lull, suddenly assume a more stormy tempo. But it is indisputable, all the same, that the epoch of imperialist wars and revolutionary upheavals will last not for months or for years, but for decades, involving the world, after brief respites, in fresh and ever graver and more painful spasms. And if this is the case, then we need to prepare seriously and for a long time, to study properly, to shoe ourselves with reliable nails. The programme for our work in the next few years follows automatically from the situations of yesterday and today: *enthusiasm must be multiplied by skill, and numbers by technique*. Then we shall conquer 'with little blood'.

Pravda
February 15, 1923,
No.34

The Fifth Anniversary Of The Red Army

Articles and Orders

Once More on the Tasks in Building the Army

* * *

One of our newspaper workers, concerned for the interests of the army (the Red Army finds almost exclusively friends in the newspapers and in the country, since it has, thanks be to destiny, disposed of its enemies), asked me the other day: 'Could you not give us a brief formula which would, in a certain sense, embrace all the tasks of the Red Army in the period immediately ahead?' To explain his idea this comrade cited some of the slogans of past years: 'Down with guerrilla-ism,' 'Proletarian to horse,' and so on.

I know how convenient such concise formulas are for newspapers, and not only for them. All the same, I am obliged this time to decline to offer such a formula, because it would not correspond to the stage through which the army is passing. The time for summary, simple, terse slogans for the Red Army has already passed and – has not yet arrived. Through successive experiments, improvisations, layerings and reconstructions our army was brought to completion, in the rough. Today we are passing through a period of perfecting it, making everything more precise – through a phase of details and trifles. The task of construction is not now focused on a single point but is fragmented into particulars. In this, if you like, consists the general 'formula' of the present period.

I spoke recently about the need to bring our 600,000-strong army up to the level of cadres, in respect of qualification. This presupposes, above all, a decisive change in the way the army, and everyone of its members, is evaluated by the state institutions and the entire population of the country. In past years we made extensive use of the army as labour-power, both for the needs of the army itself and for those of the towns and the villages. Thus, in 1920, a whole army in the Urals felled and sawed timber, mined coal and ploughed the land. This happened at a time when our substantial armed forces in the East had been freed from direct military activity but when, nevertheless, we could not disarm them in view of the prospect of fresh military complications in the near future. At that time we unwound the military 'ball' into a labour 'skein'. But when the storm broke in the West we hastily re-wound the Ural lumberjacks and sawyers into a military ball. However, besides such periodical transformations, with an army of several million men and with a weak civilian apparatus of state, the armed forces were used very widely for guard and patrol duty, for requisitioning, and for carting service ... Today the situation has changed radically in this respect. The minimum number of citizens have been directly retained in the army – and they are so detained only in order that they may acquire military training to the fullest extent possible. Under present conditions it would be senseless to transform the army into labour-power: it would mean getting, as a general rule, in place of a good soldier, a poorly-productive and very expensive worker. It is not for the army to serve the population, in the sense of contributing labour, but, on the contrary, for the population to serve the army, in every way. This is more advantageous, in the first place, to the population themselves. For, if we are obliged to remove from work over half a million workers

and peasants, then it is necessary, at least, that during their service, that is, in as short a time as possible, they shall become irreproachable soldiers. To this end it is necessary that a Red Army man be removed from the ranks of those in training as infrequently as can be. As few sentry duties as possible! As few missions, details and leaves as possible! There must be no absences, everyone must be present! If a Red Army man does work which could and should be done by a 'civilian' worker, if a Red Army man occupies a post which could be occupied by an armed watchman, that is a crime against the army and the country. The Red Army man has been sent into the army precisely in order to master the soldier's trade without wasting a single day, a single hour. Only if both the Red Army and the country grasp this point will it become possible to raise the army's level of qualifications to a height hitherto unknown.

Bringing the standing army to the condition of a cadre presupposes our going over to *the militia system*. We have firmly taken this road. We are now carrying out our first large-scale experiment in building militia units in various parts of the country ... some predominantly working-class, others purely peasant in composition. This is a very important new chapter in our constructive work. As it develops over the next few years, this experiment can completely regenerate the structure of the army. And, while we have heretofore spoken about the close link between the army and the population, today this formula has already become inadequate: in the militia divisions the army is directly merged with the population. While patronage, which has developed so rapidly, signifies fraternal tutelage over army units by soviets, trade unions and so on, the militia divisions demand from their patrons no longer just friendly care manifested from time to time, but daily participation in the building and education of the army units. This opens up prospects of such democratism in state and army affairs – real worker-and-peasant democratism, deeply-rooted, and armed with rifle and sabre – as the 'democratic' lackeys of capital dare not even dream of.

Putting the armed forces on the militia basis means, at the same time, dispersing them. This presupposes, from the standpoint of the country's defence, that means of transport exist which are capable of moving the mobilised millions fast enough to wherever they may be needed, and also stockpiles from which these millions can be armed, shod, clothed and fed. Both of these conditions are *economic* in character. The country's defence capacity is now being forged in the factories of state industry. This does not mean only those factories that directly manufacture rifles or soldiers' boots. No, it is upon industry as a whole, and, first and foremost, on the fuel and metallurgical industries, that ensuring the country's security depends. War industry is only an organ of the entire industrial organism. The same is true of transport. Every pood of coal, every pood of metal increases the strength of the Red Army. Here the fundamental problems of the country's defence are completely fused with the problems of reviving and developing Soviet industry.

This applies, in a certain sense, to *cultural and educational* work, as well. The more knowledge and skills the worker and peasant youth master at school, the more pre-call-up preparation they are given, the more deeply the Young Communist League, the trade unions and the Party succeed in penetrating their minds and hearts – the better will the young Red Army man master, in the Red barracks, the technical and mental side of the soldier's trade.

Recognising the inner links between military matters and other fields of constructive and creative work does not at all mean, of course, that we are going to place responsibility for the state of the army and its growth upon the economy and

the educational system. No, work must be carried on under the conditions that exist today, with maximum effort and in order to achieve maximum success. The army is, after all, not only a *product* of economic and cultural-educational work, it is an *instrument* of this work, and an extremely important one. Teaching the army to be precise, thrifty, responsible, efficient, conscientious in attention to details, means rendering inestimable educational services in the country's economic activity and helping to promote the raising of its general cultural level. And that is what we shall do, day after day, during the next five years, with conviction and vigour.

The time for concise formulas has already gone by – and has not yet arrived. By this we mean that the future will by no means always consist of little jobs and minute details. Otherwise we should have to conclude that the army is an end in itself and that it exists only for the internal improvement of its constituent units. No, that is not the case. An army exists to wage war, and we, revolutionaries, can least of all adhere to that old-time Prussian school of thought which considered that what is more harmful to an army than anything else is war.

We have built an armed force and are developing it in awareness that wars are profoundly inevitable so long as class society exists. The current epoch of unstable equilibrium teaches us that the interval between two armed conflicts is proving to be, generally speaking, shorter than we should have liked to expect. The next war that they may force upon us – that they cannot but force upon us – will bring with it generalised formulas and concise slogans, because it will put *great tasks* on the agenda. While, in general, war is the continuation of politics, for us war is the continuation of revolution – but fully-armed with such organisation and such technique as no revolution has ever had before.

Pravda
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No.38

The International Situation and the Red Army

I. The International Situation in the Autumn of 1921

Speech

At the Fourth All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, September 21, 1921

* * *

In greeting you on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, I am convinced, comrades, from the look of your well-attended congress, and from the spirit that prevails here, that the source of reinforcement for the Communist ranks is inexhaustible. One of the members of the Central Committee reminded me here that, two years ago, I happened to address the second congress of your League. That was at the time of the fierce fighting on the Southern front when Denikin had taken Orel and was approaching Tula. Your League then carried out an extensive mobilisation. Hundreds of its members set off for the fronts, and many of them were killed: but it is our Party's good fortune that it possesses an inexhaustible source of fresh vigour, revolutionary strength and profound enthusiasm – the working youth. This working youth, the inexhaustible source of creative effort, I greet in the name of the Central Committee of our Party. Allow me, at the same time, briefly to greet you, also, on behalf of the Red Army, in whose ranks have fought and will fight tens of thousands of workers and peasants who have passed through the school of your League.

Now let me turn at once to the fundamental tasks of the report which has been entrusted to me – a report on our internal and international situation.

We described our internal situation as one of transition from a war period to a period of peaceful construction. When we spoke and wrote in that way, we imagined that our military tasks were over, but this, alas, is not so. Precisely now, at the moment of your congress (I shall speak in detail about this in the second part of my report), we are again experiencing anxiety with regard to our international situation, where our Western frontiers are concerned. But it is certainly true that, previously, the fight for the existence of the Soviet Republic filled our lives to the full. Only now have we entered a period of peaceful economic construction. At the same time we have begun to use the methods of free trade, co-operation, commodity-exchange, rent-relations – in short, to allow a certain scope for capitalist economic forms.

To a question of enormous theoretical importance, the question of how and why it was that, at first, we carried out universal expropriation – the concentration in the state's hands of all means of production apart from those belonging to the peasants – but then began to 'release' a considerable part of them: to answer that question, as some often do, by referring to the need to go over to an epoch of peaceful construction, means talking in too general terms. We turn to our Marxist theory and ask what it taught us about how we should tackle the task of socialist construction once the working class has taken power into its own hands. On this point Marxism said the following. The transition to socialism is an immensely weighty and difficult

affair. The working class, after taking power, will proceed gradually along this road: it will first expropriate the big capitalists, taking over the most substantial means of production, then it will gradually deal with medium-sized industry. As the working class becomes organised, it will go over to expropriating the medium-sized means of production. As for the small-scale means of production, it will demonstrate in practice, by experience, to the small producer-proprietors, the advantages of the large-scale state economy. Consequently, where the biggest bourgeois are concerned, the way of taking over the means of production must be direct coercion, expropriation by armed force. Where the middle bourgeois are concerned it will be partly the same, in so far as they dare to resist. As for the petty bourgeoisie, with them it will be a matter of mental rather than economic pressure, and, above all, of pedagogic influence in economic matters, influence by example: 'There, see for yourself, in the socialist economy we obtain a larger quantity of products for a smaller expenditure of labour than you do, petty proprietor.'

Did we follow that road? No, we undertook expropriation of the property-owners straightaway. We expropriated the bourgeoisie indiscriminately – the big bourgeois, the middle bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois alike. Does this mean that we thereby departed from Marxism? Does it mean that we violated our own theoretical foundations?

That could be said if Marxism were a gospel, Holy Writ for all times and all nations. Actually, Marxism is a certain method of orientation amid surrounding conditions, a spiritual instrument by means of which we decide the tasks of a given moment in a given country.

From the standpoint of the socialist organisation of production it would certainly have been more advantageous to proceed systematically, carrying out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in a systematic way: from the big bourgeois to the middle bourgeois, and then to the petty-bourgeois, along the road I have indicated. If the working class had been in power in Germany, and we had possessed a reliable guarantee in the West that we should not be interfered with, we could have dealt with the petty bourgeoisie, and perhaps with the middle bourgeois as well, patiently and pedagogically. Having taken over large-scale industry and created a basis, we could have united the medium enterprises with it, and then, later, the small-scale ones, too. We could have proceeded step by step.

But what would have been expedient for us from the economic standpoint proved to be fatal from that of our political self-preservation. Our bourgeoisie – not only the big bourgeoisie but also the middle bourgeoisie, and to a considerable extent the petty-bourgeoisie as well, which was subordinate to the middle and big bourgeoisie – was, economically and financially, nothing but an agency of the European and world bourgeoisie. All the more easily would it have become a political agency of the world counter-revolution. In Germany it was not, alas, the proletariat that was in power, but the bourgeoisie. And if, out of considerations of economic expediency, gradualism, systematic economic construction, we had left the middle and petty-bourgeois standing on their economic foundation, with their roots in property undisturbed, this agency of world capital, hostile to us, would have proved an obstacle in our path. We had, first and foremost, to ensure the inviolability, the stability of the proletarian state.

Consequently, in the given case, the political need of the proletarian power to preserve itself conflicted with the needs of economic construction. There was undoubtedly a contradiction here. How did we resolve it? We said: above all and at

any cost we must consolidate the state power of the working class! How? We had an enemy – capital. We had to crush the enemy within, in the rear of the working class. How? By depriving the bourgeoisie of its economic roots, taking away its property through expropriation. We had to expropriate the middle bourgeoisie not because we were in a position to organise large-scale production from its enterprises, but because we had to slay a political class enemy. As for the enterprises, we said: let us try, so far as our powers and possibilities permit, to organise them in a socialist way. We had very little success in that direction, of course. We were obliged, by force of those very laws of revolutionary struggle for self-preservation of the workers' state, not only to strangle the bourgeoisie inside the country, but also to combat it in arms on the fighting fronts. In this sense we can say that our economic policy was dictated, in the first period, not so much by considerations of economic expediency as by the revolutionary class's need for self-preservation. And only after we had defended the workers' state, only after we had consolidated it, as a fact which has to be reckoned with, which has to be put up with, even if one hates it, could we tackle the tasks of economic construction in the proper sense.

Thereafter began the separation of the productive forces and resources into two big groups. The state said: 'This much will I now embrace – the major means of transport and production: this can I, the state, relying on the vanguard of the working class, organise on socialist principles – but the rest will, in the given situation be only a burden to me. Where they are concerned, we must enlist the initiative of private owners, we must attract the private entrepreneur, with his interest in making profits.'

It is self-evident that such a decision is, in a certain sense, a step backward. If the working class had come to power in Germany last year, we should not have needed to take this step. We should have received from the German workers' state very great help in the spheres of technique, production and administration, and, relying on German science and technique, which would have become the property of the working class, we should have coped more easily with our backwardness, with petty-bourgeois economic forms and practices. We should not have needed to make the concessions to the petty-bourgeoisie and to capitalist economic forms generally which we have now been obliged to make.

Thus, our economic policy is not an arbitrary invention by the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of our Party. Our economic policy is the harsh, unavoidable conclusion drawn from the situation within and without our country. Our concessions to capitalist forms of economy are a product of our internal backwardness, on the one hand, and of the delay in the working class revolution in Europe, on the other. Those of you who have been working in the Young Communist League for two or three years, who were awakened to political life two or three years (or, even more so, four years) ago – will remember that two or three years ago we were impatiently expecting proletarian revolutions in Germany and France. The Soviet republic in Hungary seemed to us to be the beginning of social revolution throughout Europe. In that matter we experienced a certain disappointment as regards the tempo, the speed of development, of the proletarian revolution. The Soviet republic was suppressed in Hungary, and in Bavaria it proved to be ephemeral. [\[1\]](#) The bourgeoisie stood their ground after the war.

This is one of the basic facts of the international situation. Capitalist economy was shattered by the war to its innermost depths. Its basis was exhausted. Europe and

America are going through an unprecedented crisis, and all this is a result of the war, which itself was the result of capitalist plethora. But, at the present time, despite the fact that the ground beneath the bourgeoisie's feet has been undermined, that the bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying on the economic development of Europe and of the whole world – a fact expressed in the war and in the unprecedentedly destructive crisis which the bourgeoisie is experiencing – despite all that, the bourgeoisie recovered itself after the war. And the revolutionary class and its organisations must clearly and distinctly recognise that this is the case. When we say that the bourgeoisie has outlived itself, that is, that it can no longer fulfil the role that it fulfilled previously (when it promoted the progress of science, of the whole machinery of state, and of culture), when we say that, in this sense, the bourgeoisie has finished its historical career, this does not mean that it will fall as, in the autumn, a sere and yellow leaf falls from the bough. The bourgeoisie has now become a reactionary force which hinders humanity's progress. But, at the same time, it is a living class that does not want to die, that fights for its existence, a class in which the instinct of self-preservation is alive, especially at the moment when the foundation under its feet is shaking. The European bourgeoisie, very much more experienced and made wiser by life, and having learnt more from its past than our bourgeoisie, concentrated, in the moment of danger, all its experience, knowledge, skill and ability to deceive, in order to crush, to put down – and succeeded in holding its ground. And this means that, although history has prepared its downfall, it will actually fall only when the working class, organised and conscious, proves able to seize it by the throat, overthrow it and strangle it.

This is the task confronting the working class of Western Europe. Over there the proletarian revolution has matured economically to an incomparably greater degree than it had here at the time of the revolution of October 1917. Thus, it is as though history is summoning the working class: 'Take power, the time has come, otherwise the bourgeoisie will lead you to ruin through renewed wars and frightful crises!' But, over there, the bourgeoisie, thanks to its greater economic wealth, political experience and culture, constitutes a formidable military and political force. In order to overthrow it the working class will need much greater strategical skill and experience, which it will, as we know, acquire through struggle. As yet it has little of this experience. It needs much more than the Russian working class had need of, faced as it was by a very backward and unviable bourgeoisie.

All this has compelled us to take several steps backward in the economic sphere. But this is also demanded by our international situation. Has our international situation grown stronger in this period, or has it not? Undoubtedly it has grown stronger. We should, of course, be stronger still if the revolution had taken place in Europe. But, even allowing for the fact that the European bourgeoisie has held its ground since the war, we must note that the most powerful section of the European bourgeoisie, British capital, has gone over from the policy of armed intervention to that of a trade agreement and commercial relations with us. At the same time, however, those armed interventionist groups have not yet disappeared in Europe which continue to consider that the only way by which a mortal danger for the bourgeoisie can be liquidated is the military destruction of Soviet Russia. The centre of this interventionism lies in France, where the stock exchange holds a large amount of Russian debt-bonds for which we have declared we do not accept liability.

Our international and internal situation has been focused and defined by that tragic fact which is now the centre of the country's attention – the famine in the Volga region. As soon as the scale of this huge calamity became apparent – a

calamity which, although indeed caused by various elemental phenomena, was, in the last analysis, an expression of our economic backwardness and helplessness – the question of Russia became subject to review on the world scale.

What had to be the first, direct and inevitable results of the famine? What does the famine mean? The famine might, of course, have brought about the downfall and ruin of the Soviet Republic. But we see it like that acutely painful phenomenon which as often as not breaks out when, after suffering a whole succession of diseases, an exhausted organism, which has fallen into a state of cachexy, presents a picture of ulcers, abscesses and other acute but more superficial ailments. When, in a few years' time, we look back at our Volga famine in historical perspective, we shall say that, when our country was beginning to recover, the past told upon it in the form of a frightful elemental famine in the Volga region.

The European bourgeoisie began at once to weigh things up, this way and that, in order to determine the line it should take. Britain wondered whether she had made a mistake in entering into economic relations with us, at a time when, perhaps, the famine was exposing our bankruptcy and impending collapse. Among the French bourgeoisie those elements who had had enough of waiting for the long-promised downfall of the Soviet power now gained preponderance and started to insist more stubbornly upon the inevitability of our collapse and the need to assist this collapse by means of armed intervention. It eventually emerged that the public opinion of the European bourgeoisie was split into two basic groupings. I do not want to talk about the feelings of the Western proletariat and its pressing desire to help us (the proletariat of Europe and America has shown its sympathy, so far as its strength permits, by raising money, by agitation, and so on), because, from the standpoint of the international situation, it is the policy of the ruling bourgeoisie that has immediate significance for the moment. So, the orientation of the bourgeoisie has followed two lines. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie – that of Britain, for instance, represented by Lloyd George – came to realise what had happened and said to itself: 'No, this regime is stronger than we thought. If it could survive such a frightful disaster as the famine which struck at tens of millions of human beings in that weakened and exhausted country: if the state apparatus did not split at every seam: if the Soviet power did not lose its head, but concentrated its attention on the most vital tasks of sowing the Volga region's fields: if it managed in the very first days to collect millions of poods of seed so as to save the Volga peasants' economy for the following year – then this regime must have firm roots.' The British bourgeoisie is, of course, hostile to us, but it is more perceptive than others, and it said to itself that there is in Soviet Russia no other force apart from the Communist Party, the working class organised into a state, that is capable of maintaining law and order and assuming the functions of government.

In France, on the other hand, those elements of the bourgeoisie which were beginning to yield, so to speak, to give in to the necessity of entering into economic relations with Russia, took heart at that moment when the full dimensions of the disaster became apparent. While some are becoming convinced that we cannot be brought down, that it is necessary to enter into economic relations with us, others say: 'If we do not overthrow the Soviet power in Russia now, when it is being undermined from within by the terrible blow of the famine, we shall never manage to overthrow it.'

'Now or never' – this is the watchword of the extreme interventionists in France and other countries. The Russian émigrés encourage them in this attitude. For we must not forget that hundreds of thousands of Russian landlords, capitalists and

bankers are vegetating abroad, people who have lost everything, who want to recover, if not everything then at least something, and whose thoughts are wholly directed towards the military destruction of Soviet Russia. One section of the world bourgeoisie said to itself that these émigrés have already exposed their bankruptcy, the fantastic, false, unreliable and stupid character of their thinking. But the other section of Europe's bourgeoisie said that the last moment had come for these émigrés to take power in Russia. We are observing how these two scales of the balance fluctuate. Never was the question posed so sharply as now. Which of the groupings will triumph, whether we shall be secured peaceful economic existence or shall be subjected tomorrow to armed intervention – that is the question that trembles in the balance.

When I speak of armed intervention, I leave the whole working class out of the argument. Fortunately for us, however, it does exist. This fact arose before us at the last, the Third Congress of the Communist International, which took place in Moscow [\[2\]](#) At this Third Congress of the Communist International we all, as becomes Marxists, that is, revolutionary realists, who are called upon to look reality in the eye, recognised that the bourgeoisie stands firmly on its feet and that more effort and skill is required in order to overthrow it. We said that at the Second [*sic*] Congress. [*'Second' is presumably a mistake for 'Third'.*] At this Congress we bore witness to the fact that the revolutionary development of the German working class was taking giant's strides, and that while today the working class of Germany, France and Britain have not yet stretched out their hands to take state power, while they are only preparing to do this, at the same time the European working class are already now preventing the European bourgeoisie from stretching out *their* hands to seize us by the throat and strangle us. If within the bourgeoisie itself the two scales of the balance are fluctuating – economic links, or intervention (the philanthropic aid of which the bourgeoisie often speaks is, of course, not pure philanthropy but merely a small advance invested in Russian soil in order subsequently to obtain big profits therefrom) – if, I say, there is wavering within the bourgeoisie itself, this wavering reflects the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the world proletariat, which is the main guarantee of our inviolability.

That is the world situation as it confronts us today. The bourgeoisie wants armed intervention, but the proletariat does not permit this. Is the proletariat strong enough to prevent it? The fact that the French bourgeoisie has not, so far, hurled its divisions upon us, and is not deciding to do so, shows that it fears the proletariat, that it fears to measure its strength with the proletariat on that ground. But this does not mean that the French bourgeoisie renounces other ways of effecting armed intervention. It is seeking the line of least resistance. It lacks the support of Britain, for the reasons I have mentioned. Britain has chosen a different way. France is trying to lean upon the countries of the so-called Little Entente and, in the first place, on our neighbours Poland and Romania. And these are the most acute questions of the present time – the questions of our relations with Romania and Poland.

We have no peace treaty with Romania. As you know' Romania was an ally of the Tsarist Government. During the world war the Tsarist Government had a common front with Romania. This common front against the Germans and Austro-Hungarians was retained under Kerensky. After the overthrow of Kerensky, under Soviet power, this common front disappeared, collapsed – and Romania took advantage of the fact that she had that common front in order to take Bessarabia from us.

The seizure of Bessarabia by the Romanian bourgeoisie was explained at the time

by that bourgeoisie as a temporary measure dictated by the need to provide food for the Romanian and Russian troops in Bessarabia. The diplomats of France and Italy declared, at that time, in 1918, that there could be no question of Bessarabia being annexed by Romania, that it was a temporary measure of military occupation. A statement to that effect was signed by the Romanian minister Averescu, the present Premier. Nevertheless, as you know Romania seized the whole of Bessarabia and declared that it belonged to her. We have not declared war on account of this because, in general, as you know, we do not lightly declare war, we fight only when there is no other way out for us. The annexation of Bessarabia against the will of its population (we have no doubt of that the population were not asked) is a monstrous injustice. But we know that there are many injustices, not only in Bessarabia but in Romania itself, that there is oppression everywhere in the capitalist world, and, in so far as we are firmly confident that the world revolution will accomplish its task of liberation, we have reconciled ourselves to the fact that one more piece of land, namely Bessarabia, will still remain under capitalist oppression. But Romania, feeling uneasy about her Bessarabian territory, was afraid even to enter into negotiations with us. And, in order to strengthen her Bessarabian frontier, Romania had recourse to the aid of the Petlyurist bands, using these as an auxiliary military force, so that now, along with the question of Bessarabia, the question of ensuring the inviolability of our South-Western, Ukrainian frontier has arisen.

With Poland we have, as you know, a treaty of peace, which we did not get easily, and which also cost Poland a great deal. Those of you who have been following political life during the past three or four years know that, day after day, almost since the first weeks of the existence of the Soviet power, we made every effort to establish normal relations with Poland, even if it was a landlord-and-bourgeois Poland. You will remember how our diplomats proposed, dozens of times, to the Polish Government that they engage in peace talks, with a view to ensuring the peaceful existence of both countries. You will remember how the Polish bourgeoisie systematically evaded peace negotiations, how Pilsudski and his supporters carried matters to the point of a major war, a war which caused great losses to both sides, in life and in property. And as a result of that war we concluded a peace treaty with Poland, at Riga, a treaty very favourable to Poland, though not so favourable as the terms we had offered her before the war. We considered that this severe lesson, severe for both sides, was quite sufficient to guarantee us against any repetition of that experience. We considered, and we want to consider now, that this is the case and will continue to be so.

However, your congress coincides with an anxious moment in Russo-Polish relations. I spoke about this yesterday at the meeting of the Moscow Soviet. The previous day, our commissariat of Foreign Affairs had received a note from Warsaw which sounds like an ultimatum. [3] An ultimatum is a demand which is governed by a limit of time, a unilateral demand, that is: 'I demand and I order that you fulfil my demand before a certain date.' This presupposes that non-fulfilment of the demand will bring forward some new, more serious, means of pressure.

Whence sprang this ultimatum from the Polish Government? Formally, it arose from the disputes which have been going on between our diplomats and the Polish diplomats over a very long period. The treaty we made with Poland assumed that overt hostile action would cease on both sides. The Polish Government is a government of landlords and capitalists. It hates us and, of course, no-one can require of us that we should behave lovingly towards that government. But the treaty imposed formal obligations on both sides. I spoke yesterday at the Moscow

Soviet about how we organised detachments and sent them into Polish territory to destroy railway lines and blow up storehouses, but did this at a time when we were in a state of overt hostilities with Poland. As soon as we had succeeded in concluding a peace treaty, we stopped doing this. We had an apparatus for forming guerrilla detachments of that sort. We dissolved it.

There were impatient persons whose hatred of the Polish bourgeoisie impelled them to continue that struggle. But we said: 'Comrades: discipline and patience! A peace treaty has been concluded, such is the decision of the working class, its interests demand it. We are obliged to submit, we have no right to display impatience, no right to disrupt that treaty.' That is what we said. Our decision was dictated, of course, not by sympathy with Poland – factors of sentimentality have to be discarded here, there can be no question of sympathies or of antipathies – this policy was dictated by cold state calculation.

But among the Polish bourgeoisie, which is torn by different groups, there is no unity. Among them there are supporters of intervention at any cost. There are supporters of economic relations with us. There are adventurers who occupy responsible positions. And it is no secret to anyone that the 'Head and Chief of the Polish State,' Marshal Pilsudski, has always scorned the peace treaty, regarding it as a mistake and a crime. To tear Soviet Russia into separate, mutually hostile parts, to create a separate bourgeois Byelorussia, subordinate to Poland, to create a Petlyurist Ukraine (in opposition to Soviet Russia), under a Polish protectorate – that is the idea of this petty-bourgeois chauvinist, who fought against Tsardom and transferred his hatred of Tsardom to Soviet Russia. To create a federation directed against the Russian 'barbarians', that is the idea which grips him, day and night.

The policy of France coincides with this. I mentioned that chauvinism has started to show itself more strongly in France and that the French usurers consider the moment is ripe for intervention. 'While we cannot throw in our own troops,' they argue, 'the time has come when we can throw in the troops of Poland and Romania.' On September 3 the French Government called on the Polish Government, that is, its vassal, to present us with an ultimatum. This document, in which France demanded an attack on Soviet Russia, our diplomats managed to obtain. And before the Polish bourgeoisie, in the person of Pilsudski, could decide to address an ultimatum to us, we had already published a warning. The People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs declared to the whole world: 'A new, unheard-of crime is being prepared. The French stock exchange speculators are demanding that the Governments of Poland and Romania simultaneously present an ultimatum to Soviet Russia, and thereby start a new war, a new onslaught on Russia.' When Comrade Chicherin's note, which unexpectedly exposed this diabolical intrigue, was published, the French press asserted that it was a lie, a slander, and the British press said it could not believe its eyes, that it was improbable, that it must be verified. That note had been sent from Paris on September 3. And on September 18 we received a note from Poland, signed by the Polish representative here, who, on behalf of the Polish Government, presented us with an ultimatum which runs out on October 1, that is, in ten days' time.

What are the demands that the Polish Government puts to us? There is no need to enumerate them, for the essence of the matter is not to be found there. What is essential is that the Polish Government is not fulfilling the basic condition of the peace treaty, that is, maintaining peaceful relations. It is sending bands against us, it is directing Savinkov and other adventurers, such as Bulak-Balakhovich. [\[4\]](#) The Polish General Staff is actually helping these bands, arming them and providing

them with all the resources they need. At the same time as the whole official bourgeois world is talking about help for starving Russia, the Polish General Staff, and therefore the Polish Government too, like the Romanian, is arming bands with French money, sending them against us, destroying food-trains and killing workers engaged in collecting food. And it can now be said that all the world's bourgeoisie, with all their philanthropic aid, have not supplied half as much food as has been destroyed by the bands sent by the French bourgeoisie through Poland and Romania. Naturally, our diplomats have demanded that the Polish Government uphold the Treaty of Riga and stop sending in the bands. In Warsaw they said – and in these cases diplomacy has a ready tongue, especially when it comes to lies – that they knew nothing of these bands. We have captured from the bands dozens of documents and letters from officers of the Polish General Staff and Savinkov's White-Guard organisation, answers to these letters, financial accounts, requests and certificates for particular bands, provided both by Savinkov's White-Guard organisation and by the Poles. These documents are indisputable, irrefutable, they can be shown to any literate person and he will acknowledge that here is a most crude violation of the foundations of the peace treaty of Riga. When we established this fact, we declared: 'We are obliged, under the treaty, to return certain property to you and to make certain payments – that is quite correct. We are ready to do this any day, any time. Here is the property, here is the money that we have to pay to you; but we have to make these payments in accordance with the treaty, and not as a bonus for bandit raids. You have given us no guarantees that the raids will cease. Let a mixed commission examine all these documents, and let them give us guarantees that there will be no more bandit raids into our country.' That was the plane on which negotiations took place. We declared that a treaty is a two-sided document which imposes obligations on both parties to it. But the Polish Government, waving aside the question of the bandits, demanded that we pay the money and hand over the relevant property.

And just at that moment the French ultimatum landed on the head of the Polish Government – for it was essentially an ultimatum, since the French Government announced to the Polish bourgeoisie: 'Your country is ruined, you are threatened with complete collapse, your finances have reached the brink of bankruptcy: only financial help from France can save you, but France will not grant you that financial help unless you help to strangle Soviet Russia.' At the same time a similar note was sent to Bucharest, to Romania.

That is the picture offered by our international situation. The entire world's press writes: 'Before such a terrible natural disaster as we see on the Volga, no heart can remain unmoved. The Bolshevik Government is a criminal government, the Communist Party is a criminal party, but love for the starving calls for active help.' In France an international committee has been formed to help the famine victims, with as its chairman Noulens, Savinkov's chief banker, who was his banker when Savinkov organised the Yaroslavl revolt, who gave Savinkov his pieces of silver and who is now the intermediary between the stock-exchange and all the counter-revolutionary thugs. This same Noulens is at the head of the international committee for aid to starving Russia.

How does he begin? By demanding that he be allowed to send into Russia a series of fact-finding commissions. He has to send several dozen, several hundred persons, whose task it will be to ascertain whether aid is or is not needed, and in what form. Noulens, or his partner, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, addresses at the same time, ultra-secretly, of course, an ultimatum to the Polish and Romanian Governments: 'Now, when over there they are being wasted by hunger, when they

are writhing in torment, now is the right moment to attack Soviet Russia and the Soviet Ukraine.' Here, comrades, we see revealed the whole nature of the bourgeoisie, of bourgeois diplomacy, the whole of its morality. There has hardly been a case in history when the baseness, greed and perfidy of the bourgeoisie found expression in such concentrated, disgusting form.

In Warsaw they receive this note, and they hesitate, they know what an ultimatum means, they know that an ultimatum is often followed by military operations. In Warsaw they hesitate, and a struggle between parties begins in the Sejm.

The Witos ministry, a ministry of the petty-bourgeois Agrarian Party, is unwilling to submit to the French ultimatum, fears to begin a new war, foreseeing that its result will be the downfall of the bourgeois regime in Poland. Witos and his government resign. But not one party in the Polish Sejm is able to form a new government. No coalition is realised. A parliamentary struggle goes on, with squabbles and intrigues. This situation is exploited by Pilsudski, the President-Marshal, the 'Chief of the Polish State', and he forms his ministry of bureaucrat-officials. [5] I do not recall the name of the new Premier. He is an obedient tool in Pilsudski's hands. This new government of officials, carrying out the will of Pilsudski, who himself is carrying out the will of the French stock-exchange, has sent our government an ultimatum. 'By October 1 you must without fail do what we demand. If by October 1 you have not fulfilled our demand, we threaten to break off diplomatic relations. The Polish representative now in Moscow will leave, and, consequently, your Soviet representative will also have to leave Warsaw.'

Breaking off diplomatic relations does not yet mean war, but it has, in the course of history' often preceded war. When two countries, though not fighting, have broken off all contact with each other, it is obvious that this pre-determines danger of war. Today, when we have a representative of the Polish Government here, and in Warsaw there is a representative of the Soviet power, it is possible for us to work, to explain, to interpret. As soon as the representatives have returned to their own countries and communication between these countries has ceased, those elements that want war get to work with might and main. The mere fact that diplomatic representatives have been recalled is essentially a step in the direction of overt military action. We are at this moment faced with such a situation.

And Romania? Romania has just now begun peace negotiations, or, at least, has begun preparing for peace negotiations with us. Today, or yesterday, a Romanian plenipotentiary was due to arrive in Warsaw, to meet our representative and arrange with him what matters the peace negotiations should cover. The situation is extremely critical. And it would be either cowardly or short-sighted to shut our eyes to this fact. If we were to discuss the question of how to reply to the note from the Polish government, we should have to say this. We want peace, at any price. That is our fundamental desire. It may be that we shall make concessions to Romania in order to preserve peace. Where Poland is concerned, we are ready now, just as earlier, to make big concessions in order to secure the peace already once achieved. But we can only make such concessions as can really ensure peace, and do not, on the contrary, unleash the other side's aggressive vigour.

I know that the Polish Government is acting at present under the pressure of France's ultimatum. To the French Government it is a matter of indifference whether Poland receives certain locomotives and sums of money today, or in four months' or two months' time. The question of these locomotives, the question of

museum property, or of the repatriation, that is, the return to Poland, of certain groups of Poles – all these are questions that are absolutely without interest to the French stock-exchange. What do they need? What they need is to set Poland on us. Have they achieved this aim? In part, yes. They have created a government which has presented us with the ultimatum they needed. Let us suppose that we were to make the mistake of taking fright at this ultimatum. If we were to satisfy the demands of the ultimatum, would Poland leave us in peace? If we could ransom ourselves from the bourgeoisie not with the blood of Russian workers and peasants but at the price of real and serious concessions, we would be ready to do that. But is that how the matter stands in this case? Is the Polish bourgeoisie presenting us with some sort of vital demands? The Polish Government is merely the postman of the French stockexchange, and is presenting us with a provocative ultimatum so as to obtain a pretext for an armed attack upon us. If we were to make a mistake and say that we submit to this ultimatum, what would that mean? That the French bourgeoisie would at once tell Poland: 'See, in our note we forecast to you that the Soviet Republic is collapsing, and that it will accept any ultimatum, submit to any categorical and firm demand.'

But that is not so, comrades! Despite the very heavy blows of fate, despite the most fearful blow of all, the famine in the Volga region, we are certainly not weaker today than we were at the time when we were obliged to begin a major war with Poland. We are not weaker now, but stronger. We are stronger, in the first place, because we are more experienced, and, in the second place, because, despite our difficult conditions, we know better how to calculate what we have. We are stronger because our army has acquired more skills and has brought forward commanders from the very depths of society, from the workers and peasants. As soon as suspicious clouds began to appear on the Western front we put the question to ourselves: 'And what if the devilish schemes of France were to be realised and we were to be subjected to another predatory attack?'

You know that we are demobilising the army, that we have already reduced it to one-third of the size it had attained at the moment of maximum effort by our armed forces. But, while demobilising millions – and we did demobilise millions, which showed that we were seriously ready to maintain peaceful relations – we retained the cadres of all our divisions, cadres that had been tempered, having passed through a very serious school. If they were to force us to do this, we could again mobilise millions, and these would return to the divisions under whose banners they fought. Today, thanks to the work of our command courses – and, above all, thanks to the harsh experience of three years of struggle – we are stronger in the military sense than ever before. Finally, comrades, we possess a most powerful lever for struggle – our Party, and you, the spiritual offspring of our Party.

If the storm were indeed to gather over our heads, the Central Committee would, of course, summon the Party to those efforts and sacrifices, to that heroism, to which it has summoned us more than once already, never meeting with refusal.

I am putting before you the worst prospect, that of the possibility of a new war. But, at the same time, comrades, I do not believe in this prospect.

Romania will not dare to stake her own existence – Romania, which doubled her possessions during the war, which doubled them but has not yet managed to weld them into a united whole. If she were again to put the question to the issue of the sword, rebellion would undoubtedly break out at once in Bessarabia and in

Transylvania. Romania knows this. Everything tends to show that she must decline to carry out the French ultimatum.

In Poland, to be sure, Pilsudski is now the master of the situation, and the ministry is in his hands. Pilsudski serves France. But Pilsudski is not alone in the Polish arena. I mentioned various groups within the bourgeoisie which are struggling against him. But, besides them, there are also the Polish working class and the Polish peasantry. If Pilsudski decided, if he dared to carry matters to the point of a new war, he would have to appeal to the Polish worker and the Polish peasant. The Polish mark has fallen to a very low value. Poland is being shaken by strikes waged by workers seeking to improve their conditions. Poland's policy means that half of the country's budget is absorbed by expenditure on the army. All these are powerful factors telling in favour of peace. We shall not lose our calm and *sangfroid* for one moment. We shall appeal again and again to Poland's ruling circles and also to Poland's working

people, explaining the whole situation as it is: 'You want us to carry out the terms of the peace treaty. And we want to do that. Let us get together and give each other guarantees. Let the campaign by the White Guards cease, and we will pay compensation and fulfil all the other demands. We refuse to submit to the ultimatum dictated by France, because this is not a real demand, derived from the treaty between us, but a malicious provocation.' If we were to submit to this provocation, if we were to say that in this case we will make a concession, that would mean that we were merely lulling the vigilance of the Polish people, that we were unintentionally hiding from them the fact that the question is extremely critical. This would not be in the interests of the Polish people. We must say, frankly, that this ultimatum is a provocation dictated by France and that we can therefore give no reply to it but a vigorous 'No'. And that 'No' is at the same time a call to the working masses of Poland. It voices a fraternal warning to the Polish working people. We say that here, under this mask of diplomatic negotiations, votes and ultimatums, what is being decided is the question of whether the blood of Polish and Russian workers is again to flow in the Berezina and other rivers. By putting the question in such a way we shall explain all its implications before the working masses of Russia, Poland and the whole world. And that we shall do.

In these ten days that are left to us, we must make this question known and clear to the Russian workers and peasants and to the workers of the whole world. We shall do that. At the same time, we tell ourselves that nine-tenths, perhaps ninety-nine-hundredths of the evidence tends to show that by acting in this way we shall avoid not only war but even a breach of diplomatic relations. By pressure of public opinion, by the force of the will of the Polish working people, we shall compel the Polish bourgeoisie to take back their ultimatum and to negotiate with us in a businesslike way about our mutual relations – to negotiate, because there are now no questions that are not negotiable.

Nine-tenths or ninety-nine-hundredths of the evidence tells in favour of our avoiding fresh trials. But, comrades, one-tenth, one-hundredth still remains, constituting danger of a new armed conflict. We say to ourselves that, while working so that a hundred per cent of the evidence may tell in favour of peace, we shall at the same time prepare to meet a situation in which the odd one-hundredth may become a terrible reality. The danger of war is not precluded – it is not very likely, but it is not precluded. We must not forget that.

If it should turn out that the French bourgeoisie, backed by the most counter-

revolutionary and predatory elements of the world bourgeoisie, were to succeed for the last time in hurling the neighbouring states against us, we should then do our duty to the end. The working class of the whole world is following with anxiety and tension the development of the Russo-Polish conflict. We say: 'Vigilance, far-sightedness and coolness! Not one movement, not one gesture, not one word will you see or hear, coming from our side, that could exacerbate relations, that could reduce the chances of a peaceful outcome, that could facilitate the task of the counter-revolutionary provocateurs. All forces, all attention will be devoted to establishing peace, to restoring normal relations. And, at the same time, our brothers in Poland, Romania and France – be it known to you that, for all our coolness, we remain fully ready to defend the inviolability of the Soviet Republic, which is still the only citadel of the proletariat. We are ready to defend it with all our strength and with our hearts' blood!'

The French bourgeoisie thought that the famine had dealt a heavy blow to the foundations of our economy, that it had weakened us terminally, depriving us of will and energy. It seemed to the French bourgeoisie that a little push was all that was needed to make us collapse. They tried to hurl Petlyura's bands against us, on the Ukrainian and Romanian fronts, and they did the same with Savinkov's bands on the Polish front. They tried to get their tentacles on us in the form of a committee for philanthropic aid. They tried to turn that miserable, scrofulous Committee of Public Personages into a sort of bourgeois government, surrounding it with support, extending lines of communication from it to the international bourgeoisie, the European stock-exchange. Finally, among the most hostile section of the bourgeoisie, they spread rumours about Moscow being now under siege by hundreds of thousands of starving peasants from the Volga, about our defending ourselves in Moscow by means of asphyxiating gases and by appointing a general to command troops against the famine victims who were advancing on Moscow. A monstrous, wild fabrication intended to dupe the masses, so as to show them how easy it would be to march on Moscow, and, at the same time, a means of pressure on Romania and Poland. 'Over there, in Moscow, complete prostration prevails, one shove will be enough and they will fall.' That is not true. You and I, comrades, are not going to fall!

There are representatives here from the starving Volga regions. You know better than I, how hard things are with us. In the literal sense of the word, people are dying, and thousands and tens of thousands more human beings will die this winter. But what does this mean? What is the source of this calamity? It results from our economic weakness, from our insufficient culture, from our lack of experience. The working people are unable to fight against nature. Nature is beating them. People are dying in their thousands. But can this break the Soviet regime? The Soviet regime expresses the entire organised effort of the whole people. What is the Soviet regime? It is the organisation of self-help by the starving. It is the organisation of industry, the organisation of agriculture through increased consciousness and capacity for organisation among the peasants. It is the organised, armed self-defence of the workers and peasants when they are attacked.

In bourgeois countries the governments are in danger. Why? Over there antagonism exists, there is war to the death between the propertyless and the bourgeoisie. Here, that conflict does not exist. Here we have striving to help ourselves, here we have striving to defend ourselves. We may make mistakes, we may stumble. We shall get up again. We shall learn from our mistakes. In trials and misfortunes we shall become tempered. We say: 'You who hope to overthrow us

because of the famine, you see already today, and will see tomorrow, that we have come through the terrible disaster of the famine, and are the firmer for it, more confident, more ruthless. If you bring upon this hungry land which wants peace, which is, step by step, building a structure of economic well-being, the new disasters of war, then those same starving people who, according to false reports, are advancing on Moscow, will join together with the halfstarved (for we are, alas, a country of starving and half-starved people) and will say; "Yes, we have starving and half-starved people here, but we want to create on our land a society of labour, and we will not allow anyone to interfere by force in the accomplishment of our destiny."

And if the Soviet power should have to say to the workers and peasants, even to those who are discontented and grumbling: 'Comrade workers, comrade peasants, they are threatening us!', they would all answer, as one: 'We are ready!'

Young Communist League! If it should be necessary – may this cup pass from us – if it should be necessary to appeal to you again, and to say: 'The Soviet Republic is again in danger!', you will say, all as one: 'We are present!'

*Pokoleniye Oktyabrya
(The October
Generation)*

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Hungarian Soviet Republic was formed on March 21, 1919 and survived until August 2, 1919. See, on this, Volume Two, Book One, note 73.

The Bavarian Soviet Republic lasted from April 7 to May 1, 1919.

[2.](#) The Third Congress of the Communist International was held between June 22 and July 12, 1921.

[3](#) On this note see the speech in the Moscow Soviet, September 20, 1921, in Volume Four, p.348, and notes 8 and 50 therein.

[4.](#) The origin of the bandit activity in the Western borderland of our Republic goes back to the autumn of 1920 when remnants of Bulak-Balakhovich's division, on departing into Polish territory, left behind some bands and numerous organisers in order to prepare the ground for a general uprising in Byelorussia.

During the winter of 1920 as many as forty pogroms took place, 21 of them in Mozyr *uyezd*, where Bulak-Balakhovich's division was operating. The activity of the White organisations increased markedly during the spring and summer of 1921. The political and military centre of the bandits was in Warsaw (the Central Committee of the League for the Defence of Fatherland and Freedom) and was headed by B. Savinkov. Recruiting and supplying of arms went on openly with the closest participation of the Polish General Staff. In July 1921, after careful preparation, vigorous activity aimed at liquidating these bands was begun in Byelorussia. Already by September 20, 1921, the forty bands, with a total strength of 3,000 men, had been reduced to a mere 14 bands made up of 275 men. The attempts made by Savinkov and Bulak-Balakhovich, with the help of the Polish General Staff, to raise a revolt of the Byelorussian peasantry against the Soviet power ended in failure.

[5.](#) The Witos ministry resigned on September 12, 1921, and was succeeded by a cabinet presided over by Ponikowski.

The International Situation and the Red Army

I. The International Situation in the Autumn of 1921

Speech

At the Parade of the Moscow Garrison on the Day of the First Graduation of Red General Staff Officers, September 26, 1921

* * *

You all know that the Polish Government has presented us with an ultimatum. We are willing to make such concessions as are acceptable to us, but let not our enemies suppose that our Red Army has grown weaker. We did not and do not want, of course, to attack anyone, we want peace on our frontiers and honest, peaceful work inside our country. Proof of this is that, since the time that we concluded a whole series of peace treaties, we have demobilised a large part of the Red Army, considerably reducing its numbers, but the fighting capacity of our Red Army has not only been decreased as a result, it has increased, thanks to the great deal of work which has been put in to improve its qualitative composition. Whoever doubts the existence of our victorious armed forces ought to be present here, on Red Square. Here they could convince themselves that the Red Army is alive and that it is strong. We are all filled with desire that armed conflict may be avoided through the work of our diplomats, we hope that our diplomacy will bring results, but at the same time we tell our diplomats that if their intense work and striving for peace should be frustrated by anyone, contrary to our wishes, we all, as one man, with even greater strength and resolution than previously on our fronts, will defend in arms the Russia of the workers and peasants. We shall strive for peace, comrades, and at the same time keep firm hold of our rifles and sabres.

Long live the garrison of Moscow! Long live the Red General Staff Officers! Long live our Red Army!

September 27, 1921
Pravda, No.215

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Speech

At the Ceremonial Meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies, January 16, 1922

* * *

Comrades, the principal feature of the world situation continues to be its extraordinary instability. Before the world war, diplomats, politicians and military men (most of us were not among them in those days) were able to predict, by and large, the development of international antagonisms and agreements over a more or less lengthy period of time. There was the Triple Entente and there was the Triple Alliance. True, when the war began, Italy broke away from the Triple Alliance and joined the other grouping, but nevertheless, generally speaking, the various groupings which had been worked out over many years, even decades, by the staffs of the European states were maintained during the war itself, for Germany, Austria, Russia and France fought against those against whom they had intended and prepared to fight.

After the world war this relative stability and definiteness in world groupings and inter-state relations vanished, and has not returned. True, it is hoped that equilibrium may be restored with the help of the Genoa conference [\[1\]](#), but it is hardly likely that this equilibrium will be fully restored in international relations, in the sense in which this was usually understood before the last imperialist war.

The world has been shaken out of its equilibrium. The centre of gravity of world forces is wandering around and finding nowhere to settle. At the time of the Versailles negotiations it seemed (not to everyone: it did not seem so to us) that the centre of the world was Versailles and Paris, that France had become the mistress of Europe, for Monsieur Clemenceau presided at Versailles. We remained sceptical about this, and we were proved right. Already at that time the domination of France bore a fictitious character and duped the simpletons whom tawdry brilliance deludes. In reality, it was Britain that then dominated Europe, and France was allowed to do only what Britain considered compatible with its dominant position in Europe. Britain ruled the seas and considered that it had the right to possess a navy stronger than the combined navies of the two naval powers next in rank. But, before very long, this domination by Britain proved to be limited in character.

After Versailles we witnessed Washington. The United States refused to join the so-called League of Nations, which is nothing but an outwardly decorative cloak for Britain's domination over Europe exercised through the sham militarypolitical domination of the Continent by France. The United States refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles or to join the League of Nations. Conscious of the preponderance of her industry and of her gold reserve, America appeared at Washington in order to re-fashion or to finish what, in her opinion, had not been sufficiently well and truly accomplished at Versailles. The centre of gravity of the capitalist world edifice was moved from Versailles to Washington. Washington attempted, first and foremost, to

calm and pacify the so-called Pacific Ocean, which, however, is fraught with major international storms. An attempt was made there to reach an international agreement based on gradual international disarmament. France, intoxicated by her imagined autocratic power, was sure that at Washington she would be able to turn the world antagonism between Britain and the United States to her advantage and so secure a majority for the solution for which she would vote, and in this way strengthen her domination.

Briand left for Washington hoping for success in a diplomatic game he had played more than once in the French parliament. To the proposal to limit land forces Briand replied in the negative. He pointed out that the Versailles peace required not the reduction but the strengthening of France's armament. And this is correct. France was maintaining with an armed hand the system of slavery, the aggregate of contradictions and ruthless hostility which over the last three years we have been in the habit of calling the Versailles peace. When it came to the question of naval armaments and their possible limitation, the break-up of the former Entente was revealed in full clarity, even to the uninitiated.

France miscalculated. She miscalculated in that Britain turned out to be more realistic than might have been expected. Britain had also totted up her stock of gold, her navy, her shipyards and so on, and compared them with the United States. She became only too clearly aware that the British pound sterling, which was accustomed to being the ruler of the world money market, had long ago been forced to take a big jump downwards, to a quarter of its pre-war value, in comparison with the American dollar. And as a result of her calculations, Britain agreed to accept the equalisation of her navy with that of the United States. Thus, after her struggle against Germany for world power, for universal domination, after her struggle and her victory, Britain is now no longer the first naval power, as she was before the war, and dare not even contemplate her navy equalling the combined navies of the two next strongest naval powers. At present the navy of the United States is not yet equal to the British, but it will catch up in the near future.

France, however, refused to reduce her navy, and, in particular, her submarine fleet. Briand, infuriated by his failure at Washington, openly defined the French position when, on leaving Washington, he said to a French journalist: 'Britain wants to keep her big warships. Let us assume that she needs them in order to catch sardines in the seas and oceans. If that is the case, then we French want to have submarines so as the better to study the vegetation of the sea bottom.' I request you to remember that this is how the French Premier spoke about the British navy. We are dealing here with the relations between two very close allies, Britain and France, who saved themselves from our barbarism, two powers which came together in the name of the highest interests of civilisation. Read the articles that were written on the eve of 1914 – although this reading will not, of course, be too pleasant a task, for such tastelessly hypocritical literature can evoke only disgust. Read them so as to compare what was being said then with such talk as this: 'We will fight alongside you, but you possess big ships, to catch sardines with, and since that is the case, then we will acquire little ships with which to study the bottoms of your big ships.'

The work having been finished at Washington, a new location has been named where it is to be carried further. This is beautiful Genoa, and it is presumed that the equilibrium needed by Europe will be found there. We have been invited to go there, and it may be that we will take part in the work of the conference. However, things are not quite so simple where this matter is concerned. The great disorder

that exists in inter-state relations will be revealed there. Certain states will not be too willing to participate in a conference to which Soviet Russia has been invited. And we must observe that it will be hardest of all to turn France on to this new path. It has to be said that Lloyd George has applied himself to this problem as strenuously and energetically as when, formerly, he set the counterrevolutionaries upon us. It took him a lot of trouble to win Briand over to agreeing to participate in the negotiations, and in reply to Briand's objections he delivered a speech which our Rosta reported in full. [*Rosta* was the name of the Soviet state news-agency until the formation of *Tass* in 1925.] He said in this speech: 'France, by negotiating, in the person of Bouillon, with Turkey [*By the agreement made in October 1921 between Franklin-Bouillon and Kemal France broke the Anglo-French united front against Nationalist Turkey.*], has shaken the Eastern bandit by the hand, yet now she grimaces (I do not know what was the actual word used by Lloyd George, but the meaning was just that) and refuses to shake the hand of the Northern bandit.' By the Northern bandit Lloyd George means, of course, us. As we do not make a particular issue of etiquette, leaving that to the mandarins of the bourgeois delegations, we are ready to accept his not very flattering description. He also said: 'When you go to international negotiations, prepare for the worst, and take with you a bar of disinfectant soap, because you will have to shake all sorts of hands.' He implied here the hands of bandits of the North and of the East – but, let me add, every other sort, too. We have always borne this circumstance in mind in our international relations, and we also carry disinfectant soap in our pockets on such occasions. How Lloyd George eventually convinced Briand is hard to know, but the fact is that the Washington fiasco knocked away a large part of France's arrogance, and Briand, on returning to Paris, sensed that France's international position had become much more difficult.

Eventually, after reckoning up certain assets – and France's stock of gold is in a far from brilliant condition – Briand informed Lloyd George that he agreed to take part in the negotiations. Conditions were drawn up for the invitation to us, and these were, in good time, printed in all our newspapers (you may remember them, if, in your spare time, you read the papers). These conditions amount to this, that, first, if we want foreign capitalists to do business with us, we must guarantee the inviolability of the capital which is to be invested in this trade. So long as capitalists exist in the world, that is absolutely unquestionable, and treaties must be honoured one hundred per cent. Then there is talk, if I am not mistaken (it is not my job to study diplomatic notes – that's for a different department), of standards of civilisation, and so on. It seems to me that we are well prepared on that score, and if we are properly received at Genoa, there will be no misunderstandings about civilisation, and we shall hold our own. Then they talk, using some unclear expressions, about the old state debts and the claims of the old capitalists. Since these debts are commercial matters, it will be necessary to discuss and bargain where they are concerned – how we are to pay, to whom, over what period of time, what we are to get in return, and so on. I think that we shall not violate the laws of civilisation within these limits. It would thus seem that the negotiations have begun under the most favourable of auguries. Comrade Chicherin had some differences regarding the location of the conference: but whether it is to be Genoa or London is a matter of the technique of passenger travel, and agreement can be reached on that point without any difficulty.

I mentioned that we watch what is going on in other countries: we follow the press and obtain information by all sorts of means, so as not to form our policy blindly, and it became known to us (I do not now recall from what source, but it is an established fact) that, when Briand yielded to the arguments of Lloyd George, he said that it was all very well, but it would have been better if the change in policy

towards Soviet Russia had been accompanied by a change of commissars, bringing in persons more congenial to France. Personally, I do not know which of us is more and which less congenial to *la belle France*. I assume that in France they keep two such lists; but the instability of the world situation is best characterised by the fact that before these more congenial persons could appear on the scene, the author of this demand had himself been deprived of his portfolio and his presidency of the French cabinet. [2] The causes of his downfall are, naturally, connected with the fact that Soviet Russia has been invited to Genoa. We do not doubt that at Genoa, I repeat, we shall carry on discussing until we reach the most useful results, which will strengthen world equilibrium. But it is not pointless to observe that certain governments are losing their natural equilibrium before they have got near Genoa – and that does not apply to France alone.

It applies, judging by the latest news, to our nearest neighbours, such as Romania, where they are expressing doubt whether the government of Take Ionescu, which specialised in the most reckless, criminal, insolent and dishonourable baiting of Soviet Russia, can really stand firm in an atmosphere of impending negotiations, even under the bourgeois regime in Romania. For it must not be forgotten that at the very moment, perhaps, when radio-telegrams were on their way to us from Italy and London, inviting us to the Genoa negotiations, they were still shooting from across the Dniester at our sentries and peaceful inhabitants. In the last few days treacherous bullets have killed one of our sentries on the Dniester, and also a woman. The government of Take Ionescu, which shot down a Red Soviet sentry and killed a peasant woman of our Rightbank Ukraine, is impelled by a feeling of revenge for unrealised advantages – because when the Soviet Federation repeatedly offered to negotiate with Romania, at a time when our situation, both internal and international, was very much more difficult than now, Romania could undoubtedly have reached an agreement with us such as she will never get henceforth.

Now, when we have been invited to Genoa, not only Romania but also some other countries will probably become convinced that gratitude is not the sentiment that guides the policy of imperialist diplomacy. The European powers, with France and Britain at their head, tried to separate all mankind from us, as from a focus of infection. They tried to form, from six states (five of these having been detached from Russia), from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, an impenetrable barrier between the West and Soviet Russia. These six states were to have been transformed into six tombstones placed over us, over the Soviet Federation. Some of them carried out France's orders with all the energy of which they were capable.

Poland, in the first place, reckoned that her service to France would not go unrewarded. Romania thought the same. But one does not need to be a prophet to say this: if we succeed in achieving an agreement (and we shall), then all the services rendered by Poland, Romania and Finland in the struggle against us – their services in bloody banditry and active support of counter-revolutionary White-Guard activity – will be left unpaid for. The great powers will write all that off, and will open current accounts for their new relations with Soviet Russia. In any sphere of politics, and especially in the international sphere, naivety, verging upon stupidity, naivety stained with blood, is never a factor tending to victory. And the calculations of the small countries that their petty bandit blows struck at Soviet Russia would be rewarded by the great imperialist powers when the accounts of peace were finally drawn up, constitute naivety, bloody naivety, verging upon stupidity. It does not follow from this in the least, comrades, that the services of the small and middle-

sized states are no longer needed by the great powers. I did not mean to say that: it is clear to everyone, it follows from the unlucky case of Briand.

What is the morrow preparing for us, on that side? Two sorts of prediction can be made here. Either the attempts of the new government to wage a ruthless struggle against Soviet Russia, against our whole federation, will be shipwrecked on resistance from Britain, in the first place, and then from Italy and other countries, and, perhaps, as we should like to hope, on the indirect resistance of the United States – and then the French parliament, having relieved their hearts by overthrowing Briand, will entrust somebody else with the task of carrying out Lloyd George's proposal, and Briand's successor will be sent to Genoa to negotiate with us. We wish with all our hearts for this outcome, because we hope that the participants in the conference at Genoa will learn something and will advance the cause of real peace. However, it is not impossible that the fall of Briand signifies a change of course in French politics. A France which has felt that she is wholly dependent on a Britain which is consciously sharing her domination of the world with the United States, a France which, after the Versailles peace, had a majority for the so-called Bloc National, and which is the most chauvinistic, most intransigent state in all Europe, may, with a sudden jump, revive the policy of aggressive military intervention against Soviet Russia. And if one could measure historical possibilities in precise figures, I should say that we are faced with equal possibilities – 50 per cent for one outcome, 50 per cent for the other. Either France will go to Genoa and even, perhaps, try to bar Britain's way by arriving the sooner at an agreement with us, so as thereby to safeguard her own interests or she will take the road of renewed intervention, that is, she will urge in that direction the states lying on our western border. There are arguments for both outcomes, theoretically both are equally probable, and, this being so, it means that we have to be ready for either – both for, let us hope, successful diplomatic negotiations at Genoa and for a new blow from the West.

The anxiety now being felt by the rulers of Bucharest, who fear that they are being chucked aside like squeezed lemons, is fully in accordance with the unease they feel in Warsaw regarding the fate of the Polish agency of French imperialism. We should, of course, welcome in every way the transformation of this agency into a commercial agency for dealings with the Soviet Federation, for Poland's industrialists, Poland's merchants, as intermediaries and agents of the French stock exchange, would be, of course, if not dearer (that word is not appropriate), then at least more useful and acceptable to us than the Polish general staff officers who, with French money that is, with money from that same French stock exchange, are arming our own bandits who have been driven out of Soviet Russia.

You know about the position of Finland, which nearly involved itself in war with us. Finland is fighting us for the territory of our Karelia, which belongs to our federation, and she is doing this so openly that we know very well the names of all the Finnish officers whom the Finnish high command has sent on leave and who, after changing their names, are spending that leave in Karelia, at the head of armed bands, firing on Red Army units and slaughtering the Communists whom they come upon unarmed. [3] Finland has submitted the Karelian question to the League of Nations.

What the League of Nations is, you all know. It is a painted Chinese dragon which is supposed to symbolise law and other imponderables. I am reminded of how the former French minister Loucheur said, with great irony at our expense, that though they did not recognise the Soviet Republic, we recognised their Supreme Council. [L.

Loucheur was France's Minister for the Liberated Regions, and, later, Minister of Commerce, under Poincaré]

Of course, comrades, we recognise everything that exists. What is the Supreme Council? The Supreme Council of the Allies is a collective fist which is aimed, first and foremost, at us, and we recognise this fist, and it is all the same to us what it is called in international law. A fist is a fist. The League of Nations is the shadow of that fist, which has tried to assume a super-democratic, super-civilised character. And there are some simpletons, not to put it differently, who pray to this shadow of another fist, offer sacrifices to it, address petitions to it, in the way that Finland has done. Let us give up these simpletons as a bad job, and walk on by. Perhaps life will teach them something in the coming months and weeks.

We recognise the Supreme Economic Council and the Supreme Council of the Allies, and we recognise that now, with God's help, they are splitting at every seam. This is the basic fact of international politics. Read the articles which the British press is writing about the fall of Briand. They speak in the tone that people use on the eve of a bloody conflict. We need, comrades, to take account of all these possibilities, we need to keep our eyes wide open, to listen with some acuteness – to have our experience about us and to be able to perceive both a fist and its shadow. That is the duty of every serious diplomat.

The class which is now in power in our country began its historical run-up from a long way off, and in the course of decades moved forward, making its way through very great difficulties and learning from its mistakes. It is the task of our Party to know this collective lesson, which is now rendering us great service in finding our way in the international situation. But this is ideological preparation, it stays with us in its entirety and will not leave us: we also need, however, another sort of preparation, in case France takes a line against us, preparation which is not ideological but material, which amounts to this – having a sound, strong and united Red Army. The chairman reminded you of this at the beginning of the meeting, and it was spoken of by the Ninth Congress of Soviets, which was above all filled with the idea of safeguarding peace and economic development.

When you utter that word 'peace' (we have not invented a different, clear Soviet word) you do not feel inwardly sure whether you should utter it or not, for so many have talked about peace in the world, starting with the Hohenzollerns and their enemies, who understood by peace fresh predatory conquests as the result of war. But we, comrades, have no need to convince each other, we all know well the state of mind of the worker masses in the factories, we all know very well the state of mind of our Red Army.

Our army wants peace above all, and we are striving, above all, to attain conditions in which we shall be able to reduce the size of our army. Even our enemies, those among them who have a drop of common sense in their heads (there are such) understand that, given a real safeguarding of peace, a real possibility to develop, to raise the level of culture in our devastated country, we shall apply ourselves to peaceful economic work with the same ardour with which we fought at the fronts.

Nevertheless, the Ninth Congress of Soviets, while completely taken up with the striving for peace, pointed at the same time to the need to strengthen the Red Army. The interval between the Eighth and Ninth Congresses of Soviets was a protracted period of demobilisation, contraction and reorganisation of the army. All our attention was concentrated on this work. The country sought to obtain from the

army what it needed: the factory looked to receive its skilled men, the village its sturdy, grown-up workers, the Party its Communists, the trade unions their executives, while the organs of the state looked to receive those big and numerous material resources which had been at the disposal of an army numbering 5,300,000 men. This work of contracting and weakening the army had been wholly completed by the time of the Ninth Congress, and that congress said: 'Stop demobilising, stop contracting, and throughout the winter concentrate all efforts on strengthening the combat-capacity of the Red Army. And, to this end, ensure that it has all that it needs, one hundred per cent.'

Comrade Lenin spoke about that in his speech, it was mentioned in the resolution on the report on the military question, the leading representatives of all the Soviet Republics of our Federation spoke about it, and, finally, in the concluding declaration of principle and in the concluding resolution, in which all the work of the Ninth Congress was summed up, it was said, clearly and distinctly, that the first task was to ensure that the army had all it needed, one hundred per cent.

While, comrades, our Soviet state, given all the difficulties with which it is encumbered, cannot always and everywhere satisfy the needs of the Red Army to the full extent of one hundred per cent, there did, at any rate, arise at the Ninth Congress, out of our collective consciousness, the idea of a closer rapprochement between the Soviet power and the army, at the centre and in the localities.

The army, which owed its birth to the collective of workers and peasants, which emerged from the Soviet apparatus in Moscow, Petrograd and the provinces, did not at first sever the umbilical cord binding it to the Soviets, for the armed Soviet workers who had become Red Army men thought that within a week or a month they would return to their work.

But as the Red Army beat its enemies and drove them further and further from the centre, as it moved further from the centre into the borderlands, it became increasingly cut off from the fundamental sources and foci of the workers' and peasants' Soviet strength. It became separated from them, of course, only in the material sense, for spiritually it never lost contact with them – on the contrary, it was inspired by them, defended them, and for their defence it gave its life and its blood.

And now a breathing spell has come, which we hope will be a very long one, which we should like, but do not hope, to last forever, enabling us to return our divisions, batteries and battalions to the centre, to the Soviets. We see how the Soviets, which sent the army to the front, are now encountering it in altered form: it has been regenerated and has changed its own position, and those tempered workers from Petrograd and Moscow who were the leading element in it now constitute only a minority in its ranks. This is a young army, made up to a considerable extent of raw peasant material, but, at the same time, it is a properly organised army, an army with its own revolutionary fighting traditions, which, though they do not go far back in time, are rich in content. The army now returns to its Soviets like that hero of antiquity who drew close to the earth in order to acquire fresh strength.

This idea of Soviet patronage, of a very close organisational and material link between Soviets and army units, arose among us almost in the last few days, and has already managed to put out strong shoots: we already have divisions which are proud to bear the name of the Moscow Soviet, divisions which will fight and, if need

be, die under the banner of the Moscow Soviet.

In this matter of patronage, the Moscow Soviet, as is proper for the country's centre, has shown an example which is already bringing results in the localities with every day that passes. District and local soviets are already raising the question of transforming every barracks into a comfortable hostel for our young citizens armed with rifles, in which they can be taught and educated.

An army is the material weapon of every ruling power, but in bourgeois society the army is proclaimed to be outside of politics. Our army, however, cannot be outside of politics – on the contrary, it must be the conscious weapon of the working class. Where the army stands outside of politics it perceives the state power as a principle standing above it, alien to it and ruling over it from some inaccessible height. The Soviet power, however, stands alongside the Red Army, it is today in this hall: in all the districts, in the persons of the members of the Soviets, working women and peasants, it looks into the barracks, into the cookhouses, sees whether they are clean and neat for the preparation of those meagre provisions which the workers' and peasants' state can spare for the army.

And our young Red Army man, who in 1917 was a youth, whose mind was first awakened by the thunder of the October revolution, who went to the front and fought for the Soviet power blindly, from feeling, who saw in his village only the village or *volost* soviets, can now see, in the towns, what Soviet power really is. He sees that Soviet power is harmonious and organised work, that Soviet power is not something external to the population but lies in the population itself, that Soviet power, which he defended in arms, is a power which is fighting for a new form of life and politics.

I think that the Moscow Soviet will carry out in the course of the whole new period persistent and sustained work aimed at drawing closer to the army. Not long ago I read in a newspaper that we are backward in the sphere of accounting and systematic economic work. That is true, but it is something that can be put right: we promise you that we will learn and will correct our mistakes. During this winter we shall introduce order, and whatever you give to the army in the course of this winter will be taken over by a better and better organised organ of Soviet power. During the coming year we shall re-educate our army thoroughly. We shall make it fully aware of our policy, whatever the prospects may be that await this army. If the spring brings us peace, we shall welcome it. If we have to fight, we shall fight, and fight to the end. I do not doubt (and in this no offence is meant to other soviets), that those regiments which have passed through the school of the Moscow Soviet will occupy the foremost positions. I do not doubt that the Red banners which you see in these halls will fly over the most dangerous places in our fronts. I do not doubt that, defending Soviet Russia and its heart, Moscow, these regiments will give their lives with the cry: 'Long live the Moscow proletariat and the Moscow Soviet!'

From the stenogram of
the Moscow Soviet

Endnotes

1. At the end of December 1921 talks took place between Lloyd George and Briand concerning relations with Soviet Russia and German reparations. At a conference held at Cannes on January 6-13 it was decided, on the initiative of Lloyd George, to convene a general peace conference, to

be held at Genoa at the beginning of March 1922, in order to solve the Russian and German problems with the participation of Soviet Russia and Germany. As a result of a ministerial crisis in Italy (the fall of the Bonomi cabinet), the Genoa conference was postponed, and it did not open until April 10. At the first session the head of the Soviet delegation, Comrade Chicherin, raised the question of universal disarmament, pointing out that only in this way could a peaceful situation in Europe be ensured. The representative of France, Barthou, protested against this move, saying that the Cannes Conference had restricted the scope of the Genoa Conference to questions of an economic and financial character. The Soviet delegation's proposal was therefore not accepted.

Where the question of the restoration of Russia was concerned, the Allies took as their basis the London Memorandum of Allied experts, in which it was provided that, as a condition preliminary to the rendering of economic aid to Russia, the Soviet Government must recognise the obligations of previous Governments, restore private property belonging to foreigners, and compensate foreigners for losses sustained. These demands were presented to the Russian delegation at the conference. In reply, the Russian delegation put forward on April 15 a counter-proposal for compensation to be paid for the losses inflicted on Russia by the Allied intervention. After negotiations, the Russian delegation on April 24 made the concession of agreeing to withdraw the demand for compensation for losses, on condition that the period allowed for payment of debts was lengthened, that credits were made available to Russia, and that the Soviet Government was recognised *de jure*. Differences arose between the states of the Entente on the question of restoring the property of foreigners in Russia. Britain and Italy renounced this demand, but Belgium particularly insisted upon it. France wavered, but eventually supported the Belgian view. Agreement was not reached at the Genoa Conference on the questions under dispute. It was decided to convene another conference, where further negotiations could take place, at The Hague, and a four months' truce between all the states was signed. [The 'truce' was a non-aggression pact based on provisional respect for existing *de facto* frontiers, without prejudice to their ultimate settlement.] The conference closed on May 19.

2. Briand resigned on April 12, 1922, after the Cannes Conference, and was replaced by Poincaré.

3. On the events in Karelia, see note 51 to Volume Four.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Speech

At the Celebration of the Fourth Anniversary of the Red Army at the Military-Academy Courses for Senior Commanders of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, February 18, 1922

* * *

Comrades, it is after long delay, due to a whole number of reasons, that I appear before the flower of our commanding personnel. Comrades, we are at present, on the one hand, at an eve-of-festival moment, preceding the fourth anniversary of the creation of the Red Army, and, on the other, at a very significant moment in the international situation of the Soviet Republic and of the whole world: we are before the fourth anniversary and before the Genoa Conference. There is some connection between these two dates, because, if we are now able to send a delegation to Genoa, the credit for this goes to our army, that Red Army which, though rough, formless in the past, chaotic and poorly trained, already covered itself with glory and saved our country internationally, established our revolution, and opened and paved the way to a most responsible international conference. Since you all follow the latest news, I can add nothing to this, because I know no more about the forthcoming – or, may I say, the non-forthcoming – conference at Genoa – than is known to any others present. If anybody thinks that there is somebody in the world who knows more than we do, he is mistaken. The international conference at Genoa is now the ideal point of intersection of an immense number of wills, interests, endeavours, intrigues and all kinds of diplomatic approaches and tricks, and since it is proposed to invite forty states, not all of whom, to be sure, possess decisive importance, and since all of these states have their own plans and schemes, it is quite obvious that this ideal point may never be realised. There are some whose interest it is to wreck the conference, others who are interested in having it take place. In Britain, the Government, in the person of Lloyd George, has, so to speak, linked its fate with the forthcoming conference and its success, whereas the French Government, the present one, has linked its fate with the sabotaging of this conference. But we, comrades, approach this proposed conference with complete tranquillity. If it is held, we shall take part in its work, which will do us no harm. If it is not held, we shall say: we'll wait.

If the conference were to take place without difficulty, that would mean that they had come to an understanding, and they can do that only if their understanding is directed against us: it would mean a united front of 39 of the participants against the fortieth, because we are on our own against the 39 others.

If this conference were to take place quite smoothly, having been prepared at the pre-conference meeting, the rehearsal which is now being held in order to make a fresh attempt to smother us, that would be very sad. But they will never reach an understanding among themselves. They are going to the conference with a whole heap of antagonisms, and we are going with a keen-edged weapon so as to intensify those antagonisms to the utmost. If we are not going to have a single

reliable ally, and that will be the case, then on every question it will be one against all the rest. If any of them disrupt the conference, that will mean that we have reached an understanding not with everyone present at the conference but with some of them separately. All the better – it was not we who convened the conference, and it was not we who disrupted it. We waited patiently, refraining from reply to provocation after provocation, but answering in the most courteous fashion (so far, of course, as our breeding allows), in the politest language. And if they break up this conference, we shall negotiate separately with those who have not reached an understanding between themselves. Some advantage will come from this, too. We shall not lose from either conjuncture. We shall play our game with cards on the table and, in the last analysis, without losing. If we can play our game in these circumstances it is only because we possess a Red Army which has already passed through its most critical period of demobilisation and reorganisation. And a certain ideal shadow of this Red Army – its spectre – will be present at Genoa, if the conference does take place. To this shadow, this spectre, our diplomats will politely point their fingers, when this becomes necessary: the Red Army exists.

One of the most important questions in the world of diplomacy is the reduction in the size of the Red Army, disarmament of the nations, lightening of the arms burden. We are ready to take that road. Welcome! Welcome! Disarmament, or at least reduction of the army? Splendid: but where reduction is concerned we need to have a definite yardstick. If, Messrs diplomats, you want to know our opinion, we have a programme for this purpose, it is called the European, and later the World, Soviet Federative Republic – the most reliable road to disarmament and pacification in Europe; but we shall not meet, in Lloyd George and Poincaré, enthusiastic collaborators, so to speak, in taking that road – oh no! We can say: let us try applying palliative measures, by way of reducing the army. You say that the Red Army is a threat to peace? Give us, then, the yardstick, the numerical coefficient, of an army that will not be a threat to peace. Here, for you, are the fundamental data – territory, population: give us the coefficient that will determine the legal, permissible, legitimate, non-threatening numbers for the army, and let us come to an agreement. The coefficient will be in our favour. If they say that we are too poor to have a big army, we shall reply: yes, we are poor, that's true. With your help, Messrs French and British, we have been made extremely poor; but what follows from that is that military technique is less good in our army, it means that we have to make do with numbers, and so, where we are concerned, the coefficient ought not to be lowered but, on the contrary, somewhat raised. Finally, with whom are the numbers of the army to be compared? If with the present French Republic, well, of course, it is richer than we are. But the French Republic knew a period of revolutionary wars, when it was surrounded on all sides by British intrigue. And if you take the numbers of the revolutionary army of those days, which saved France, if you compare that figure with ours, it will leave ample room for increasing the size of our army. Give us a yardstick, give us a coefficient for determining the lawful, legitimate numbers of the army. Some so-called democrats, our Mensheviks in particular, are striving to ensure that a question of some delicacy for us, the question of Georgia, gets brought up at Genoa. Georgia, they say, was seized by armed force, and so they demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops and a free consultation of the inhabitants. An excellent programme: we are ready to discuss it with them. Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Georgia? So, then, they see Georgia as a colony, a conquered country? That is nonsense, of course. But, for the moment, let us adopt that point of view. Let troops be withdrawn from colonies. We withdraw from Georgia – not, of course, the Georgian troops, but the all-Russia troops – and you withdraw from India, from Morocco, from Tunisia, from Algeria.

Don't forget, we, too, have learnt a little geography. Then we ask: why are the troops to be withdrawn? They will say: so that the Georgian people may make a free decision. But a free decision depends not only on the presence or absence of Russia's troops in the territory, but on the absence or presence of the British fleet near the shores of the Black Sea. When the Georgian peasant sees that a landing may take place in Georgian territory at any moment, from British vessels, that Georgian peasant will not feel, as you wish he should, that he is in a position to decide freely. What is the solution? We withdraw our troops from Georgia, for example, and you withdraw your fleet from the Black Sea. Where to? To the Mediterranean. But the Turkish Straits are now wide-open gates for Britain to pass through. So, perhaps, the Turkish Straits should be closed against warships? That, of course, will not decide the matter, but, all the same, it will bring us somewhat nearer a solution. And, having closed the Straits again, should not the key be given to Turkey? But, after all – the last and weightiest argument – Georgia is not a colony. What happened in Georgia was the same as happened here in the old Russia. Did the Soviet revolution as they imagine it, happen anywhere in any different way? We, you see, brought to Moscow Lettish, Chinese and Bashkir troops in order to seize power, and into Georgia, of course, we sent Muscovite troops. If, in accordance with the laws of history, a Soviet revolution took place in Latvia, then that was carried out, of course, not by Letts but by men from the Urals. Speaking generally, it is a characteristic of ours that, when making revolutions, we always fetch troops in from somewhere outside, whence they are brought by some mysterious route, and these troops from outside implant everywhere the will of the working masses, establish the Soviet order, and banish, or expel through the trapdoor at Batum, those Mensheviks who really were supported by imperialist troops from elsewhere. Thus, the given question will be turned round, so to speak, and we shall have very weighty arguments against our enemies. I must admit that I am very doubtful whether they will find a coefficient that would compel us to reduce the size of our army to numbers smaller than we have at present. And although we should be very glad if this happened, I should commit a crime ill were to indulge in the optimistic hope that the Genoa Conference would enable us to effect a further decisive reduction of the army. That is unlikely – not through our fault, through theirs – and we have spoken publicly about that on more than one occasion. Just because, at Genoa, all questions will be posed in a precise way, and it will not be possible simply to postpone them to an indefinite future, but they will have to be answered, yes or no, that very circumstance may bring new harsh conflicts nearer. And we can say with satisfaction and a certain pride that the working masses of our country possess a profound political instinct, awakened by the revolution, which finds expression in the increased attention paid to the Red Army which we are now noticing. What is happening at the present in Moscow and throughout the country in the matter of Soviet patronage of the army, that is, establishing links between soviets, particular organs, institutions and trade unions, on the one hand, and units of the army, on the other, the enthusiasm which this is arousing among the workers, who are not at all sentimental, who have seen some very depressing sights – all these are facts of immense importance. Our Red Army has evoked among these tired masses, who have endured much, very profound concern, which is expressed not only in meetings but also in a whole number of practical, material sacrifices by the soviets, by the organised working masses, for the sake of the Red Army. This is a fact of very great importance. They will learn that at Genoa.

The first period of the Red Army was a period of great internal difficulties. Just after the imperialist war, the peasants did not want to join the Red Army, or else joined it doubting whether they really needed to: the workers, too, joined without

full confidence, and state coercion played a very important role in the period of our first mobilisations. Today a complete and profound change has taken place. It is due to the fact that the country's consciousness has to a certain extent become defined, that the people have taken account of the international situation which has been formed, and, as a result, the Red Army appears in the thinking of the working masses as a necessary and salutary organ of our country in this very difficult national situation. This achievement, which has resulted from experience, this very profound turn in the people's psychology, after the horrors of the imperialist war, after the first semi-revolution, after the October revolution, after our four fronts, or, more properly, one encircling front, this is a colossal achievement of the people's consciousness, upon which we shall build the army. Already this army is unshakable!

In connection with all these conditions, comrades, a question which assumes decisive importance for us is that of raising the level of the army's skill. This is a fundamental question! What we have least of in every sphere is good assembling of parts and polishing to the finest degree. Certain comrades are turning their minds nowadays mostly towards broad military generalisations, sometimes towards so-called new, unified, universal military doctrines. I, comrades, am much more cautious where this question is concerned. I think that our generalisations can embrace such a wide field – in fifteen or twenty years' time. What we are lacking in is certainty that every nail shall go where and how it ought to go. In military matters this is of colossal importance: it applies everywhere, but even more than elsewhere does it apply in military matters. Here we have defects, blunders and mistakes, and we have to pay for these ten or a hundred times more than in any other sphere. By this I do not mean that our Red Army, its Academy, or the Revolutionary War Council that leads it are preparing to clip anyone's wings, to curb the flight of creative thinking in the military sphere – no, never, in no case! Whoever has something new to say, whoever shows insight into the future – such insight is possible, if it is firmly rooted in experience – whoever can anticipate new prospects in military matters, is welcome, and we will back him up in every way. But for collective creativity in the military sphere, as in any other, real success is possible only on the basis of steady consolidation and elaboration of what has been achieved, of the practices established, and working over experience won. The individual thought of an individual genius in the military sphere may, of course, be engendered according to those obscure laws of nature which have yet to be investigated: but raising the general military level of the army is quite a different matter. In this, inspiration can play no part. Here we have to operate with minute particulars, to plant grains, to strengthen and rear them, starting by teaching everyone to read and write, so that we have not a single illiterate Red Army man (the task we have set ourselves to accomplish by the First of May), and so that our commanders, our new sturdy, strong commanders may not cease to polish their military knowledge, both practically in war and theoretically in the intervals of truce. If I speak against the self-deception in the expressions 'new military doctrine', 'unified military doctrine', that does not, of course, mean, comrades, that I am afraid of a really new contribution in the military sphere – let us have it, we shall all welcome it, develop it and apply it. But what I fear most of all is that from this may grow the superficiality which lulls and hypnotises with high-sounding words and enables people to avoid learning just because somebody has promised to produce from his waistcoat pocket, not in 24 days but in 24 hours, a military doctrine, a new discovery, a new doctrine that will be a universal specific. No, this will only take shape if we have firmly mastered, rammed into our consciousness, that which has been done up to now, that which has been acquired by military experience in the

broadest sense of the word. While we are not obliged to apply our minds to the Punic Wars, we must study, and study properly, our own civil wars and the last imperialist war.

The fact that at these courses in the Military Academy I see, as instructors, old comrades whom I met in the North and in the South, in the East and in the West, who commanded our divisions, brigades and even armies, shows that the danger of getting hypnotised, the danger of falling into cheap selfsatisfaction, is not so terrible, and so the army will not suffer spiritual depreciation.

We went through a first period, which was a period of very chaotic improvisation – our first year. The second and third years were a period of most desperate struggle on all fronts, with the aid of the more or less stout and fit units which had been created by that original improvisation, and which got better in the course of struggle. The fourth year was the year of our reorganisation and demobilisation, a year of very painful internal operations by the army itself. And the fifth year, if we are not going to fight, will be a year of study, of preparation, of raising the level of skill, of making more precise, adjusting and polishing. Only in this way shall we progress.

In concluding, I express my very great and sincere pleasure that these tempered warriors of the revolution, divisional and brigade commanders who led our glorious Red Army in the most difficult circumstances and who have been decorated by the Soviet Republic with the Order of the Red Banner – how many are sitting here who have won that decoration repeatedly! – that these stout Red fighters, revolutionary wolfhounds, have come here to study in this time free from other occupations. This is the real public opinion of the Red Army. We shall not trust anyone who wants to say something new in military matters just on the basis of what he says, but shall demand: show us. We learn from experience, and not only from books. Show, link with experience – for superficiality in military matters is the most terrible of enemies. And you, the flower of our commanders, you, the salt of our Red Army, you will not allow that superficiality to appear among us. The fifth year will be a year of industrious, persistent, steady and honest study.

Long live our military studies, long live the flower of our commanders, our Higher Academy courses, and long live our Red Army!

*Voyennaya Nauka i
Revolyutsiya, 1922, No.1*

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Listen and Get Ready, Red Army!

Speech at the Ceremonial Meeting of the Moscow Soviet Devoted to the Fourth Anniversary of the Red Army, February 23, 1922

* * *

Comrades! We make the anniversary of the Red Army coincide with today's date because the decree on the creation of the Red Army was issued exactly four years ago. In fact, however, the Red Army was born together with the revolutionary proletariat at that moment, at that unknown hour when the first revolutionary worker took up a revolver – but why a revolver: a stick or a stone! – in order to aim it at the head of Tsardom and the bourgeoisie, in the knowledge that he was fighting not just for his own destiny but for that of the whole working class. That first moment, which we shall never establish and which no historian will ever determine, was the real birthday of the Red Army. Pacifists smelling of incense do not and never will understand that.

The Red Army is the organised and armed embodiment of the proletarian revolution. I happened today to come upon an article by a foreign Socialist who even thinks he is a Communist. He preaches that the fight against militarism must never cease, no matter what protective colouring this militarism assumes. The emancipation of the proletariat, he assures us, can be attained only through solidarity and not through force, bloodshed, 'the methods of militarism'. This sort of superstition, worthy of the most miserable Tolstoyan, still finds shelter in the heads of some persons who consider themselves revolutionaries. For us, who have made a revolution, there can be no question of embracing under the single concept of militarism the military system of the bourgeoisie and the Red Army. For us the army is an organised, armed section of the working class, which fights for power, takes power and defends what it has taken.

Through all its four years, the history of the Red Army has been the history of the working class in struggle. The first period of this history consisted of hasty, feverish and often helpless attempts to arm the advanced detachments of the working class. I remember how, at the time when the Brest-Litovsk negotiations broke down and German imperialism launched a new offensive [\[1\]](#), the workers of Moscow and Petrograd were seized with militant enthusiasm. We received telegrams from Comrade Muralov about how the workers everywhere were demanding to be armed, about how, everywhere, revolutionary regiments were being hastily formed. But when, after a week, we counted up the forces that we had managed to create, a miserably tiny figure emerged – not even thousands, barely hundreds.

And the whole of the first year was spent in such attempts, which expanded in concentric circles. We built units under the blows of the enemy, we made many mistakes, we staggered between two extremes – between attempts to reproduce completely what had existed earlier, that is, to pour new content into the old, ready-made, familiar form, and a rush to create in a very short time an army such

as the world had never seen before: to turn its defects, its military naivety and ignorance, its lack of organisation into heaven knows what revolutionary advantages. This wavering between routinism, looking backward, and what I will call revolutionary superficiality was inevitable in an epoch of sharp change such as ours.

However, with these hastily organised units we fought. There were battles when, very often, we blocked all the breaches in our front with the best working-class elements of Petrograd and Moscow, of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the Donbas and the Urals.

We began this meeting by honouring the memory of the fallen. One day we shall collect their names, write them down, and count – how many precious lives of the best human beings, how much enthusiasm, how much ability and devotion lying there at the different stages of our hard struggle against enemies who were better organised, armed and trained than we were.

Looking back, and starting from the experience which we have won, you sometimes say to yourself: 'How could we ever have conquered with the forces that we had in 1918?' Our army was numerically weak and badly organised – and if we won, it was only because this was not an 'army' in the ordinary sense of the word, but the embodiment of the revolutionary working class. Precisely because the revolution of the working class was the bearer of a new idea against the old one, its enemies were unable to withstand it. The revolution steadily broadened its basis: despite all the instability and vacillation of the peasant masses, the revolution steadily embraced them and bound them to itself.

In 1919 and 1920 we fought with what was already a better weapon of struggle. But in that period we counted on our fight at the fronts merging, any day, with fronts that would stretch over the body of Europe, from us to the West, that would extend, we were sure, all across Europe. We hoped that the war we were waging would merge with the proletarian revolution in the West in the next few months, perhaps weeks.

Week followed week, month followed month – and the fourth year was upon us. The Red Army exists, but the revolution in Western Europe is developing far more slowly than we had hoped four or five years ago. The revolution is, of course, developing, and the reports that were made at the conference of our International by the most responsible leaders of our brother-Parties testify that the International is advancing, firmly and confidently, and that the bourgeoisie draws nearer to the abyss with every succeeding month. But the iron chest of bourgeois society in the West is too strongly put together and is being broken up too slowly. When its component parts have been shattered, when it seems that just one more shove is needed and everything will fall apart, it turns out that in this stout, centuries-old structure there is still inertia enough, still sufficient conservatism, which serves in place of living links [6#8211](#); and the old edifice continues to hold out, and requires fresh efforts, renewed pressure on the part of the working class.

We have had to adapt the structure of our Red Army to these new conditions of the international situation. Reckoning that the revolution may take a long time, we have been obliged, in the first place, to seek agreements on practical questions with the bourgeois governments which exist today.

In the second place, we have been obliged to make use of the unwished-for 'breathing-space' which has been given us, between the Russian revolution and the

world revolution in order to consolidate, strengthen, organise and train the Red Army.

From the experience of these years we have learnt to value the creative force of revolution. We know that revolution performs miracles, that it raises up the oppressed strata of the people and enables them to set their hands to the building of their own destiny. But at the same time we are infinitely remote from revolutionary arrogance, from revolutionary conceit, from revolutionary bragging, which supposes that it is enough to set up a revolutionary regime, and all problems have been solved. The revolutionary regime is only the scaffolding for the new culture. In order to build the new culture we need to learn how to erect the new edifice stone by stone, brick by brick. And that fully applies to the army.

While we invariably emerged victorious from our struggle against the White bands, the struggle will be harder when we come up against better technique, a higher level of leadership and more efficient organisation. We have already learnt to speak the truth to ourselves. We had as many failures as we had successes. The fact that we won so many victories bears witness to our real strength: to the fact that our Red Army was composed of material such as no bourgeois state in the world possesses. But, in spite of that, all our efforts must be directed to converting the rude framework of our edifice into a real house – a house in which the walls stand properly, a house that will be properly roofed and glazed. And this careful work has to be done now, since we could not do it in the first years of our struggle.

True, we are now going to the Genoa Conference, to make peace. We are going, but as yet we have by no means arrived. Our diplomat comrades, it appears, are in no hurry to purchase their tickets to Genoa, because the bourgeoisie (judging by the telegrams printed in our papers), in their quest for 'economic equilibrium', are upsetting that equilibrium, now at this point, now at that. In France the government which shared in the decision to hold the Genoa conference has now been overthrown: Briand has been replaced by Poincaré. We were invited to Italy – but hardly had the Italian Government of Bonomi made its generous gesture of hospitality than it too was flat on its back. [2] Subsequently we have had reports that Lloyd George is very tired. His job is, of course, extremely fatiguing, but, all the same, it is strange that his weariness should have intensified just now, at the moment of the Genoa conference. Does all this mean that, among the ruling classes, as the Genoa conference draws nearer, those elements are coming to the top who do not want to reach agreement with us, and who have decided to link their fate with that of the renewed intervention about which the émigrés talk in foreign gateways [Translated here as 'gateways' is the Russian word for the space under agate – through which dogs are supposed to growl at each other.], reports of which percolate through into the White-Russian press, and about which we receive information from our friends abroad? In any case, these frequent rumours of a new intervention and the intentions of our neighbours, both close and distant, combine to constitute a threat to us. This threat is, not, of course, such as could arouse panic here: however skilfully our enemies may plan their schemes, we have, after all, grown stronger indeed, we have grown cleverer in all respects.

Though the revolutionary movement is not strong enough to overthrow the bourgeoisie today, it is nevertheless strong enough to give the bourgeoisie a definite and perceptible shove. The fate of Soviet Russia is again being weighed in the great world scales. And while today one scale of the balance swings over Genoa, the other scale, the bloody one, may at the last moment prove to be nearer to us.

This is why we observe such tension at the centres and in the armies. Six months ago, and, especially, nine months ago, we saw a striving here to take away from the Red Army as many forces and resources as possible. That was a quite comprehensible tendency: it was a reaction after the terrible strain which had lasted for three years. In the present month, in the month of intense discussions about recognising us and of talks concerning the Genoa Conference, we see something different. We see a movement for fraternisation between the working people and the army, patronage by soviets, trade unions and particular institutions over units of the Red Army. When we put forward the idea of attaching military units to Soviets, none of us was to any degree hopeful that this movement would develop so quickly and produce such splendid results in the weeks that followed.

What does it mean, the fact that individual soviets, factories, institutions and unions are hastening to 'adopt' individual units, to get close to them and make a fuss of them? It means that, among the Russian working people, the revolution has awakened a true, infallible instinct of revolutionary statesmanship. It means that the Moscow proletarians, both men and women, have absorbed from our scattered speeches, articles and telegraphic reports, from the entire situation and the surrounding atmosphere, this conclusion: the struggle between historical forces is now traversing a certain critical point, and this critical point may mean, with equal likelihood, either recognition of Soviet Russia, that is, a new, prolonged breathing-space for us, or a new blow struck at us, a new bloody struggle, more severe and more decisive than all the wars that lie behind us.

Nor is that all: the revolutionary state instinct prompts the thought in our men and women proletarians that the chances of deflecting the bloody scale of new war this spring will be the greater the more distinctly and sharply the shadow of the Red Army shows up on the diplomatic screen at Genoa.

Our diplomats, the revolutionary representatives of the Soviet Republic, must have inner confidence that their decisions will be backed by all the workers and peasants of Russia.

And if they say: 'We shall not make such-and-such concessions', that will mean that the whole working class and the whole peasantry will repeat after them a resolute 'no'. But it is not enough to say 'no'. One needs to be able to defend one's 'no' from those who want to force down our throats their own 'yes'. When we reject the unacceptable importunities of the imperialists, we shall do this relying not only on the revolutionary consciousness with which we were armed – alas, armed only with that! – at Brest-Litovsk: no, we shall be firmly aware that, behind us, is the organisation, experience and armament of the Red Army.

We should have wished that the Genoa Conference had taken place as soon as possible. We are interested in establishing normal, proper economic relations. But if it is postponed, we shall not waste the period of the postponement. Postponement of the conference will mean temporary victory for the interventionist elements of the bourgeoisie, and so intensified danger, and it will demand that we take great precautions and make great preparations. Therefore we say: Red Army, every week that the Genoa conference is put off shall be a week of training and preparation for you! We shall not waste the time: the time that they oblige us to lose in the field of diplomacy we shall use in the field of organising and strengthening the Red Army. And the resultant of this parallelogram of forces will be in our favour.

Our preparation – we have spoken about this on several occasions, and it was confirmed by the Ninth Congress of Soviets – is, above all, preparation, in the soldier, of the revolutionary citizen. We have to raise our young men in the army to a higher level, and, first and foremost, to rid them decisively and finally of the shameful stain of illiteracy. By the First of May there must be not a single illiterate soldier in the Red Army ... You, the Moscow Soviet, you, the district brigades and schools – the Red Army asks you, the Red Army expects of you, that you will not let anyone remain illiterate among your 'sons' in the great family you have adopted. You will give them teachers, you will help them master the elementary technical means whereby a man can become a conscious citizen.

Literacy is far from being everything, literacy is only a clean window on to the world, the possibility of seeing, understanding, knowing. This possibility we must give them, and before everything else.

We must give every Red Army man a clear and precise idea of who our enemies are and who our friends, tell him about this in the simple and clear words in which one has to talk to the worker and peasant youth who are without political experience.

We must teach our Red Army man to look at the whole world with a clear, free and bold revolutionary gaze. All the superstitions inspired by the sorcerers and priests of all religions must encounter clear and distinct criticism in the honest, frank language of materialist science.

So, each warrior, whether he be worker or peasant, must know and understand that at the basis of the world lies the law of change of matter, that everything living is the product of a long process of change, that man has behind him an immense chain of ancestors, reaching back to the first, elementary living organism, and that this same man has, in his subsequent development, taken his destiny into his own hands, that he is going forward, opening up new worlds, casting down all rulers from their thrones both heavenly and terrestrial, and saying: 'No, I do not need any sovereign lords – I am man, organised in socialism, I am the master and the ruler of all things . . .'

This pride, this revolutionary consciousness, which cuts the umbilical cord of old superstitions, this proud awareness, we must give to the Red Army men of all categories – not forcibly, but through intelligent, persistent and scientific propaganda.

Another of our tasks is this, to ensure that our army approaches the soldier's trade as a complex art which requires study – the mastering of skills, the repetition of experiments, criticism and tireless work upon oneself. Our fifth year will be a year of study. With the same enthusiasm, self-sacrifice and conscientiousness with which the advanced workers' followed by the peasants, fought and died at the fronts of the Civil War, we shall in the coming months master the most correct military methods, military organisation, technique, tactical and strategical procedures.

No self-deception, no illusions! History may face us with a task of very great gravity: a moment may come, and in the very near future, when the dimensions of the revolutionary movement in the West will still not be strong enough at once to overthrow bourgeois society, and the bourgeoisie, sensing the proximity of the decisive onslaught, will put forth its last desperate effort to crush the Russian nest

of world revolution. In two or three months events of the greatest importance may take place. In the last analysis, of course, history will set everything right, the proletariat will triumph – because, if the bourgeoisie were to succeed, in the last hour of its own life, in driving an iron roller over the Soviet Republic, that would mean, even so, not the end of the social revolution, but only the end of our existing soviets; and we know that a new generation would then arise, on our bones, to carry on the fight for our cause.

If, of course, in Germany or in France, a victorious proletarian revolution should develop before the bourgeoisie tries to launch its final attempt to fall upon us, so much the better. Even then, however, I think the Red Army would not prove superfluous. But if, instead, the revolution is delayed, and the bourgeoisie hurries to forestall it, we shall have an army which is materially and morally strengthened, wholly adopted not only by the working class as a whole but also, in detail, by individual workers' organisations – an army which has learnt from its experience of four years of struggle, has absorbed it, and has purged itself of errors: an army which has become stronger than it was.

That is why the increase in interest in, attention to and love for the Red Army which we have observed recently here in Moscow, and one of the expressions of which is this present ceremonial meeting, is a symptom of immense revolutionary-historical importance. This attention shown by the working people imposes upon us, workers in the War Department, twofold, tenfold responsibilities.

You, comrades, representatives of the units in Moscow, like all the army workers throughout Russia, must all say to yourselves that this new, repeated adoption of its Red Army by the working class demands from the army that it be worthy in all respects of its adoptive father. And that means, first and foremost, that the Red Army must conscientiously apply itself to its duties, paying attention to every trifle. That means that, where the axe is used, we must hew and round off as accurately and well as possible. That means that we must remember that in the soldier's trade there are no trifles, no unimportant matters, no *bagatelles*. For it is out of trifles, details, supposed '*bagatelles*' that victory or defeat is made – and we want victory.

Comrades! On the day of the fourth anniversary we firmly resolve to prepare for renewed struggle, if they should force war upon us; and, by all the signs, that danger is not past. For the end of the conflict between labour and capital is still far off. The bourgeoisie will not leave us in peace. And since the danger is not past, since we shall have to fight, we shall fight properly ... And on the day of our fourth anniversary, here, in the name of the Moscow Soviet, we must send out a call to the Red Army throughout the whole land: 'Listen, get ready! Prepare for struggle and prepare for victory! The Moscow proletariat, the head and heart of Russia's proletariat, is with you, Red Army!'

From the stenogram of
the Moscow Soviet

Endnotes

[1.](#) On the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and the German offensive see note 20 to Volume One.

[2.](#) On the fall of the Bonomi Government, see note 60 to Volume Four.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Order No.268a

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army
and the Red Navy, February 28, 1922, No.268a, Moscow

* * *

The Genoa conference has been postponed.

The Red Army and the Red Navy have followed with maximum attention all the preliminary negotiations in connection with the international conference. The workers and peasants in the army, like those outside the army, counted on the possibility of practical agreements with bourgeois states being achieved at Genoa, so that the Soviet frontiers could be secured and our forces concentrated on peaceful labour. In particular, the whole country, and along with it the Red Army, hoped that it would be possible to reduce still further the armed forces of the republic and release more of the older age-groups.

These calculations and hopes have now been dealt a new blow by the governments of the Entente. Those same governments which issued invitations to the conference and fixed the date for it to meet, are now starting openly to abort it.

At the same time, rumours and reports are coming from every direction to the effect that, in all corners of the world, the White Guards are stirring themselves at the prospect of the coming spring. There is again talk of invasion by bands, landings, the blowing up of storehouses, acts of incendiarism and assassinations.

Soviet diplomacy will, as before, make every effort to promote the holding of the conference, so that at the conference practical agreements may be reached, and so that, consequently, it may be possible to carry out a further decisive reduction in the arms burden. But in the situation created by the countries of the Entente we have not now, and cannot have, the slightest confidence regarding the actual security of our frontiers.

I hereby order:

- that every Red Army man and every Red Navy man shall have explained to him the essence and meaning of the international situation which has come about; that commanders and commissars show the greatest vigilance; that intense work be carried out for the training of the troops; and that it be firmly kept in mind that the real independence of the Soviet Federation and the inviolability of its socialist construction depend on the consciousness, solidarity and courage of the Red Army and the Red Navy.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Japan at Genoa and at Vladivostok

* * *

The Japanese Government is represented at Genoa. At Genoa it is going to construct peace and prosperity in Europe and throughout the world. At the same time it is represented at Vladivostok. It maintains its troops on the land of Russia's workers and peasants on the pretext that order and civilisation are insufficiently safeguarded there. In the name of order and civilisation' the Japanese Government is supporting in the Far East corrupt bandits, atamans, hired leaders of black gangs, it is setting them on the Russian working population, arming and feeding them, and protecting them from the armed rebuff of the workers and peasants. This regime of dishonour and baseness has already gone on for years. Artificially maintaining a state of bloody anarchy in the Far East, the Japanese Government thereby creates motives for the continued maintenance of its troops on the land of Russia's workers and peasants' and then, by means of these troops, supports and increases the bloody anarchy that prevails. To this it must be added that the Far Eastern Republic is governed by the methods of formal democracy, while Japan is a bureaucratic absolutism based on a regime of castes. There is a worthwhile theme for meditation both by the diplomats at Genoa and by the diplomats of the Second and the Two-and-a-half Internationals.

The forces of the Far Eastern Republic have again beaten the Whites – as so many times already – and are irresistibly advancing, sweeping away the remnants of the White-Guard bands sent by Japan on to Russian territory. But now Japanese troops have appeared from behind the scenes. Despite the fact that they had been warned by the Far Eastern Republic (1) of the forthcoming advance by the revolutionary army and (2) that this army had absolutely no intention of engaging in hostilities against the Japanese forces, the latter opened fire in a frenzied way, from rifles, machine-guns and artillery. The revolutionary forces withdrew without firing a shot, having suffered 30 casualties killed and wounded. [\[1\]](#)

In the name of the maintenance of order, democracy and civilisation, the troops of Japan, that is, of a caste monarchy, have again killed thirty [*sic*] Russian peasants and workers on Russian soil, on the soil of a little democratic republic. We shall put this down to their account, and that account we shall present, sooner or later, at Genoa or elsewhere.

April 11, 1922
Izv. V. Ts. I. K., No. 82

Endnotes

[1.](#) On the general situation in the Maritime Province, see notes 38 and 53 to Volume Four.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Order No.271

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic to the Red Army
and the Red Navy, April 13, 1922, No.271, Moscow

* * *

To be read to all companies, squadrons, batteries, task-forces and ship's crews

On April 10 an international conference opened at Genoa at which representatives of Workers' and Peasants' Russia are negotiating with representatives of bourgeois states about the establishment of peaceful, businesslike and, in particular, normal trading relations. At the first session of the conference the leader of the Soviet delegation, Comrade Chicherin, proposed to all the states *all-round disarmament*. Barthou, the representative of the French capitalist republic, at once spoke against the Soviet proposal, declaring that if it were discussed the French delegation would leave the conference. The representative of Great Britain, Lloyd George, proposed that the question of disarmament be not discussed. For the time being, this question was removed from the agenda. Furthermore, the bourgeois telegraph agencies tried to remain silent about the very fact of Comrade Chicherin's proposal.

What does the Soviet delegation's proposal mean? It means that we sincerely want peace and are ready to disarm, on condition that those who up to now have attacked us shall disarm at the same time. What is the meaning of the refusal by capitalist France to discuss our proposal? This refusal means that the capitalist countries and, in the first place, victorious France, want to keep in their hands a mighty weapon for crushing and oppressing the weak and unarmed.

Soldiers of the Red Army! Seamen of the Red Navy! We wish complete success to the peace initiatives of our representatives. We hope that the peoples of Europe will compel their warlike bourgeois rulers to listen attentively to the demand for peace between the peoples. But so long as the bourgeois governments answer our proposal for all-round disarmament with a categorical refusal, each one of us must stand firmly at his battle station.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Order No.272

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, April 14, 1922,
No.272, Moscow

* * *

'Keep your powder dry!'

Herewith, for information, an order issued to the Revolutionary War Council of the Caucasian Military District and the Revolutionary War Council of the Caucasian Special Army:

At the meeting of the three Internationals held in Berlin [\[1\]](#), the Social Democrats, present and former ministers in bourgeois governments and devoted agents of the bourgeoisie, raised the question of restoring in Georgia the rule of the Mensheviks, that is, of the petty-bourgeois agents of Anglo-French capital. Following that, the official diplomatic representative of capitalist France, Monsieur Barthou, raised at Genoa the question of inviting to the international conference the former French agents in Georgia, in the person of the Zhordania Government. These facts testify that the European, and in particular the French, stock-exchange is striving to cut a way for itself, at any price, to the riches of Caucasia, and, especially, to the oil of Baku. Past experience shows that the democratic declarations of European diplomats are usually followed by armed invasion by Wrangel and other hirelings of capital.

I hereby order:

1. That every Red Army man shall have explained to him the possible consequences of the insolent intervention by French diplomacy.
2. That vigilance be redoubled and powder kept dry.

Endnotes

[1.](#) In December 1921 the Executive Committee of the Communist International adopted theses 'on the workers' united front and on the attitude to workers belonging to the Second, Two-and-a-half and Amsterdam Internationals, and also to workers who support the Anarcho-Syndicalist organisations'. After the adoption of these theses, negotiations began with the Second and Two-and-a-half internationals. On April 2, 1922 a meeting of delegations of the three Internationals was held. A resolution was passed at this meeting in favour of convening in the near future a conference of the three Internationals. Before the first session of this conference, on May 21, 1922, a meeting took place between the British and Belgian Labour Parties, which belonged to the Second International, and the French Socialist Party, which belonged to the Two-and-a-half International, at which it was decided to convene a conference of all the socialist parties, without the Communists. The failure of the conference of the three Internationals was thus decided in advance, and its first session, in Berlin on May 23, 1922, proved to be its last. [At this conference the Second (Labour and Socialist) International was formally reconstituted. (May 1923).]

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Speech

At the Parade on Red Square, May 1, 1922

* * *

Comrade Red Army men, commanders, commissars and all of you – representatives of workers' and peasants' Russia!

Our military festival today coincides with the great festival of the world working class. Today, the First of May, we, the Red Army, pronounce together for the first time our solemn oath to the working class of our country and of the whole world.

The Red Army exists in so far as Soviet Russia as a whole exists. Our Red oath was created in the first weeks of the Red Army's existence. But then there was no time for us to take, as one man, the revolutionary oath of loyalty to the working class. We swore it at the fronts, amid passionate battles against the enemies of the working people, the hirelings of the capitalists. And in those battles, which defended and saved Soviet Russia, and the memory of which will survive from century to century and from generation to generation, the Red Army was tempered as the armed force of the whole world.

We were invited to distant Genoa, to negotiations which turned out to be a market-place. They proposed that we pay the old Tsarist debts, that is, that we pay for the blood shed by the workers and peasants who died, under Tsardom, to ensure the triumph of British and French capital. They demanded that we pay for the factories and the land which once belonged to foreigners who plundered the Russian workers and peasants. They said that they were ready to recognise us if we paid two ransoms – one for the Tsar and one for the revolution – and if we agreed to become not Soviet Russia but an enslaved Russia, the slave of capital.

We replied: 'No! Russia, in the persons of her workers and peasants, did not shed her blood in order to become a slave.'

We offered an agreement on common rights and all-round disarmament, we proposed that we live and labour in peace.

They refused, and showed thereby that their minds are filled with bloody schemes for the future.

And today, on the First of May, we, the Moscow garrison, in the presence of the Moscow Soviet, the representatives of the central institutions of the Republic and the leaders of the working class of Russia and the whole world, have assembled on this Red Square in order to declare that we, the soldiers and workers of peasants' Russia [*sic*] [Presumably a misprint for 'the soldiers of workers' and peasants' Russia'.] of peaceful revolutionary labour, looked toward Genoa with hope, but with justified mistrust. Our hopes have now grown smaller, our mistrust has increased. And here, before the representatives of the working people, we give our solemn promise, our

revolutionary Red oath, that we remain and shall continue to be the armed hand of the working class, that we shall be true to it to the end, to the last drop of our blood.

I call upon you, comrades, to take this oath with pure thoughts of the very great tasks and aims that it implies. [\[1\]](#)

Isv. V. Ts. I. K., No.96

Endnotes

[1.](#) For the text of the oath see Volume One.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

From Talks

With Representatives of the Foreign Press About the Genoa and Hague Conferences

* * *

I

Genoa showed that the most outstanding diplomats of Europe do not understand the present state of affairs, if they suppose that the Russian workers' revolution has not opened up a new epoch in world history, but is merely an ordinary event which can be eliminated by force of arms or by persuasion.

At Genoa they want to force us to change the form of property established by the working class and restore the old form. This is tantamount to our demanding at Genoa that Europe's capitalists should change their form of property and hand over the factories and mines to collective ownership by the working class.

At Genoa two forms of property are disputing. Particular agreements between them are possible, but not through changes of principle, only through practical arrangements based upon the interests of both sides. If the problem is not solved at Genoa, the economic position of Soviet Russia will be restored in the future much more slowly than it could have been, and Europe's economic collapse will happen much more quickly.

As for France, it is drawing near to the biggest catastrophe in the world, which will begin with a financial crisis. French policy is a policy of desperation. In any case, no one can follow it.

America stands aside from the conference. It will thereby secure the possibility of a better orientation and a better solution of the question. It cannot, however, follow the line of the advice which Hughes [C.E. Hughes – Secretary of State in President Harding's administration, rejected a Soviet approach advocating trade relations with the USA in 1921.] has tried to give, that is, to dictate to us the forms of our country. It was not for the sake of this advice, these instructions, that we went to Genoa, or that we shall cross the ocean.

I hope, nevertheless, for a victory for good sense, first of all in America and then in Europe. Genoa is not the last word in negotiations. In the event that the Genoa conference breaks up, there will be a certain interval in negotiations, after which, I hope, they will be resumed in a more vigorous and practical tone.

I do not think that failure at Genoa will mean the beginning of military operations against us. We proposed disarmament, but met with refusal. Instead, they proposed that we pay enormous sums to foreign capitalists who acquired their property by exploiting the labour of the Russian workers. We refused.

Can it be imagined that any government would be victorious if it were to hurl its

troops against us, in order to punish us for wanting peace and not wanting to pay indemnities to foreign capitalists? I do not believe in intervention, but, if it comes, the Red Army will do its duty.

Pravda, May 7, 1922,
No.100

II

'Have the chances improved for the success of the Genoa conference?'

If the Genoa conference were to adopt, even if only in part, the Soviet delegation's proposals, and were to try to create guarantees of mutual non-aggression and maximum reduction in armaments, that would be a big step forward. Can it be doubted that practical financial and industrial agreements would then follow automatically, even if not at Genoa?

'May Russia reach agreement with a group of Entente countries excluding France and Belgium?'

If the government of Lloyd George and the Italian Government will separate the question of pacifying Europe and lightening the burden of armaments from the financial claims of Mr Urquhart and other capitalists [\[1\]](#), it will be fully possible and desirable to arrive at agreements within the limits of the fundamental and profound difference of world-outlook and system of property.

'What line will the Soviet Government follow, in the event of the failure of the Genoa Conference, in order to arrive at agreements with European countries and with America?'

It will follow the line of strict and complete fulfilment of the international obligations we have assumed and practical implementation of the guarantees we have announced for private economic initiative in the internal life of our country, on the one hand; and on the other, the line of firm explanation, on the basis of experience, to European and American capital, that the Soviet Republic is an unshakable fact, that it has been constructed according to its own methods, its own principles, with which they must reckon and to which they must adapt themselves.

'Is the Russo-German treaty an alliance between Russia and Germany as a counterweight to other groupings of European countries? [\[2\]](#)

Germany is separated from the Soviet Republic by the same basic contradictions of property-systems as the countries of the Entente. This means that it is not possible to talk of the Rapallo Treaty as being some sort of offensive-defensive alliance to counterbalance other states. It is a question of re-establishing the most elementary inter-state and economic relations. Soviet Russia is ready today to sign a treaty with any other country on the basis of the principles of the Rapallo Treaty.

Talk of a secret agreement, of a military convention is obvious nonsense, to which hardly anyone will accord serious importance. *[Secret collaboration between the Reichswehr and the Red Army had, in fact, begun in 1921, before the Treaty of Rapallo.]*

'Are there symptoms that might point to the possibility of a new war, of renewed intervention by France and her vassals, Poland and Rumania, in the event of failure of the Genoa Conference?'

I do not believe that renewed intervention is possible. True there is no lack of attempts by the Russian counterrevolutionary émigrés, in alliance with the most imperialistic elements of Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia, to go over to active operations. But since the programme of Soviet Russia will, after Genoa, be clear to the peoples of Europe and to our nearest neighbours, I do not think that the necessary minimum of good sense will be found lacking in Warsaw, Bucharest or Belgrade, to give a rebuff to the adventurers.

'To what extent is the Soviet Government interested in an agreement with the government of the United States? In particular, would it be possible to grant advantageous concessions to American citizens in Siberia, to counterbalance Japan's demands?' [\[3\]](#)

The United States is the richest and economically most secure country, and so Russia is most interested in establishing economic relations with that country. American expansion in Russia can assume a commercial and industrial character. Japanese expansion has and strives to maintain a military and aggressive character. It is quite clear that we are interested in an economic agreement with the United States both from the standpoint of the interests of our economy and from that of securing additional safeguards against the purely annexationist, bandit policy of the Japanese ruling cliques.

'What significance do you attribute to the recent statement by President Harding concerning recognition of Soviet Russia?'

I should like to understand President Harding's statement as meaning that the traditions of Wilsonism where the Russian question is concerned have been liquidated, and that the American Government wants to reckon soberly with the real state of affairs in Russia. If this psychological turning-point is at hand, then an agreement is assured.

'What foundation is there for rumours about negotiations said to be going on between the Russian Government and British entrepreneurs about offers to the latter of concessions in Russia's oil industry?'

I have no concrete information about these negotiations, but I do not doubt that our oil resources constitute an enormous field for investment by foreign capital, both in rationally exploiting existing fields and in prospecting for new ones. The conduct of these negotiations is in the hands of our Commissar for Foreign Trade, Krassin. I cannot say, precisely, what role is being played in these negotiations, at the present moment, by British entrepreneurs. But I do not doubt that if Lloyd George would finally turn his back on Urquhart's ultimatums and ensure the success of the military and political agreement, economic negotiations would follow immediately, and one of the first items in these negotiations would be the oil industry of the Soviet Federation.

Izv. V. Ts. I. K.,
May 18, 1922, No. 109

III

You tell me that the chief of the Polish General Staff, General Sikorski, expounded a theory to you according to which the reduction in the size of our army signifies at

the same time an increased threat to Europe and the whole world.

I can say nothing about this clever theory until it has been published and its basis explained. It is incompatible with the principles of Euclid and the laws of logic. Perhaps it may somehow be founded on Einstein's theory of relativity. I repeat, in face of this theory ... I am unarmed.

We proposed to Poland, as also to our other neighbours, a conference for the purpose of a further decisive reduction in armaments. [4] Poland returned a *de facto* refusal. General Sikorski's answer makes one suppose he was guided in this by humanitarian considerations: he evidently feared to increase the danger of war through further reduction in armaments.

Military agreements with Germany, which is disarmed and subject to control? Reorganisation of the Red Army under the guidance of German officers? To that one should add that the Red Army consists of Chinese and operates under the influence of opium. [5] After all, some politicians and journalists (I don't mean General Sikorski, since he, so far as I am aware, is neither a politician nor a journalist) count too much on the credulity and simple-mindedness of the public.

What proposals might Russia make to the world regarding disarmament or, at least, reduction in armaments? Our delegation at Genoa had ready several proposals carefully defined in the spirit of the most uncompromising pacifism. We were ready to go as far as the complete abolition of all armies, or to their reduction to the minimum. Where disarmament was concerned we were ready to accept any conscientious proposal of a yardstick (coefficient) that would rule out the possibility of military coercion of one country by another. We were and are ready today to discuss any proposal in that direction. There would be no point in setting forth here the possible variants of pacifist systems of this kind. The difficulty lies not in the plan

Will not the prosecution offer these documents as material evidence in order to astound the friendly foreign journalists?' or in the technique of its realisation, but in the political will. Capitalist Europe, as it has emerged from the devil's smithy of Versailles, is incompatible with disarmament. Present-day Europe does not want to disarm, and cannot be expected to want to disarm. That is where the difficulty lies, and not at all in the technical sphere. That was proved at Genoa, where our interlocutors flatly refused to put the question of disarmament on the agenda.

You ask what size of army Russia needs, in all circumstances, in order to safeguard internal order and defend her frontiers. We have now reduced our army and navy from 5,300,000 to 800,000. Any further reduction must be conditional on some serious changes in the international situation. The *de facto* refusal by our neighbours of our proposed conference on disarmament does not, of course, make the solution of this problem any easier. Minimum forces would be needed for the protection of internal order, considering the enormous size of our territory and the large numbers of our population – a few hundred thousand men.

Izv.V.Ts.I.K.
August 27, 1922, No.192

IV

You ask about reducing the size of the army. Eighteen months ago our army numbered 5,300,000 men. Today it consists, together with the Navy, of 800,000

men. Sixteen age-groups were conscripted into the Red Army. Today it contains only one.

At Genoa we proposed general disarmament. Europe refused even to discuss this question. Then we submitted the same proposal to our immediate neighbours: with the same result. We cannot, of course, prevent persons without conscience or honour from talking about our plans for conquest. But persons of conscience and intelligence will not be able to forget that we have persistently proposed disarmament to Europe, and to particular parts of Europe, and have met with refusal.

That is why we are compelled to maintain an army of 800,000 men. We have created a ramified system of military-education institutions, which have produced excellent results. While reducing the size of the army, we are constantly perfecting it. We are quite ready to reduce, contract and completely liquidate this work. But our neighbours, both the nearest and those farther off, must adopt along with us a programme of disarmament. If America were to take the initiative in this matter, we should support her.

This is also my answer to your question as to whether we expect any renewed military intervention by France, Poland or Romania.

We do not foresee any immediate danger, and it is for that very reason that we have reduced our army to so great an extent. But we do not regard the danger as excluded. Consequently, we are obliged to improve the cadres of our army and its technique.

Past experience gives us serious, even though far from complete guarantees against renewed intervention. However, the military situation in Europe is determined not only by the relations between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois countries: the question of German reparations retains its full force. Complications due to this matter may affect the situation throughout Europe. It is, for example, quite obvious that another blow struck at Germany from the West could be critical for the equilibrium which has been established in Eastern Europe.

*Izv. V. Ts. I. K., August
30, 1922, No. 193*

V

You ask what actions, military and other, we expect from Europe after the failure of Genoa and the Hague. [6] The inability of the existing European states to agree on the basis of the most modest and limited pacifist-reformist programme has been fully exposed. The representative of France at Genoa and the Hague was the one who proclaimed loudest that Europe is moving towards new and very large-scale conflicts, difficulties and upheavals. France's irritably aggressive policy results not from the bad character of particular statesmen (though I am not prepared to say anything favourable about their characters), but from the glaring contradiction between France's military and political situation since Versailles and its shattered financial and economic foundations. France does not want to cut her coat according to her cloth. This is the principal cause of the European crisis.

It is just for this reason that I decline to predict what actions, 'military and other', Europe will take. In an organism with a broken nervous system, movements are

neither co-ordinated nor voluntary, and one cannot predict them. It is necessary to prepare for the worst.

How long, you ask, do I think that American capital will avoid trade with Russia. I should myself be very interested to know the answer to that question. American capital is in an incomparably better position than that of Europe. In the form of their thinking the Americans are empiricists – they seek to test everything by sight, touch and taste. The American Relief Administration, which rendered unforgettable help to the starving masses of Russia, was, of course, at the same time, a highly-skilled antenna thrust by the rulers of America into the very depths of Russia. America, more than any European country, has seen us as we are. It remains to be seen how the public opinion of America's property-owning classes will digest the material collected and draw from it the appropriate conclusions.

As regards Genoa and the Hague, I would rather put questions to you myself than give you answers, since I frankly confess that I do not understand to this day why these conferences were really convened. The Genoa conference was designated by its initiator, Lloyd George, as 'the greatest event of its kind'. And, indeed, it appears that forty states were invited. For what purpose? That I quite fail to understand. Were the promoters of this conference seriously hoping that Soviet Russia would, in the circumstances of a solemn conference, accept obligations that she had refused to accept before? It is difficult to believe that grown-up persons could entertain such childish notions of the Soviet Republic and its policy. True, I have heard that professional parliamentarians and diplomats are inclined to accord mystical powers to 'negotiations' and 'conferences', to elevate far above everything else the black and white magic of diplomatic oratory. One cannot deny, of course, that Soviet diplomats are human beings and that, consequently, nothing human is alien to them, including the charms of oratory. But we are, above all, realists. The Soviet republic is a real fact, the programme of the Communist Party likewise, and the leading role played by this programme in the Soviet Republic was, is and – *pace* the parliamentary and diplomatic magicians – will continue to be the basic directive for the policy of the Soviet Republic. And our diplomacy, too, keeps in line with our programme.

After the failure at Genoa came the Hague. Why? Was this conference called merely to camouflage a little the failure of the 'greatest congress in the world'? Or were there some statesmen who believed that, whereas at Genoa the Soviet representatives had engaged in 'rhetoric about principles', in the businesslike atmosphere of the Hague they would quietly surrender to the ultimatum of capitalism? Pursuit of such a policy indicates complete failure to understand. As a result, the Hague did nothing to mitigate but merely accentuated the failure of Genoa. But not through any fault of ours.

You ask me what our intentions are, now that Genoa and the Hague have failed? *We intend to work and wait.* Europe and the whole world need Russia not less than Russia needs Europe. The superficial views and the adventurism of some statesmen will mean new sacrifices and hardships, but irresistible economic necessity will eventually force a way for itself. *If these statesmen will not recognise us, then others will, who will come to replace them.*

The most stupid demand and expectation was for us to return to the foreign capitalists their former property ('restitution'). The October revolution was the political victory of labour over capital. As a result of that victory the working class took from the capitalists the wealth that the working class itself had created. This

wealth could be returned to the capitalists only by a successful counter-revolution, that is, a victory of capital over labour. That road has been sufficiently explored. Or do these crafty simpletons perhaps think they can liquidate the workers' revolution by juridical and diplomatic arguments after they have failed to do this by military intervention?

Our railways, factories, land and subsoil belong to the state.

Some people may not like this, but it is a fact, which has to be taken as one's starting-point.

This year has seen a striking change for the better in agriculture. We shall probably not only be able to supply the towns and industry with food but also start exporting grain once more – for the time being, of course, on a very modest scale. This means that fresh blood will begin to flow in the economic arteries of our country. The year 1923 will be considerably more favourable than the year 1922. We shall advance, slowly at first, perhaps, but steadily and firmly. Any influx of foreign capital parallel with this would, of course, greatly accelerate the process. But, even without foreign capital, we have already entered the phase of improvement and consolidation of our economy. That will enable us to react without too much irritability to the changing moods of foreign capitalists.

The animation of Soviet Russia's economy means, on the one hand, enrichment of the workers' state through the development of the very important and valuable enterprises which have remained in the hands of the Soviet Republic, and, on the other, the growth of capitalist relations within the country. Over the commodity and market system of economy our state keeps control, because it owns the most important productive forces and because it retains, and will retain, the monopoly of foreign trade. Foreign capitalists and their governments will have to reckon with these irremovable facts. Our policy is sufficiently realistic and elastic for us to permit, within the framework of our system, wide scope and opportunity for very substantial profits to be made by foreign capital. It remains to be seen whether the policy of foreign capital will become sufficiently realistic and elastic to appreciate the need to adapt itself to the Soviet system of legal and property relations, and cease to look forward to some apocalyptic moment when they will collapse. If Genoa and The Hague have contributed an additional dose of sobriety to the views and hopes of the bourgeoisie where Soviet Russia is concerned, then I am prepared to acknowledge the 'progressive' significance of these undertakings which have suffered so obvious a fiasco.

Izv.V.Ts.I.K.

August 30, 1922, No.193

Endnotes

1. The London memorandum of the experts on the problem of the restoration of Russia was drawn up under the influence of the claims put forward by Urquhart and other British and French capitalists. [Leslie Urquhart was chairman of Russo-Asiatic Consolidated, Ltd, the most important British claimant against Soviet Russia.]

2. The reference is to the treaty concluded at Rapallo, near Genoa, on April 16, 1922, during the Genoa Conference, between Germany and Soviet Russia. It was based on reciprocal renunciation of all claims, and renewal of diplomatic relations. The Treaty of Rapallo called forth protests from the Entente powers and the exclusion of Germany from the political commission of the Genoa

Conference which was concerned with the Russian question.

3. In an interview with Walter Duranty published in the **New York Times**, January 19, 1922, Trotsky said: 'America – I am not speaking conventionally in saying so – is the one great power whose interest in no wise contradicts ours. We have many enemies, but with America the idea of conflict is absolutely precluded. In the economic field we might have important interests in common, and we do not forget America's help in our famine. She is the one country really helping us.'

4. A disarmament conference was convened in Moscow on the initiative of the Soviet Government, at the beginning of December 1922, and was attended by the border states: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Finland. An invitation had also been sent to Romania, but she refused to take part in the conference. The representatives of Soviet Russia raised at this conference the question of actually reducing the armies of all the states participating in the conference and defining what the strengths of these armies should be. This move was opposed by Poland, which considered that the conference should concern itself solely with 'moral disarmament'. Since agreement was not attained, the conference ended without result, in the middle of December.

5. Although the fact of clandestine mutual aid between the Reichswehr and the Red Army became generally known in 1926 (see C.F. Melville, **The Russian Face of Germany**, 1932), the Soviet Government and the Communist International adhered strictly to a policy of silence on the matter, which Trotsky refrained from violating until, at the Moscow trial in 1938, a false version of the affair was given, according to which the collaboration was an unauthorised enterprise of Trotsky's and contrary to Soviet interests. In an article in the **New York Times** of March 5, 1938 Trotsky then explained the actual circumstances and nature of the contacts between the Red Army and the Reichswehr in the 1920s, adding: 'In the secret archives of the Military Commissariat and the GPU there should undoubtedly be documents in which collaboration with the Reichswehr is referred to in most guarded and conspiratorial terms.'

6. The Hague Conference, which was a continuation of the Genoa Conference, began work on June 15, 1922. At this conference the states of the Entente continued to insist on the demands they had formulated at Genoa – restoration of the private property of foreigners, payment of debts, compensation for losses, etc. The Russian delegation, headed by Comrade Litvinov, declared that satisfaction of these demands would depend on the provision of credits to Russia. Owing to differences of view between the states of the Entente on this question, and their refusal to make a definite promise of economic aid to Soviet Russia, the conference ended without result, on July 18 1922.

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Interview

Given to a Representative of the British Press

* * *

I. 'Do you consider that, with the cleaning-up of the Maritime Province and the evacuation of Vladivostok by the Japanese, the war for Russia's independence is over? If so, do you consider it possible to reduce Russia's military expenditure still further? Or will you continue to maintain the standpoint that any further reduction in Russia's armed forces is possible only if Russia's immediate neighbours accept a corresponding measure of disarmament, and if there is general disarmament in Europe? Are you ready to bring up once more the question of general disarmament?'

Even after the cleaning-up of the Maritime Province and the evacuation of Vladivostok there still remain, both in the Far East and in the south-west, Russian territories which are occupied by our neighbours. But it does not at all follow from this that the question of these territories must be solved by force of arms. We considered and we consider it quite possible to settle all disputed questions, including territorial ones, by way of agreement, and we have more than once proposed this to our neighbours. This proposal remains valid today in relation both to Japan (the question of the northern half of Sakhalin) and to Romania (the question of Bessarabia).

Our programme of disarmament, or, at least, of reduction in armaments, has absolutely not been made dependent on a preliminary cleaning-out of all Russian territory by force of arms. The best proof of this is the fact that our proposals for international agreement on this question were put forward long before the cleaning-out of the Maritime Province and the evacuation of Vladivostok (which, be it said in passing, has not yet been completed, since there are still foreign warships in the territorial waters of Vladivostok). We are ready to put forward, expound and support a programme of disarmament (or, at least, of preliminary reduction in armaments) at any moment, either at a conference with our immediate neighbours or at a world conference. It is self-evident that there can be no question of a unilateral act of disarmament on our part. Such questions can be settled only through agreement.

II. 'In view of the fact that European public opinion is afraid of a 'Bolshevik-Kemalist' plot against European civilisation, of insinuations that Soviet Russia's Policy in the Near East is no different from the policy followed earlier by Tsarist Russia, and, finally, of the danger that the Black Sea may be made an internal Russian sea, it would be most useful to have replies from you to the following questions:

- 1. What are the limits and aims of the Russo-Turkish alliance?**
- 2. How does the Near-Eastern policy of the Soviet Government differ**

in essence from that of the Tsars and of Milyukov?

3. How is freedom of navigation to be ensured in the Black Sea?'

The limits and aims of the Russo-Turkish agreement (not 'alliance', as it is described in your question) are determined by its origin. It is an agreement between two countries which were threatened with enslavement and strangulation. It is hardly necessary to refute talk about a Bolshevik-Kemalist plot against civilisation: one only needs to know a little geography, economics and politics in order to appreciate the senselessness of such chatter.

You ask how the Soviet Government's Near-Eastern policy differs in essence from that of the Tsars and of Milyukov. The Tsar and Milyukov wanted to take Constantinople and the Straits away from Turkey. We, however, desire that what belongs to Turkey be given back to the Turks. The Tsarist Government wanted to break through the gate of the Dardanelles and enter the Mediterranean, where it would then, sooner or later, inevitably clash with Britain. Our intention is, however, to prevent British imperialism from forcing, or opening whenever it finds this necessary, the gate that leads from the Mediterranean into the Black Sea. In other words, the difference between our policy and that of the Tsars is the same as between robbery and compensating the victims of robbery.

The so-called 'freedom of the Straits' means a dictatorship over the Black Sea by the country which possesses the strongest navy. We propose 'neutralisation' of the straits, guaranteed, on the one hand, by international agreement and, on the other, by practical military measures such as would make this agreement effective. [\[1\]](#)

III. 'In view of the fact that it is thought in Europe that you are predominantly a friend of *rapprochement* between France and Russia, and the most serious obstacle to *rapprochement* with Britain, it would be desirable to know your views on Russia's international policy in general, and, in particular, your view concerning *rapprochement* with Britain and with France. A struggle for hegemony in Europe is now going on between France and Britain, and so Europe is especially keen to know with whom Soviet Russia is disposed to side – with Britain or with France?'

I can only express amazement that, as you say, I should be regarded as an opponent of Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* and a supporter of *rapprochement* between Russia and France. Needless to say, in our policy we are guided least of all by national sympathies and antipathies, which we, being internationalists, do not have. We are guided in our attitude to capitalist countries only by considerations of expediency – that is, above all, by concern to safeguard peace and economic relations. From this standpoint it would be impossible to make a definite choice between Britain and France, because the policies of both countries towards Russia are extremely amorphous and indecisive: a little step forward, a little step back, and so' merely marking time. We are equally ready to establish the closest possible relations with Britain and with France, together or separately. Relations will be formed more closely and lastingly with whichever country breaks decisively with the policy of the last five years and bases its new policy on considerations of tomorrow, not memories of yesterday.

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Endnotes

[1.](#) In an interview with Arthur Ransome, published in the **Manchester Guardian** of October 23, 1922, Trotsky said, in connection with the Straits question: 'Our interest is to avoid war altogether, but as a first step we must be satisfied in the elementary demands that in time of peace French battleships shall not be able to come in and blackmail Odessa by threat of bombardment, and that on a day when Lord Curzon wakes up in a bad temper he shall not be able to relieve his feelings by announcing that he will order British ships to sink Russian submarines at sight.' In an interview published in the **Observer** of November 5, 1922, replying to a question on what measures he proposed for neutralising the Straits, Trotsky said: 'Exactly those by which Belgian neutrality is guaranteed, namely, Turkey's right to possess an army and a fleet, and to fortify the Straits with a guard against any passing warships, under whatever flag.'

The International Situation and the Red Army

II. Genoa and the Hague

Speech

At the Ceremonial Meeting in the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army Devoted to the Fourth Anniversary of the Academy, December 7, 1922

* * *

When the history of our Academy comes to be written (which will probably not be all that soon), it will show how the difficult conditions under which the Academy has lived and developed have reflected the difficulties of our Soviet existence generally.

The Academy is roughly one year younger than our Soviet Republic. Now, of course, on the fourth anniversary of its existence, we can and must look ahead rather than look back. For, while the Soviet Republic and our Red Army are young, the Academy, which is in essence a certain scientifically organised condensation of all our military experience, thought and practice, and, so to speak, the crown of our military edifice, is, of course, especially young. And it is wholly appropriate that it should look to the future.

One may ask oneself: will history give our Academy time enough to develop, since at the very moment of our anniversary commemoration, our joint celebration, a conference on disarmament is meeting in Moscow? This question has been raised very seriously, so far as we are concerned. You will certainly have read in the newspapers the proposal which Comrade Litvinov has put forward on behalf of the Soviet Government – to reduce the Red Army, over the next one-and-a-half to two years, by no more and no less than three-quarters of its present size, that is, from 800,000 to 200,000 men. At the same time, our diplomats have said that this is not a maximum figure, that we are prepared to table even more radical proposals for reduction of the army. In this connection some of you may ask yourselves, and not without justification, whether there is any point in our developing and strengthening the Military Academy, if the army, in general, is heading for disarmament.

Comrades, let us consider whether there are grounds for such optimism ... I say 'optimism' because, of course, if conditions were to take shape such that we could dissolve the army, liquidate it entirely, that would be a very great gain for our country. Unfortunately, that is not the case. From the cautious echoes from the work of the Moscow conference that we find in our press we can already say with complete certainty, even while being quite ignorant of what is going on behind the diplomatic walls, that there will be no disarmament.

You know how this question has been posed. In proposing disarmament we are continuing here the policy which was expounded quite clearly at Genoa. We proposed that we proceed directly and immediately to carry out material disarmament, or, at least, maximum reduction of armed forces. The other side replied that material disarmament must be preceded by 'moral' disarmament. I find it hard to explain what 'moral' disarmament is supposed to mean, but, as it has been interpreted, it must in any case signify a set of measures which would avoid

the undertaking of material disarmament and would not get in the way of retaining a numerous and well-equipped army.

It is enough to mention who it was who initiated and devised this delicate expression, 'moral disarmament', namely, France. When, at the last congress (I think it was) of the League of Nations, at which some old-fashioned British pacifists like Lord Cecil [*sic*] [Lord Robert Cecil is meant.] – persons of a very pious cast of mind but who absolutely and undoubtedly failed to understand anything of what was going on around them at Genoa – brought up the fundamental purpose of the League, namely, disarmament, they found themselves up against French imperialism. Disarmament, it was said, must, of course, be begun, but it must be begun by way of 'careful preparation', through 'moral' disarmament. If we have in mind the policy of French imperialism, we must most readily understand moral disarmament as meaning disarmament ... by abandoning all social and political morality. But let us not discuss the delicate aspects of French policy. For us it is enough that France, while proposing 'moral disarmament', has retained to this day her very numerous army, and is not going to renounce it. France undoubtedly holds the hegemony and primacy in military might in Europe. Therefore, I repeat, moral disarmament, means a set of measures, phrases, fictions and tricks such as may constitute a pretext for retaining large armed forces.

We have now been presented afresh, in reply to our proposal for material disarmament, with a programme of 'moral' disarmament. And this after the experience of Genoa! At Genoa our proposal was not even put on the agenda ... The Genoa experience was preceded, quite significantly, by the experience of Washington (at which we were not present), where the strong naval powers discussed, on the initiative of the United States, a programme of reduction in naval armaments. This programme was devised in such a way as to ensure, to a greater or lesser degree, the naval hegemony of the United States, in place of the old, traditional naval hegemony of Britain. The programme which was devised and adopted there was constructed in a very cunning and complex way, but its principal distinguishing feature is, as the rulers of America are now noting, that not a single one of the powers has taken any steps to carry out this programme. Washington and Genoa – there you have the latest petty efforts of capitalist pacifism.

We have always stood and we continue to stand for the view that so long as class society exists, wars are inevitable. But we always declared that in the interests both of politics and of pedagogics we are prepared sincerely and consistently to support the thorough implementation of every pacifist initiative – partly because we may, perhaps, manage thereby to secure, all the same, some limited successes in the matter of lightening the arms burden. And also, of course, so as to demonstrate that a lightening of the arms burden, not to mention its abolition, is inconceivable until the entire historical burden constituted by class exploitation has been liquidated. At Genoa our disarmament programme was not even put on the agenda. We then said that we were ready to take this initiative again, together with any combination of states and in anyplace. And from Genoa the trail led to Moscow.

This conference has not yet finished. How it will finish we do not yet know. But it is clear already that the states which are our Western neighbours, and, which are under the direct guidance of French militarism, especially Poland and Romania – Poland directly and Romania indirectly, through Poland – have come here with that same formula which French imperialism advanced against real reduction of armaments already at Genoa and at the League of Nations. This fact testifies that there are no great hopes of our achieving very substantial successes in the matter

of reducing armies.

There is yet another major attempt – major, at any rate, by virtue of the masses involved – to bring about reduction in armaments and prevention of war, namely, the attempt which is to be undertaken in the next few days at The Hague. I must say a few words about this. While Washington and Genoa were pacifist attempts by imperialist diplomacy, at The Hague we shall see, in the next few days, attempts by petty-bourgeois democrats to achieve reduction in the arms burden and elimination of the dangers of war. At The Hague there are to assemble, during the next few days, representatives of the Amsterdam group of trade unions, which are led, as you know, by the compromisers of petty-bourgeois democracy, men who consider themselves socialists, together with representatives of the co-operatives and representatives of Social-Democratic and other parties whose programmes include a fight against militarism. Representatives of the Communist International have not, of course, been invited. But Russia's trade unions have been invited. And since our trade unions and our Communist Party are essentially one, Communist speeches will be heard at The Hague – and that will be a good thing.

What does the pacifist, anti-militarist position of these compromiser bourgeois-democratic elements amount to? Their position was formulated in Rome about a year ago. The Rome resolution says: 'Down with war, war on war, down with militarism, fight to the end against war, general strike against war.' To those of you who are older, those who took part in the struggle before the imperialist war, who took part in the life of the Second International, all these formulas will be extremely familiar... A year, perhaps a year and a half, or less, before the imperialist war, a world congress was held at Basle at which all these formulas were voiced and promulgated a hundred-and-one times, in solemn circumstances. The general strike was counterposed to the spectre of the coming war. But when the war came, the Second International surrendered miserably to the slogan of defence of the fatherland – and it was precisely out of the experience of the imperialist war that the Third International grew, that new revolutionary force in history. I hope the representatives of our trade unions and co-operatives at the Hague will ask the Social-Democrat gentlemen: 'You say that you will not permit a repetition of the second imperialist war and you threaten to answer war with your general strike – but what about the programme of 'national defence', the programme of defence of the fatherland which constitutes the entire foundation of the Second International? If you recognise the right of each country to defend its threatened fatherland, how can you demand that the working class of that country declare a general strike, which will inevitably disorganise defence, and, if it succeeds, will demoralise the army?' Furthermore, the majority of the representatives of those parties which are shortly to assemble at the Hague vote, in their parliaments, for the military credits asked for by theft governments. They participate in national bourgeois-democratic governmental blocs, and at the same time, as is characteristic of petty-bourgeois democrats in general – of all this world-wide 'Kerenskyism' – they are mortally afraid of the consequences of this policy! ... We have seen this with our own eyes. Kerensky conferred with the Second International, issued along with Tsereteli a manifesto 'to the peoples of the whole world', and, at the same time, held on by one hand to Buchanan [Sir George Buchanan was Britain's ambassador to Russia between 1910 and 1918.] and organised the well-known June offensive, remembered by all.

In these contradictions lies the whole essence, the entire policy of the petty-bourgeois Second International, and we shall see that, distinctly, at this congress which is to begin in the next few days. They vote for war credits, they recognise national defence, and at the same time they fear that this may result in war – war

which must inevitably follow from all their policies, war to which they counterpose the bald, miserable, abstract notion of the general strike.

We have seen how wars begin ... Is it conceivable that a country without a powerful revolutionary movement can answer the starting of a war with a general strike? Never. At such a moment the state mobilises all its forces: it is able to deceive the people, to lead them into all sorts of delusions about the causes, aims and tasks of the war, it always presents itself before the people in the guise of a lamb – every state will affirm that it is the victim of aggression, that it has to defend itself ... Such behaviour has been constant since people began to practise swindles on each other, and it goes on to this day, whenever states begin to fight one another. But who is to decide the question of who began the war? The future historian will say that this is an unanswerable question. Here you always have two trains travelling towards each other along the same rails: both are attacking and both defending, and, in practice, the question is decided by the victor. When France forced Germany to her knees she, exploiting her victory, ordered Germany to 'confess': 'I was the aggressor.' Germany was obliged to take the guilt upon herself. France said: 'Don't resist, confess, and sign your name to the confession.' And Germany signed.

That is how the question of attack and defence is settled. And, of course, if you approach the question of the general strike seriously, you have to say: 'If you want to answer war with a general strike, that is, to demoralise the national army at the critical moment, then begin with "a little thing" – refuse to grant your government credits for the army, because this army, which you want to demoralise when they start to set it to work, will prove to be unprepared for war if you have previously refused credits for it. You must begin with agitation against bourgeois dupery, and then later bring about the general strike. You must first carry on agitation on the railways, because transport is of great importance in wartime. If you are serious about a general strike you must have footholds on the railways, not to mention in the army, you must concentrate there your conspiratorial cells ... Begin' – the representatives of our trade unions will say at The Hague – 'with systematic propaganda against your bourgeois government, and when the war begins, we shall see! It will then become clear whether you can at once go over to the attack, or must operate in accordance with the underground revolutionary apparatus that you have: perhaps you will be obliged to wait until the government gets weaker' ... This position, as you know, follows completely from the programme and tactics of the Third International.

This means, comrades, that war is not going to be liquidated tomorrow. Recently we concluded in Moscow the Fourth Congress of the Third International. [\[1\]](#) During the past year the International has grown to an extraordinary extent, but, even so, it does not embrace the majority of the working class. The majority of the working class will be represented at this pettybourgeois pacifist congress at the Hague: and, if that is so, if it is still not possible to talk seriously about the seizure of power, then it is necessary to win the majority of the working class – in Europe, at least. The Fourth Congress presented a picture of remarkable, planned, confidently-conscious growth of the Communist movement – but not such a rapid growth as we should have hoped for and as we did hope for five or four years ago. At the same time we cannot but admit that the bourgeoisie of Europe and the world have learnt a lot, partly through the experience and on the bones of our own Russian bourgeoisie. In Italy we have seen the victory of counter-revolution, and also a distinctive attempt [i.e. the occupation of the factories in September 1920.] by part of the proletariat actually to take power. All this shows that the next ten years – or even not just one decade

– will be an epoch of very great upheavals – revolts, revolutions, counter-revolutions and wars. I am very much afraid that our century will see plenty of revolutions and wars.

And it is this, comrades, that answers the question as to whether it is worth while our studying properly at the Military Academy. If one could really hope that, here in Moscow, Comrade Litvinov will reach agreement with the representatives of our western neighbours on reducing armies, and that this initiative will then be imitated on the wider scale of the territory of all Europe and the whole world, we might become pensive concerning the Academy. But, if we take the question in its full perspective, we have to say with certainty that we are going to have to reduce our army and then to expand it – and again to reduce and again to expand it ... And, this being so, it is absolutely necessary that we should possess a very valuable condensation of military thought and experience. In reducing the army we shall, so far as possible, bring it to the state of a saturated solution – and in that solution the Academy must be the most precious crystal. We have all, of course, left behind the childishness of pacifism: we know that war, like revolution, is an extremely cruel and harsh method of solving social problems.

In order not to leave the sphere of diplomacy, I will mention the tirade delivered by Monsieur Colrat, a French representative at Genoa, about the consequences of the Russian revolution, which led, he said, to utter ruin and economic destitution in our country. To a certain extent, that is true. Our industry has, in the last year, produced no more than a quarter of what it produced before the war. Our agriculture is economically more primitive and more capable of revival, but during last year it produced only about three-quarters of the average pre-war crop. What does this prove? Something which we knew even without the instruction provided by this French financial expert, namely, that war and revolution are extremely brutal and destructive methods for solving social problems. But no other methods are available!

In the last analysis, war and revolution may contend with each other as methods. While revolution is the instrument for carrying out the new tasks of a progressive, advanced, historical class, war is merely one of the links in the chain of revolution. And, contrariwise, in every revolution there is the other side of the barricade: over there the class which represents counter-revolution is fighting. In this case, war and revolution have often in history gone hand in hand, neither of them yielding to the other in respect of brutal methods and destructive effects.

In this appropriate connection I have been looking through the history of the French revolution, and I came upon facts therein which are astoundingly vivid.

The French revolution, as is now beyond question for every bourgeois philistine, played an immense progressive role. It opened the gateway for all contemporary civilisation, with its power, its science and technique, and so on. And yet this Great French Revolution, in the course of the ten years of its development, transformed France into a heap of ruins and an arena of poverty. I came, for example, upon this fact. Bonaparte, when he was still First Consul, in the tenth year of the Great French Revolution, checked every day on the number of sacks of flour delivered to Paris, which then had a population of 500,000. Paris needed 1,500 sacks of flour every 24 hours to sustain a famine ration – our Soviet ration of recent years! – but what it received was between 300 and 500 sacks. That was how things were in the tenth year of the revolution, the revolution which overthrew feudal society and opened the gate for powerful capitalist development, with its technique! This means that

revolution, which Marx called the locomotive of history, has as its most immediate consequence – ruin and want. And if we compare the situation of our Moscow, which has twice the population, and which is now only at the beginning of its sixth year of revolution, with Paris, that city of half a million people in the tenth year of its revolution, it must be said that we don't look so bad. I even see that you are going to have, tomorrow, a gala supper to celebrate the anniversary of the Academy: which is, of course, proof of a small but nevertheless definite improvement in our material prosperity. In the third or the second year we could hardly have undertaken to celebrate in such ways as that our then very modest anniversary.

So long as class society exists, wars and revolutions are inevitable, both for solving the problems of imperialist society itself (I speak of war) and for overthrowing that society (I speak of war and revolution).

From this it further follows, comrades, that this epoch will be one of decades. And since, by the will of historical fate, Russia was pushed forward to take the first place in this serious round-dance, and our Communist Party and Soviet Government have been put into the position of being the world's teacher where these matters are concerned, there is every reason to suppose that we shall be, in respect of military matters as well, the teachers of the revolutions which are beginning – the seedbeds of military knowledge and experience for their use ... And, therefore, we must be prepared. Because we have now to learn, not only for our own sakes but also for future purposes, for the great battles which will begin in our lifetime. I don't know whether they will end in our lifetime: let us hope that they will end in the lifetime of the youngest of those present here.

In this connection I should like to stress one other point. The military man of today cannot but be a politician and a revolutionary – that is, of course, unless he is a counter-revolutionary. In what are called peaceful epochs, politics ruled over military affairs unnoticeably, on the sly, so that the military man seemed to himself to be merely a military man and nothing more. Our epoch has upset all conventionality, stripped bare all sorts of relationships: it is showing, graphically, that politics rules over military affairs no less than over all other aspects of human activity, forcing them to serve it. The Fourth Congress reminded us strikingly, once more, how impermissible it is, in our epoch, to retire into one's national shell. In spite of the embitterment of bourgeois national states against each other, in spite of the fact that all Europe is divided up by customs barriers and bayonets – in spite of this, there has never been an epoch in human history when the mutual dependence of nations and classes has been so close, so indisputable, as it is in our time!

This fact finds expression in that same Communist International, in which there now appear the same slogans and methods of action for work in all civilised countries. It has become possible, in Moscow, at the Congress of the Comintern, in this political general staff of the world revolution, to examine all these problems – taking into account, of course, local and national peculiarities. Essentially, Europe, and to a considerable extent the whole world, has been transformed into an arena of internationalised and unified class struggle. Out of political struggle which has become acute grows civil war, when the time is ripe, and this also will tend towards a higher degree of internationalisation. This civil war will need military leadership. And here, comrades, I must emphasise a very prosaic but very important point – that of foreign languages. Whoever in the Academy is still in a position – this applies especially to the younger comrades – to study foreign languages, to give a little

more time to them, ought and should do that, at all costs. Times are coming, comrades, when a conscious person who knows no foreign language will be like someone who lacks a right or left arm or leg.

Your study of foreign languages must become, comrades, the expression of the internationalising of your interests, of your psychology, and of our military affairs.

We were arguing not so long ago about when, how and in what period we should create for ourselves our own 'military doctrine'. We have now become a bit more modest in that regard. I think it is good that we have become a bit more modest. But precisely in proportion as we engage wholly and completely in practical and theoretical working-over of our experience, bringing into this work also the military and political experience of the West, and widening our horizon – precisely in this process are we, unconsciously, without setting ourselves this aim, preparing, grain by grain, the elements of a new military doctrine, which will appear not because he, or you, or I set ourselves the task, sitting down at a desk, of creating it, but because, under the new conditions in which we work over our old experience, we apply existing methods and modify them in accordance with new tasks and new circumstances. And this new military doctrine which we shall establish by working over old experience, and not by setting up chimerical tasks for ourselves, will be the richer, the wider is our horizon, the more boldly we break out of our national shell, the more deeply we enter into world-wide experience. And the instrument for doing that is foreign languages. Consequently, to know at least one foreign language as well as his own, so as to be able to use it as his organ for intercourse with others, is a matter of duty for the qualified military worker of our epoch. About other matters, about our purely military work, I shall not speak. The Academy has only just emerged from a very painful period. We shall not talk about that today.

I said that politics rules over military affairs. That is undoubtedly the case, but if anyone thinks that politics can 'replace' military matters, he is very much mistaken. Politics rules over literature, over art – but politics does not replace literature and art. Politics rules in the sense that it reflects class ideology – it penetrates everything and compels everything, from guns to literary verses, to serve this class ideology: but that does not mean that if I know the politics of the working class I can make a gun or write lyrics. For that, one has to have talent and training, to know the laws of prosody, and so on. In order to follow the military vocation, one has to know the laws of military affairs and to know military technique. Politics rules over military affairs: but just as we, through the unripeness of our experience, were inclined, to some extent, in all institutions and all spheres, to build everything on the basis of politics, and consequently made mistakes, so also, here too, many of us are still inclined to think that politics 'replaces' everything else, and that with this talisman in our hand we shall be able to open all doors. This cannot but affect the Academy. Only recently, in the last few weeks and months, we have been reminded, by a working class which has grown stronger, that although politics rules over military affairs, it does not take their place. Military affairs constitute an independent sphere which lives by creative analysis, investigation of mistakes, correction of mistakes, and development of accumulated knowledge. And the Military Academy is the laboratory of this military experience, this military knowledge: here, in the Academy, the marshals of the revolution are being prepared!

On the fourth anniversary of the Military Academy I greet you fraternally, comrades, congratulating you on the successes you have achieved, of which we are all proud, taking into account, of course, the difficult conditions – which, however,

we must in no way exaggerate. I greet you and call on you all to look back over the four years which have passed, and to look ahead. I express my firm certainty that your fifth year will be richer in work and success than the fourth, and that the sixth year will prove still more glorious than the fifth. And I conclude my greeting with the cry: Long live the Military Academy, the laboratory of the marshals of the Russian and world revolution!

*Krasnye Zori (Red
Dawn),
April 1923, No.[?]*

Endnotes

1. The Hague Conference, which was a continuation of the Genoa Conference, began work on June 15, 1922. At this conference the states of the Entente continued to insist on the demands they had formulated at Genoa – restoration of the private property of foreigners, payment of debts, compensation for losses, etc. The Russian delegation, headed by Comrade Litvinov, declared that satisfaction of these demands would depend on the provision of credits to Russia. Owing to differences of view between the states of the Entente on this question, and their refusal to make a definite promise of economic aid to Soviet Russia, the conference ended without result, on July 18 1922.

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

Speech

At the Parade on Red Square, May 1, 1923

* * *

Comrade Red Army men, commanders, commissars, and you, working men and women of Red Moscow!

For the seventh time since the overthrow of Tsardom, for the sixth time under the sickle and hammer of the Soviets and the Red star of battle, we are celebrating the festival of the working class of the whole world on Moscow's Red Square. We, the Republic of the workers and peasants, are still, in the seventh May since the revolution began, surrounded by the bourgeois states of the whole world. But this year we have become stronger. That is known both to our friends and to our foes. The Soviet republics have come together in a single union, which now embraces a fraternal family of 28 independent or autonomous republics and autonomous regions. [1] Our army is united, as a pledge of the unity of the working masses. In this year our economy has taken a big step forward. We are beginning, step by step, slowly but steadily, to emerge from our hell of poverty. In this year our Red Army has become better, more firmly and soundly organised. In this year we have seen more seriously to the defence of our maritime approaches, our coasts, because from that direction, too, we are menaced by potential enemies. Our navy has this year taken a big step towards revival and development. And, of course, we have undertaken, at the end of this year, serious practical work to develop and strengthen the Red Air Fleet, so as to be able to defend our approaches in the air as well. We have grown stronger. And in the year now beginning we shall become still firmer and stronger.

But, as before, we live side by side with states which exploit every opportunity to strike a blow at us and do us harm. Despite all our sincere and honest love of peace, all our attempts to establish peaceful relations have failed, up to now, to produce even partial results. Cast a quick, broad glance around. What do we see in Europe?

Imperialist reaction has during this year become more insolent and aggressive, and is trying to threaten us more than it did in the previous year. The working class has in many countries been forced underground. It is bravely fighting for its future and ours, but at present reactionary capital is still the master of the situation.

In Italy Fascism has conquered, the most bloody, hardened wing of capital, and the best expression of the state of affairs in Italy is the fact that the imperialist dictator of Italy, Mussolini, has forbidden the celebration of May Day. [2] Oh, if only they could, they would forbid us, too, to celebrate the workers' festival! But in all the countries where today the fist of capital reigns, the free thoughts, the revolutionary aspirations, the proletarian spirit of the working masses wing their way hither, to us, to Red Square. And from here we say to the rulers of the whole

world: no force in the world will forbid us to celebrate the First of May here. We, the workers and peasants' are the masters here!

Take a look at Britain. The conservative wing of capital is triumphant in that country. While suppressing Ireland and staining her with blood, and while pursuing her age-old oppression of India, Britain is at this moment, at Lausanne, trying, for a second time, to bend and bring our friend Turkey to her knees. Under the pretext of a bogus freedom of the seas, Britain is demanding access to the shores of the Black Sea, to our Black Sea ports, so as to keep them under the threat of her long-range naval guns. What is more, Britain is illegally fishing off our shores, and is depicting our attempt to protect our country's vital economic interests as an assault on *her* interests. But that is not the end of it: Britain is trying to interfere in the internal life of our country. She has the audacity to dictate to us on whom we should pass sentence and whom we should pardon. [3] But we who are gathered here in serried ranks on this First of May will say to everyone: hands off! We workers and peasants, working women and peasant women, are the masters here, and we ourselves know on whom to pass sentence and whom to pardon.

France has plunged her imperialist bayonet into the heart of industrial, working Germany. The Ruhr is running with workers' blood. [4] At Essen French soldiers, slaves of imperialism, have killed German workers. [5]

And, among our immediate neighbours, it is enough to name Poland, who misses no opportunity, omits no measure, fails to take no step to stir up against us both other countries and her own people, so as to do us moral and material damage.

That is why we are compelled to hold our sixth May Day festival under the sign of the hammer and sickle also under the sign of the bayonet and the sabre. All our attempts to achieve disarmament and agreement between the nations have come to nothing. At Genoa we proposed peace and disarmament. We invited here, to Moscow, representatives of the neighbouring countries. We proposed to them, sincerely, frankly and honestly, a practical plan for gradual reduction in armaments. Their answer was: no! We cannot and do not want to disarm in face of an enemy armed from head to foot. On the contrary, we shall study with double and treble application the art of war, so long as the mailed fist of capital threatens "the independence – and freedom of the union of Soviet republics. We are not going to attack anyone. We want peace and labour. We are true to the spirit of the May Day festival and this spirit means brotherhood between the workers, between the peoples of all countries. And we are ready at any time to reach out a fraternal hand to any people. But so long as our hand is left hanging in the air, or is rebuffed, we shall firmly and unshakably grasp in that hand the rifle of the Soviet Republic.

That is why the celebration of the First of May is for us, this year again, a day of military parade, a day of induction of young Red warriors to the solemn promise.

Comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars! Before the working men and women assembled here I call upon you all to repeat after me the Red oath to the working class, to the working masses of all lands, the oath to be loyal in our military service and in our military struggle for the well-being, freedom and independence of organised labour.

Comrade commander of the parade, summon the parade to take the Red oath!

Comrade Red Army men, commanders and commissars! I greet you fraternally on the occasion of your taking the Red oath of loyalty to the cause of the working

class of all countries. We have today once more pronounced the Red oath, in which, according to the old formula, mention is made only of the Russian Republic; but already today we have given our revolutionary pledge of loyalty to our entire Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. And I call on you to conclude the solemn act of taking the Red oath with our unanimous greeting to the working class of the whole world, to the international revolution to freedom and brotherhood of the peoples, to the Red Army and to our Soviet Union. All together: Long live the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! Hurrah!

Pravda, May 3, 1923, No 96

Endnotes

1. In the second half of 1922 the Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Transcaucasian Republics raised the question of uniting in a single union-state of all the Soviet socialist republics. The Tenth Congress of Soviets, held at the end of December, acceded to the wish of these republics. After the Tenth Congress the First Congress of Soviets of the USSR was convened, at which, on December 30, 1922, a declaration was adopted on the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and a treaty of union signed between the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR and the Transcaucasian SFSR.

2. The Fascist government of Mussolini was formed at the end of October 1922. A fascist congress at Naples demanded that the Facta cabinet resign and hand over power to the Fascists. At the same time the Fascists launched an open offensive in several Italian cities, as a result of which a Fascist dictatorship was set up.

From the very outset, Mussolini's Fascist government pursued a harsh policy towards the workers' organisations, and everywhere banned the celebration of the First of May.

3. The reference is to the British Government's protest, in a letter from Britain's representative in Moscow, Hodgson, on 30 March 1923, to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, against the carrying out of the death sentence on the Catholic priest Butkiewicz, who had been tried along with Archbishop Cieplak and found guilty of treason. [A group of Roman Catholic priests was tried for opposing the confiscation of church property and the ban on religious education. Against Monsignor Butkiewicz there was the additional charge that, by corresponding, during the Russo-Polish War, with the Papal Nuncio in Warsaw, he had been guilty of treason. Despite pleas from many quarters, he was executed. Duranty (**I Write As I Please**, 1935, p.205) records that 'the storm of world-wide indignation which followed surpassed Chicherin's worst forebodings; indeed; he was reported to have said bitterly that the life of this one man had robbed the Soviet of its two years of patient diplomacy ... So strong was American sentiment that it is not unreasonable to assume that the Butkiewicz execution did more than anything else to retard American recognition of the USSR for ten years.']

4. The occupation of the industrial region of the Ruhr by French troops began on 10 January 1923, on the pretext that Germany had not carried out the obligations she had accepted under the Treaty of Versailles and the need to supervise the activity of the German coal-mining syndicates. The occupation was accompanied by acts of violence against workers, expulsions, arrests and shootings.

5. On March 31, 1923 French troops in Essen fired on workers at the Krupp works who resisted the requisitioning of trucks: 13 were killed. The German Communist paper **Die Rote Fahne** reported the news under the headline: 'Krupp workers the victims of French militarism and German nationalist provocation.'

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

Speech

At the Emergency Plenary Meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' and Red Army Men's Deputies, May 12, 1923 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades! Yesterday in my work-room certain items of news and certain facts came together. I received two comrades, worker delegates from a stationery factory in Kaluga province. One of them has worked in this factory for 51 years, the other for 46 years. About the same time as they arrived, or a little earlier, I received a telephone call from the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs concerning the murder of our friend and representative Comrade Vorovsky. [\[2\]](#) And I also received a whole packet of newspapers published abroad by former landlords and capitalists of our country.

I do not know, comrades, whether you are aware of how frenzied and unprecedented in its senselessness is the campaign of lies, invention and hallucinations now being carried on by the émigré press. The period in which we are living and which is marked by great and growing unity between the Soviet power and the working masses of our entire union, by the great revolutionary movement of the peoples – and by the drawing into the revolution of those peoples who in previous years had no part in it – this period is described by the White press as one of fresh uprisings in all corners of our country, a period of breakdown of the state apparatus and disintegration of the Communist Party. And when you read these sheets, which come out in Warsaw, Heisingfors, Riga, Reval and other places, you are forced to ask yourself: who prints them and for whom are they printed? Are those who print them mad, or is it that they count on their readers being mad?

For what purpose is all this stuff printed? In order to involve us in war with imperialism, in order to bring about war – but why? Between us and the imperialists of the West there lies a necklace of foreign states. And if, contrary to our wishes, a senseless and criminal blockade were to begin, or, still more, if war should come, the first blows of such a war would fall upon the foreign states adjacent to us, by force of the logic of geographic location. Yet it is from those very countries that comes this flood of lies, hallucinations and baiting, through the White-Guard émigrés, the former landlords and capitalists.

And yesterday these two old workers told me how they had lived through the year 1918, through hunger and cold, and said that now they are living somewhat better. These old men, heroes of labour, had brought with them a few dozen specimens of the paper which they produce there for various economic and cultural requirements, and with their gnarled and trembling fingers they showed me with justified pride these specimens of our revived production. We said: give us another two, three, five years of peaceful labour, and we will raise up our economy, our schools, our cultural level. Can we contemplate war? Can we, with our boundless expanses, our many millions of people, our backwardness, our poverty, our lack of culture,

contemplate aggression, conquest, offensives? We say: let any among us be accursed who raises his voice in favour of attacking anyone, in favour of a future war. One of those workers had had 51 years at the bench, and if you were to tell him that we, the workers' and peasants' state, entertain some aggressive intentions, he would not understand you. The working class would expel from its ranks anyone unwilling to defend peace and labour in every way and by every means.

And nevertheless, comrades, the atmosphere along the frontiers of the Soviet Republic has thickened again and we are once more obliged to follow attentively and not without anxiety the intentions not only of governments but also of separate groups, particular cliques inside these governments, for, given the unstable state of European politics, the conduct of particular groups or individuals who stand on the heights of imperialist power may, in such a period as this, so tighten the knot that, later, these same gentlemen may be obliged to cut it with the aid of one of those swords of which they have so many in their armoury – many, many more than we have. This is also among the reasons why we shall fight for peace in every way and by every means, and back up our diplomats, who are honestly, sincerely and persistently fighting to uphold the independence of the Soviet Union through peaceful agreements.

Comrades, I think that every Red Army man – and, with us, the Red Army man is first and foremost a citizen who takes an active part in the country's political life – understands and will understand the tone in which the Soviet power and its diplomats are now speaking. It is a tone of composure, of remonstrance, of invitation to show prudence. I know that we have grounds enough for indignation, for resentment, for raising a clenched fist and grinding our teeth. But the present moment is one when it is necessary to call for prudence, self-restraint, caution and calm. The worker and peasant masses, the masses of our Red Moscow in its entirety, have shown that they understand fully the disturbing character of the present situation. We do not know whether Curzon's action is an isolated action by Great Britain or whether there are also other states, nearer home or equally distant, who are now developing diplomatic and perhaps not merely diplomatic, plans directed against us. And for that very reason we shall not take a single step, or utter a single word, that might render the situation more acute or close the path to a peaceful *denouement* through negotiations. We desire peace above all things, though, naturally, not at the price of surrender, not at the price of converting the Soviet Union into a vassal of foreign imperialism.

The governments of the Entente, since the war and the Versailles peace, have not been accustomed to talking to other peoples, states and nations in any manner but that of orders and commands. On this subject we say that their words of command do not reach as far as Red Moscow. We, the Republic of workers and peasants, are ready to make the greatest concessions, but only on the basis of independence and equality. And that, comrades, is why we all, as one, in the ranks of the government and the state apparatus, and in the ranks of our Party, and in those of the many-millioned non-Party masses of workers and peasants, will support all the steps taken by our diplomats which are directed towards peace and securing the possibility of safeguarding the trade agreement and economic relations with other countries. And, to no less a degree than everyone else, the Red Army and the Red Navy stand behind our diplomats, because the armed forces know better than anyone else what war means, what war would mean if they were now to bring it down upon us.

Today, in the present tense situation in Europe, war would be a fight to the death.

It would be a fight lasting not months but, possibly, years, a fight which would swallow up all the forces and resources of our country, putting an end to economic and cultural work for years to come. That is why we say: 'Let this cup pass from us.' ['Let this cup pass from me' □ i.e., may I not be required to drink this bitter draught: said by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew, 26:39).] We want peace, we are all for peace – so say the Red Army and the Red Navy, which are part of the working class, flesh of its flesh. But, comrades, if this desire for peaceful labour which was expressed by the two workers who had worked at the bench for half a century, and who voiced that desire from the bottom of the hearts of the workers and peasants of the whole Union – if this will to peace of ours should fail to succeed, and the ring of imperialism continue to enclose us, if challenge should follow challenge, assuming material form, and if the bayonets of imperialism should be aimed at our breast, or to strike us a blow in the back, then, in the name of the Red Army and the Red Navy, who wish for peaceful labour, I tell you that the Red Army and the Red Navy will do their duty to the end.

From the archives

Endnotes

- [1.](#) The emergency plenary meeting of the Moscow Soviet held on May 12, 1923 was convened in connection with the Curzon ultimatum of May 1.
- [2.](#) Comrade Vorovsky, Soviet Russia's plenipotentiary representative in Italy, who had come to Lausanne to take part in an international conference, was killed on May 10, 1923 by a Russian White Guard named Conradi.

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

To the Kikvidze Division [\[1\]](#)

* * *

I greet the Red Army men, commanders and commissars of the glorious division named after the unforgettable hero Kikvidze, on the fifth anniversary of the formation of this division.

Today, when world imperialism has again bared its teeth against the Soviet Union, I firmly hope that, in the hour of danger, your valorous division will do its duty, on guard for the revolution.

Izv. V. Ts. I. K.,
May 16, 1923, No. 107
from a Report

Endnotes

[1.](#) See note 36 to Volume Four.

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

From a Report

To the Moscow Provincial Conference of Metal Workers, June 5, 1923

* * *

Comrades, we are again entering an uneasy period. The British ultimatum is only one of the outward expressions of this uneasy period. We experienced the years of intense civil war and intervention, and they were followed by the period of the so-called breathing space, which was most prominently marked by the Russo-British trade agreement and the invitation of our diplomats to Genoa and The Hague. From the Russo-British trade agreement until Genoa there was a sort of constant increase in the extent to which we were recognised, it was as though they had decided to reconcile themselves to us. I speak, of course, of the bourgeoisie, because the working class had reconciled themselves to us from the first days of the Soviet Republic's appearance on earth.

After The Hague a new, uneasier period began. The bourgeoisie of even those states which had concluded, or were going to conclude, agreements with us, now beat a retreat, either completely or partially. They alleged, first, that economic relations with us constitute a game that is not worth the candle, because we import too little and are able to export too little. That was their principal argument. The second argument, an old one, temporarily forgotten and now renewed, was that we are short-lived, that the Soviet Republic is now, finally, at its last breath. They talked a lot about this 'last breath', especially in the first three years, then they apparently granted us a respite; but now Russia is, for the last time, at her last breath. The bourgeois and White-Guard press are reiterating this opinion in all the languages of bourgeois civilisation.

It is necessary, however, to note that this mood of thefts has, as always, its economic basis. In 1919-1920 Europe was, like the whole world, passing through a very great economic crisis, such as the capitalist world had never seen. Under the pressure of the millions of unemployed (in America there were five million and in Britain between two and three million), the bourgeoisie, as usually happens, in order to stay in power, strove to find a way out, even through dealings with Soviet Russia. This was the explanation of the period which saw the making of the Russo-British agreement and, later, our participation in the conferences at Genoa and the Hague. [\[1\]](#)

At Genoa and the Hague they put a serious question to us, asking to what extent we had become civilised and educated under the influence of our economic dealings with Britain and other countries, When, to a whole number of questions and, especially, to the basic question whether we would agree to replace state ownership by private ownership on the part of the former proprietors, we returned a categorically negative reply, the bourgeoisie resolved to undermine the prestige of our diplomats.

At the Hague, a few weeks after Genoa, the respect shown to our diplomats was already much less. After the Hague, which, as you remember, came to nothing, our international situation (I am speaking always about the official situation, that is, about our relations with bourgeois governments) began increasingly to deteriorate. Lord Curzon was by this time already counting on a new period of economic upturn in Britain and throughout the world. By the laws of natural development, an economic crisis is usually succeeded by an economic upturn. At present this upturn has, in Europe, by no means reached pre-war levels, but the number of unemployed in Britain has nevertheless dropped sharply. In France it had not been large to start with, and in America, after a tremendous crisis, we can observe a general boom. During the past year very many major American trusts have, on their own initiative, raised their workers' wages so as to paralyse any strike movement in advance.

On the other hand, it has turned out that our economic advance is proceeding slowly, and that, as buyers and sellers on the world market, we constitute a comparatively modest magnitude. It would be possible to enhance our purchasing power by granting us large credits and investing in our Soviet land large amounts of foreign capital, as loans, for a number of years. But the situation in Europe and throughout the world is so unstable, and the bourgeoisie is now so lacking in faith in its own future, that it cannot bring itself to engage in an operation calculated over a period of years, as it used to in the old days, before the imperialist war. Nowadays the world bourgeoisie lives from moment to moment: today they grab, they speculate, they rob Germany, they lay their hands on the Ruhr, they carry off' sell, take their profits' and so on' day after day.

These, comrades, are the fundamental reasons which have obliged the bourgeoisie to say to itself: today, Soviet Russia, the Union of Soviet Republics, is still too small a quantity, as buyer and as seller: for us to invest capital in order to help them revive their economy would be unprofitable, because we could pluck the fruits only after five or eight years – and who knows what the situation will be then.

Besides which, the Soviet Republic showed at Genoa and the Hague that she is not disposed to renounce her fundamental 'errors'. True, she has introduced the New Economic Policy, NEP is developing and the market expanding, but the railways, the bowels of the earth, the principal means of production and the basic industrial enterprises are in the hands of the state. And the Soviet Republic has not agreed either to return the factories to their owners or to compensate the latter for loss and damage. If one were to enable the Soviet Republic to develop further – and it is developing, even though slowly – then, in a few year's time, while retaining its Communist principles, it might become a powerful factor, a more dangerous factor in world development than it is today. Therefore, the thing to do is to try and give it a shove, to test its stability.

Coinciding with this was the frenzied attack by our White Guard press connected with the illness of Vladimir Ilyich. Out there, abroad, live between one-and-a-half and two million (let's not forget that) former Russian landlords, capitalists, bankers, generals, officials, professors, lawyers and doctors, who have looked forward to the fall of Soviet power from one day to the next, who have been disappointed, but who then have begun to hope for a miracle. And when the first telegram was received about the illness of Vladimir Ilyich, that gave wings to their hopes. They have learnt to appreciate what Comrade Lenin means for our country and for the world revolution. They have learnt to appreciate that so highly that they understand that his withdrawal from work, for a long time, even though only for a time, means

a terrible disadvantage for the prospects of the entire revolution. But, in addition, they firmly count on Comrade Lenin's illness at once causing breakdown, disintegration, internal conflict in the Communist Party and in the Soviet apparatus which it leads. This was their principal and fundamental hope. And when they read our central newspaper, **Pravda**, in which there were polemical articles before the congress, in which Osinsky [2] wrote and Kamenev, Martynov, Krassin and others retorted, this polemic in the pages of our central organ seemed to them to be the harbinger of a great catastrophe, the collapse of all the pillars of the Soviet Republic, and so the doomsday of the Soviets. At Helsingfors they organised a special factory for fabricating this sort of rumour: you could read in the bourgeois, White émigré papers telegrams about speeches by Preobrazhensky which he never made, about speeches by Bukharin which have been a great surprise to him, about my retorts to reproaches which I had never heard or refuted. This stuff was taken up by the entire press of Europe and America, translated into all languages – and so it went on for weeks and entire months. And it must be said that by this means they have succeeded in making an impression on the European bourgeoisie, to the effect that we are on the brink of collapse, that the Party is demoralised and the Soviet apparatus on the point of breaking into fragments. And in these circumstances Curzon said: 'We must try and give them a shove – maybe something will come of it.' These are the economic, political and psychological pre-conditions of the Curzon ultimatum.

At the same time, inside the countries of Europe, we see an undoubted revival of the mass revolutionary movement, after the lull of 1921 and of part of 1922. We can project a curve in this connection. In 1919, after the war, the workers throughout Europe were, as you know, in a profoundly revolutionary mood, and if they had been headed by parties even distantly resembling our Party, the proletariat of Europe would have taken power in 1919. But the Social-Democratic party which they had raised up in the past betrayed them. And they found themselves leaderless at the very moment of the first revolutionary offensive after the war. There were a whole series of unsuccessful movements, the defeat of the workers in Germany and, especially, in Italy, the blow suffered by the workers in France in May 1920 [3], and, as a result, a decline in morale. The working class has noted that, even after the imperialist war, the bourgeoisie has remained in power, that its police and military apparatus has been strengthened, and that power is not to be wrested from it with bare hands.

The Communist Party is gradually beginning to take shape. This is a slow process, and the broad masses of the workers are waiting to see. They are waiting to see because the old party deceived them, and they are not going to show naive trust in the new, Communist Party – they are waiting to see. And in 1920, 1921 and the beginning of 1922 there was a major hold-up in the revolutionary movement and a slow growth of the Communist Party. In that period the International, led by our Russian Party, put forward the slogan of the united front – that is, the Communist minority proposes to the mass of the workers a united front in all movements, everywhere, in which the elementary interests of the worker masses are being defended. At first these united front slogans rebounded from the old trade unions, the Social-Democrats, the passive worker masses, like peas from a wall, but the economic upsurge which has taken place during the past year in Europe and throughout the world has shaken the worker masses out of their passivity, and we are now seeing a flood-tide of strike movements in every country in Europe.

For a strike the workers need to close their ranks. That is why the united front proposals made by the Communists, who are in the minority, are now meeting with

a very much more sym-pathetic response, and you have probably read how, in the international transport workers' union we have succeeded in realising a united front – that is, our Red transport workers' international association and the transport union of the Amsterdammers (the yellows, as we call them, and rightly call them) have been able to setup a contact organisation for joint struggle against the war danger and for the common interests of the transport workers. This is one of our greatest victories. At present these victories find no concrete expression, but they signify that we have, with the battering-ram of Communism, broken down the wall of apathy and forced the yellow leaders of the old traitor trade unions to meet the unions of the Red Profintern half-way. What is on the agenda now is a similar unification on the world scale among the metal workers, and here, seemingly, if all the signs are not deceptive, we shall compel the Amsterdammers to organise an international union, and meet our union half-way in order to unite the revolutionary trade unions on the world scale.

What does this mean? It means that the class struggle is being intensified after a certain period of decline. This is not yet the first step, comrades, not the first chapter in the proletarian revolution in the West, for the Communists are still in the minority, but it is already an approach to the first chapter, a transition from decline to movement, to advance, and, therefore to more favourable soil for Communist influence throughout Europe.

At the same time, international relations are not only not reverting to the framework of normal connections between bourgeois states, they are continuing to be extremely strained, threatening a bloody explosion from one day to the next. We have seen this from what happened in the Ruhr. Since the imperialist war, people are used to anything, but if you think about what confronts us in the form of the occupation of the Ruhr, it must be said that this is a war, which has not assumed the direct character of immediate mass baffles merely because one of the belligerents keeps the other in a state of disarmament. Essentially, hundreds of thousands of French soldiers have burst into Germany, and seized the railway junctions and mines, and they are shooting armed or semi-armed people, and so on. This is a new form of continuation of the same imperialist war.

The Ruhr affair has thrust a wedge between Britain and France, on the one hand, and between Italy and Britain, on the other. All this creates conditions of maximum instability, which have a twofold meaning for us: in the first place, they signify the downfall of our enemy, and, consequently, that the revolution may go forward more quickly than we recently thought it would: and, on the other hand, this same collapse and instability in Europe creates the possibility of surprises in the form of the ultimatum from Lord Curzon and of other, perhaps much more serious factors in the sphere of international relations.

Poland has in recent times shown an increasing disposition to pass from under France's guidance to that of Britain. In the last few days there was a change of government there. The so-called Left grouping, the more adventuristic one, whose spokesman was Pilsudski, that well-known 'friend of the Ukraine', was brought down, and in power now is a kulak-peasant government of Witos along with the National Democrats, who are the local party of trade and industry, something like our late Octobrists or Cadets. This change of government in Poland corresponds to our interests. No-one, of course, will suppose that the Polish Octobrists are nearer or dearer to us in the class or socialist sense than are the Polish Kerenskys – and Pilsudski is a Polish Kerensky, only made up to look like Napoleon – but they are based upon a solid foundation of commercial and industrial capital. Under Tsardom

Polish industry, especially the textile industry, was wholly dependent on the Russian market, and Poland's big capitalists are highly interested in re-establishing peaceful and neighbourly relations with us. And it is to be expected that relations with us will now be more peaceful, that is, in the sense that Witos will not send bandit gangs against us, in the form of Savinkovites, Petlyurists and others, because the Polish industrialists will not let him, but will rather seek to send us textile goods. Thus, relations with Poland seem to be improving.

In the Far East, too, Japan seems to be changing her line, escaping from the influence of Britain, which had determined her behaviour, and preparing not only to conclude an economic treaty with us, but even, apparently to restore full diplomatic relations. All this is at present only at the initial stage, Comrade Joffe is negotiating, and there are what look like favourable symptoms. [4] But it is hard to make predictions in all these affairs, in view of the complete instability of all world relations.

Before the imperialist world war we had the Triple Entente, on one side, and the Triple Alliance, on the other. For years and decades the diplomats and chiefs of staff made their calculations for a future war, they knew against whom they would be fighting, where the battlefields would be, and they deceived public opinion through decades. Today the profession of diplomat or bourgeois general has become much more complicated, because they do not know against whom to mobilise public opinion, with what country, in what theatre of war, they will have to fight, or where they can seek help, for utter instability reigns in all relations, both social and inter-state.

You will probably ask how our polite correspondence with Lord Curzon will end. I must admit, comrades, with a clear conscience, that I do not know, and I am very much afraid that, at this moment, Lord Curzon does not know, either. He began, as I have already mentioned, at a time when it seemed that one shove would suffice to bring us down. Seven weeks passed and nothing came down. He gave us a ten-day time-limit, then he added a few days, until Wednesday, and finally, on Wednesday, on the 13th or 14th day, he wrote a new note, and in this note he asked us to reply as soon as possible and once for all, but this time he did not set a time-limit. [5] It is to be hoped that our diplomats will not abuse the patience of this so very courteous Lord Curzon, but will reply at the earliest opportunity. But how will Lord Curzon answer? He was a minister in the government of Bonar Law, and the attempts to topple the Soviet Government began under Bonar Law, but Bonar Law toppled first: between the two notes a change of government took place. [6] It is said that the new one has a more conciliatory attitude towards us – I cannot take any responsibility for this report, but that is what they say. So that the situation is that we are now, as it were, sitting in a sort of lottery, and the number we shall draw is not known: this best typifies the international situation and the diplomacy and policy of the bourgeoisie, when no consistent line can be followed, and it is impossible to forecast what will happen tomorrow' because it will not follow logically from today. In any case, if we assume the worst, a break in relations, this would, of course be a serious blow to us, yet a blow that we could survive.

We are becoming to an increasing extent an exporting country, which exports, primarily, grain and timber, but also other kinds of raw material: flax, hemp, hides. Britain needs our timber urgently. As regards our grain, Britain needs that somewhat less, although, here, too, it must be said that all Europe is ready to buy as much grain as we can export. We can now quote the figure of more than 50 million *poods* of grain of all varieties. To be sure, this is a small figure when

compared with what we exported before the war: then we exported 600 or 700 million *poods*, sometimes as much as 900 million, but, on the average, between 500 and 600 million. Next year, however, if prospects for the harvest are not deceptive, this figure will increase to 200 million *poods* and over. True, America also exports grain, but that has to be paid for with gold, because America needs nothing from Europe except gold. America has no need of European machinery, and Europe has no raw materials of its own. But Europe, as it is, owes America 20 milliards in gold, and cannot pay, so that Europe is almost unable to buy anything at all from America. But what about us? We, of course, are not averse to receiving gold in exchange for our grain, but we will take machinery, too, and other industrial products. Europe cannot export to America but she can export to us. That is why, if things drag out, that is, if the revolution does not happen in the near future, and the bourgeoisie stays in power for three, four or five years more, then the British bourgeoisie may grimace, but in the end they will have to eat Soviet grain and use Soviet timber. About the other countries there is no point in saying anything. Italy cannot live without our wheat. You know that the Italians' national dish is macaroni. They make it from hard wheat, and our hard wheat from the South, from the Kuban, is hard, just as the Italians like it; and whatever Mussolini may say, however he may philosophise on the theme of Fascism, he will be obliged, all the same, to eat our hard wheat. This is our major trump-card, we can boldly say, and this is why even a breach of diplomatic relations with Britain, which would, of course, be to our detriment, would merely slow down our economic progress but would not halt it completely, and could not capsize us.

From the archives

Endnotes

- [1.](#) The year 1919 and most of 1920 actually saw a post-war boom in Britain. This came to an end in late 1920, and unemployment rose sharply, reaching its highest point – just over two million – in June 1922, after which it declined to 1,137,000 at the end of 1923.
- [2.](#) There is no reference figure in the text, but this is evidently the passage to which [Note 7](#) refers. N. Osinsky (V.V. Obolensky) was in 1921-1923 People's Commissar for Agriculture. In October 1923 he was one of the signatories of the oppositionist *Platform of the 46*.
- [3.](#) On May 1, 1920 the French railwaymen went on strike, and were supported by the dockers and other groups. However, the strike petered out and ended unsuccessfully before the end of May.
- [4.](#) Joffe was invited to Japan, 'for his health', by Japan's former Foreign Minister, Viscount Goto, president of the Japan-Russia Society, and while there he initiated, in the spring of 1923, talks on the resumption of normal relations between Japan and Russia. These talks were resumed in the following year, and led to Japanese recognition of the USSR in January 1925. Russia tendered 'an expression of sincere regret' for the massacre of 700 Japanese at Nikolayevsk in March 1920, and Japan agreed to evacuate North Sakhalin.
- [5.](#) The reference is to Curzon's memorandum of May 29, handed to Comrade Krasin, who was in London for talks with the British Government. In it, Curzon repeated the demands of his initial ultimatum, but now without laying down any time-limit.
- [6.](#) Bonar Law resigned on May 20, 1923, and was succeeded as head of the Cabinet by Baldwin.

Bonar Law's resignation was due to ill-health. The new Premier' Baldwin, had been his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Curzon remained as Foreign Secretary, and the only new member brought into the Cabinet was Lord Robert Cecil. Baldwin had a 'business' background' and in July 1923 a delegation of British businessmen, headed by the Premier's cousin, visited the USSR.

[7.](#) Before the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (17-25 April 1923), a discussion took place on the relations between the Party and the economic organs.

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

Report to the Sixth All-Russia Congress of Metal-Workers

June 16, 1923

* * *

Comrades, there are two questions which are today at the centre of attention in international politics: the Ruhr and the British ultimatum.

I will deal with the latter, because it affects us directly.

The ultimatum with a deadline of ten days, according to Lord Curzon's calendar, is an ultimatum which was presented on May 5 [sic] [The ultimatum was presented on May 8.], but today, I believe, is June 16, according to us – that is, almost the same amount of time has passed that the Flood lasted, according to the Bible [‘And the flood was forty days upon the earth’ (Genesis, 7:17)], and the matter has still not been finally settled.

What, however, is the explanation of this ultimatum which is not quite precise in its time-limit, and what explains the very great compliance shown by us in our reply to this ultimatum?

Here it has to be said, clearly and distinctly, that Britain – I refer, of course, to the bourgeois rulers of Britain – is with this ultimatum remaining true to her traditional policy. She regards even her present struggle against us as, in a certain sense, a continuation of her struggle against Russia generally.

What constitutes today the basic line of British policy? One must not forget that Britain is headed by the most experienced bourgeoisie of all. It is not that every one of its Curzons is a Solomon – that cannot be said – but all the Curzons together have accumulated, over the centuries, the collective wisdom, the collective experience and the collective perfidy of the British ruling classes. The essence of Britain's policy has always consisted in setting one, stronger state against another, weaker one, and then remaining aloof and offering up prayers to the Lord of imperialism. This has been Britain's traditional policy over a period of centuries.

Britain was deeply hostile to Tsarist Russia, as well. Britain is an ocean of water, while Russia is an ocean of land, joining Europe to Asia. Britain strives to encircle every continent with the necklace of its ocean, but in Asia she always came up against the imperialist, conquering tendencies of Russian Tsardom. During the Crimean War, in 1855, Britain rallied to the side of Russia's enemies. During the Russo-Turkish war in 1878 Britain was again on the side of Russia's enemies. During the Russo-Japanese War Britain sided with Japan. Only in 1907, after the first Russian revolution, did Britain's policy change. Considering Russia to have been sufficiently weakened by her unsuccessful war with Japan, by the revolution, by internal disorder, and so on, Britain concluded in 1907 the Anglo-Russian agreement

on the Persian question, which was the prelude to the Anglo-Russian alliance.

On the eve of the imperialist war, Britain hesitated. Comrades, when the British proletariat open all the steel safes of British diplomacy (if those sly fellows haven't destroyed them), they will find conclusive proof that Britain wanted the imperialist war more than all the other states. If, on August 1, 1914, Britain had said that she would fight, then neither Germany nor Austria-Hungary would have gone to war, but would have made concessions. [1] If Britain had said that she would not fight, then Russia and France would not have gone to war, but would have sought an agreement. On the eve of the war Britain acted as a *provocateur*, and in this way brought war upon the European continent. It is the same where the Ruhr is concerned. If Britain had not wanted France to get bogged down in the Ruhr, thereby weakening herself and exhausting Germany, the Ruhr affair would never have occurred. Britain provoked it, Britain wanted it, and now she stands aside, and watches for the right moment to intervene. Remaining aloof and using others to pull one's chestnuts out of the fire is the essence of the policy of the British bourgeoisie, the most perfidious in the world.

Remember Britain's policy during the period of the intervention and blockade. All these facts are so fresh in our memories that I shall not enumerate them, although I will not conceal from you that as soon as the ultimatum was received, I instructed our War Department to compile a little list of the things official Britain did to us during the first three years of intervention and blockade. First and foremost, I will recall that during the imperialist war Russia lost 3,080,000 men, whereas Britain lost only 455,000, that is one-sixth the number of Russia's losses. In order that Lord Curzon might now consider himself powerful enough to present us with a ten-day ultimatum, the blood of more than three million Russian workers and peasants had to be spilt for the glory of British imperialism. We shall present this account one day to the British bourgeoisie. After Britain's victory had been assured by the deaths of over three million Russian peasants and workers, Britain inaugurated a period of intervention and blockade. It was the same old policy, on both a large and a small scale. Britain was not at war with us, but she did have her expeditionary units at Archangel and Murmansk. For what purpose? In order to conscript Russian peasants and workers there for the White Guards, and to force them to fight against the Red peasants and workers. In the North, in the Archangel-Murmansk area during the occupation, Britain lost no more than ten to fifteen men, but she shot hundreds. [2] British counter-intelligence there had its favourite method: those whom it suspected of lack of sympathy with the Russian bourgeoisie it simply dropped through the ice.

Today Britain is demanding compensation from us for two British citizens, one male and one female. They were engaged here in the most innocent activities: spying, helping to blow up railways, killing Soviet public figures and so on. One of them suffered for it – he was shot (but that is a spy's occupational hazard), while the other was put in prison. [3] Now we have to pay out 30,000 gold roubles for this lady, and 70,000 as a pension to the heirs of the honourable gentleman. We must acknowledge Lord Curzon's extreme moderation, for he is not demanding that we pay pensions in the case of the 15 or 30 [*sic*] British who died in our North.

A couple of words about Britain's role in Caucasia. We all remember the story of the shooting, at a remote station, of the 26 Bolsheviks who had been brought from Baku, those who have gone down in history as the 26 Baku Commissars. This was done on the order of the British officer Teague-Jones and with the agreement of the British General Thompson. [4] [5] One day we shall demand pensions and compensation in respect of our 26 Baku comrades, who included Comrade

Shaumian, an old revolutionary and member of the Central Committee of our Party.

There you have a schematic picture of Britain's role in the imperialist war and the civil war. Then there was a turn, and they made a trade agreement with us. Why? Under the influence of a most severe crisis and in search of a way out of it. Three million unemployed put a colossal burden on Britain's budget, and Lloyd George hoped, first, to remedy unemployment, and, second, to be the first to get into Russia and reorganise the country by means of British capital – that is, to shackle Russia economically and turn the country into a colony. About two years have elapsed of this policy of trade. What have they shown? Above all that, economically, we are developing more slowly than the impatient profiteers of the City would have liked, and not along the line they had expected. They had reckoned that the NEP was a capitulation by the Russian proletariat in the sphere of economic construction, but in actual fact it was not. On the other hand, Britain's economic situation has improved and Anglo-Russian economic relations are at the present moment not such a big factor in Britain's overall balance of trade.

At the same time we observe the intermittent fever of the bourgeoisie both in international and internal affairs. This must be spoken about precisely and concretely, so that it may be clearly understood that we have now entered an acute and anxious period which menaces us with complications of the order of the British ultimatum, and perhaps even more serious than that. Despite the economic upturn in Britain and, to some extent, in other countries of Europe (I do not speak of America, where the life of capital pulsates more strongly), the basis of the capitalist economy is most vividly expressed in the occupation of the Ruhr, which signifies destruction and, potentially, war. There is no normal capitalist life in Europe, nor even any approximation thereto.

Such a minor fact as the *coup d'état* in Bulgaria, of which we have read recently, testifies to the continuation of the intermittent fever of all bourgeois society, at any rate in Europe. [6] At the present time the overthrow of governments by armed counter-revolutionary gangs has become normal procedure in a number of countries. Mussolini, that former renegade Socialist, organises gangs in full view of society, surrounds Rome with them, enters parliament, and announces that he is the master. And the whole world applauds him. Yet, when we dealt energetically with the Constituent Assembly, Europe didn't like that. I do not wish to put our October seizure of power on the same plane in any way with the Italian *coup d'état*. I say this only so as to show how the bourgeoisie of Europe has exposed itself in going over from the piety of Lloyd George to open counter-revolutionary *coups d'état*. The Bulgarian *coup d'état* took place in the Fascist style. The latest telegrams say that it was organised with direct co-operation from agents of Britain and Italy. And it would be surprising if that had not been so. Today we have received news of a *coup d'état* in Persia. British agents work openly in that country. There, too, is Comrade Shumyatsky, whose recall Britain demands. But, under cover of negotiations, Britain has overthrown the national government of Persia, that is, the government based on the undoubted will of the overwhelming majority of the masses, and has established its own agents in power.

The Ruhr affair has not yet exhausted itself. The complications arising from it increase daily, in the form of shootings and arrests. In France there has been an attempt by the Royalists, who have become transformed into French Fascists, to begin, through intimidation, an assault on state power. For the moment this attempt has miscarried. [7] But all these facts are typical of the instability of the situation, both internal and international, all over Europe.

And, at the same time, there are very serious symptoms showing that the bourgeoisie is preparing a new orientation, first in France, then in Britain. In France the *Bloc National* is in power. What is this *Bloc National*? It is an extreme organisation of exploiters, a political clique formed by lawyers, which was raised up by the war and brought on the crest of the wave of victory, to a position of undivided political power in that country. But today the illusions of victory, which were sown by the *Bloc National*, are vanishing among the masses in France, not only among the workers but among the peasants as well, and the bourgeoisie in that country are bringing to the forefront the Left bloc of Radicals and Radical-Socialists, Menshevik Socialists. The next elections, due in eleven or twelve months' time, will, in all probability, lead inevitably, unless something very serious happens meanwhile in the international situation, to a victory for the Radical-Socialist-reformist bloc, to a local variant of the Kerenskiad, which must inevitably lead to an agreement of one sort or another with Soviet Russia. Individual representatives of this French bloc have already visited us. They particularly approve of our Red Army. They say: it would be good if this army were to join with the French forces in the event of some danger threatening us. One of them was sitting with me when a regiment marched past the window singing *For Soviet Power*. He started up, listened, and expressed approval. [8] In France, I repeat, an orientation is taking place towards the Left bloc, and this is happening because the Right wing of the bourgeoisie has exhausted its possibilities.

We shall observe in France in the next few years an extremely interesting internal conflict, into which our Communist Party, which is now working there shoulder to shoulder with the revolutionary trade unions, will thrust a sharp wedge. This conflict will lead to a victory for the Left bloc, and this will signify the helplessness of the bourgeoisie, its inability to fight actively against Soviet Russia. A victory for the Left bloc will provide us with serious guarantees of peace on our western frontier.

Nor have the Conservatives in Britain been elected for all time: the Labour Party (that is, the British Mensheviks), the British Liberals, the Independents, in short, everything needed to provide a British Kerenskiad, or Milyukoviad, are bound to succeed the Conservatives, whose Right wing is formed by Lord Curzon's group. This will happen in a year or two. There can be no doubt that a victory of the Left bloc in France will automatically entail a strengthening of the reformist, Menshevik position in Britain. [9]

In the year that remains before these changes, the Conservative wing of the bourgeoisie will try to exploit a Fascist war against Soviet Russia, which still today, of course, constitutes a fundamental danger in the eyes of the world bourgeoisie, and especially that of Britain. What was Lord Curzon's task when he presented us with the ultimatum? He hoped that we would make' in reply, a move which could be interpreted as a slap in the face for the British Government, and which would offend the public opinion of all the British philistines, petty-bourgeois and vulgarians, including those in the British Labour Party and it is said that their proportion is pretty high. But we spotted this artless trap.

We had to force the philistines to understand what was what in this matter, and since their skulls are made of a material which it takes a long time to penetrate, the ten-day limit which Lord Curzon gave us was insufficient. That, comrades, is the explanation of our policy. Our task was to say: Lord Curzon is displaying magnanimity, but we will show ourselves even more magnanimous: Lord Curzon is peaceably disposed, but we are disposed even more peaceably; he does not want war, but we trebly do not want it. That is the meaning of our reply.

Thus we engaged in diplomatic preparatory work, explained our position, and managed to hammer something into them. The first formal result is that there will, apparently, be no rupture of relations. But I regard this result as the least important nature of the ruling groups of the British bourgeoisie – there can be no stability in our relations with Britain. Judge for yourselves. During the intervention we shot a British spy, and forgot about it long ago. The trade agreement was signed after this. Now they tell us: pay cash, or we break off trade relations with you. Well, comrades, this is monstrous evidence of the fact that this experienced, clever British bureaucracy [*sic*] has bad nerves, that it will threaten us with all sorts of extortions and importunities both in the near and in the more distant future. Consequently the present situation does not contain any great guarantees for us as regards stability.

You see, the affair savours not only of a possible rupture of relations with Britain. Take note of the fact that, when Britain wanted to exploit any clumsy, impatient move on our part in order to arouse public opinion against us in Britain, the rulers of France started to court us a little, and this precisely at the moment when the time-limit of the ultimatum ran out. Why was that comrades? Undoubtedly, so as to encourage us, so that we might know that we have 'friends' in Paris – and if we had become overjoyed at having these friends, and had fallen into the trap, Poincaré and Curzon would have splendidly united their forces to jump on our backs.

Not only that: we have Poland and Romania as neighbours, and, despite all Lord Curzon's affirmations of his peace-loving plans, our 'friends' undoubtedly counted on creating military difficulties for us on our Western frontier, and profiting by the short period during which, as I have already mentioned, the 'national blocs' will still be in power.

There, comrades, that was our plan, that was the aim we pursued with our policy of concessions. We showed that we are not preparing to launch any campaign against the West, as the Russian White Guards and our foreign foes constantly assert. But our readiness to comply does not in any way mean that we lack the strength which, given the most unfavourable situation, we might use in the event of a challenge from West European imperialism.

The caution we showed on this question has had good educational consequences. It has thwarted the schemes of the bourgeoisie for the present. But in no case can we have complete peace, primarily because, as I have said, the situation in Europe remains unstable, and besides, a gigantic revolutionary process is going on in the East, which worries Britain particularly. The main point of the ultimatum was, by Curzon's own definition, our so-called propaganda in the East. Curzon's demand that we end propaganda in the East is, according to accounts by the more perceptive bourgeois publicists, an empty demand by its very nature, for it is not a question of this or that Soviet citizen turning up there, and even occupying an official position, and in this or that statement violating Britain's right to exploit and plunder the peoples of the East, but of the prospect of our social order, if it behaves itself correctly where the national question is concerned, presenting the maximum mortal threat to every colonial power, and, first and foremost, to the British.

That is why Britain is most of all disturbed by the resolution of the Twelfth Party Congress on the national question. [\[10\]](#) We have developed and refined our national policy and are taking serious measures to implement all aspects of it, especially in such countries of the Soviet Union as Turkestan and Azerbaidjan, where it

possessed great demonstrative importance for the East. In particular, we shall try to implement this policy – which we are implementing so far as our possibilities, our resources and practices permit – in the sphere of army-building as well. We are setting ourselves the task of ensuring that, in a few years' time, Turkestan shall be defended primarily by Turkestani troops – troops who will be consciously defending their own republic: and the fact that, next door to Afghanistan, which is supposed to be independent but has, in reality, been enslaved by Britain, there will exist a Turkestan which is developing to an ever greater extent upon its own national foundations, will be a fact of very great importance. That is the matter to which we are directing our greatest attention and effort, and from it, of course, we shall not be deflected by any ultimatum.

The processes of emancipation of the oppressed peoples, comrades, are taking place less rapidly than we should have liked. It is therefore necessary that in the forthcoming period, which will be a very acute and feverish one, we do everything to ensure that our army is not weakened, but strengthened. Despite the fact that we are concentrating our attention and our forces principally, at present, on the economic revival of our country, at the same time we have taken the first step towards reconstructing our army on militia principles.

One-fifth of an infantry division will henceforth consist of units in which only the permanent element, that is, the commanders, the political, administrative and supply personnel, and the auxiliary services will form the cadre, the armature, while the transient element, the soldiers, will be drawn into this armature only from time to time, without being detached from their factories and villages, in order to be welded together and trained. In this consists the essence of the militia system. It brings the army close to the foci of the economy, to the factories, it combines the soldier with the worker more closely than hitherto in our army. The militia system imposed new tasks on the trade unions. Since the first day of the revolution our trade unions have put immense energy into the work of developing the Red Army. Today this bond between the trade unions and the army is expressed in patronage, which has not always assumed the proper forms here, but has always played an enormous moral, educative and political role. Under the militia system the bond between proletarian and soldier must be still closer and more direct, and we must work out forms and methods for direct participation by the trade unions, in the persons of their central and local organs, in building the armed forces of the militia. The attestation of the commanding and political personnel, the attestation of the soldiers, their evaluation, their grouping, must, in certain of their aspects, enter into the everyday work of the trade unions, so that the army may be, in the true sense of the word, an organ of the organised working class. That is the first task which we must accomplish together, and which I do not doubt that we shall accomplish. But the transformation of the Red Army into a militia army will be carried out gradually. After the first fifth we shall proceed to a second fifth, when this reform has shown its viability and power.

In order to strengthen the army we need aircraft. This idea has been sufficiently popularised by our press, and I shall not dwell upon it. I might merely offer this advice once more, comrades – in connection with every event in international life, every blow, shove and even major flick dealt us, let us cut, so to speak, a notch in our memory. They presented us with an ultimatum – right, we will build a squadron of aeroplanes and name it 'Ultimatum'. There is a coup d'état in Bulgaria – we will create another squadron, or one aeroplane, and, if Comrade Chicherin gives his permission, name it 'Red Bulgaria'. If, to all the offensives by the bourgeoisie, we reply by building aeroplanes then, maybe, one of these days we shall in this way

put an end to such offensives.

Comrades, in order that work on the development of aviation and all our military technique may be possible and fruitful, we need to develop industry, and, above all, that industry which wrests iron-ore from the earth, and by means of coal transforms it into metal. We are in devilish need of metal, we have too little of it. Instead of saying all that which I said to you about international politics one might answer the question why Curzon sent us his ultimatum by saying: because in America they produce, let's say, 20 *poods* [720 lb] of cast iron per head of population, whereas here we produced, before the war, one *pood* 32 lb [68 lb], and today we produce 14 lb. I think that every worker in our country and, especially, every metal-worker ought to know these figures. We have too little metal; and modern culture, modern technique is a technique of metal.

Our metal industry continues to be in a very grave situation, not through the fault of the trade unions which lead it, but because of our general poverty: we are building our economy by new methods, on new foundations, but these methods are as yet very poor. It is an undoubted fact that the trade unions have succeeded in ensuring that the worker now devotes to production almost the same amount of living energy, of his nerves and muscles, as he devoted before the war. The intensity of labour approximates in most branches of industry, including the metal industry, to its pre-war level; but the objective productivity of labour per individual worker comes, probably, to only 12-15 per cent, and when measured in relation to equipment it is a great deal less. What is happening here? We are conducting an extensive economy where industry is concerned. By an extensive economy we mean one in which man, in using the resources of nature, applies an insufficient quantity of technique, of capital, and gets from nature one-fifth or one-tenth of what nature could actually give him. It is impossible to continue for long with such a way of conducting the economy. We cannot demand that the working class shall, during five or ten years, devote 100 per cent of its productive energy if we do not learn to adapt the means of production, raw material and labour power to the object of production. Concentration of production and proper internal organisation – that is the central task, fulfilment of which will decide our whole fate, and it is no less a revolutionary task than was, in October, the fight to take state power from the bourgeoisie.

We have to reconstruct in that direction all our educational work, agitation and propaganda, our press, and not only the trade union press, which is closest to production, but the press in general: but we must do this not in the sense of issuing appeals but through proper, systematic education, based concretely on the conditions of each branch of production. I spoke recently with a group of comrades who are directly connected with the lower ranks of the workers and their everyday work. They said: 'The worker of today strives to increase his qualification, he is interested in the technique of production, and so he looks around for textbooks.' Have we got textbooks? No, we have not. And we need now to establish, first and foremost, workers' libraries in which workers who are interested in their own branch of production and who want to rise to a higher level in it can find the manuals they need. Our task has now become, as Comrade Lenin excellently expressed it in his last article, one of cultural, educational work – we are now, through partial efforts, bit by bit, building a new way of life upon the revolutionary foundations we have conquered. [\[13\]](#) Cultural, educational work means, in other words, giving very close attention to all the trifles of everyday life and the technique of production in all its aspects. It is therefore necessary that, in mass work, and, especially, in your own branch of production, which is essentially advanced, the worker shall receive from

his trade union and from the leading organs of the Communist Party, not only books that will teach him how to produce and help him to improve himself in that line, but also books that will enlighten him with regard to all aspects of his everyday life. In the period now behind us, all questions apart from those directly connected with the revolutionary struggle were pushed into the background, but now the working class, followed by the peasantry, will expect from us, and in the first place from the trade unions, answers to all the problems of life. Here we have, on the one hand, the church, with priest and censor, and, on the other, the trade union. Can the trade union explain and show to the worker his place in the universe, in production and in the workshop? Can it elevate and ennoble his interests, beautify his life? In order to learn to do that we must gradually get to grips with the trifles of everyday life, giving them expression in our press in a more attentive, careful and skilful way than hitherto. If I am to finish on this subject, comrades, I will say over again: all this will be done successfully only in so far as our economy is raised up, only in so far as the productivity of labour per unit of equipment and per unit of labour power is increased, and this in its turn, will be possible only if work is properly, scientifically organised.

At the basis of our work and of its scientific organisation in the epoch we live in lies metal. Our old Russian culture, or, more correctly, lack of culture, was built on straw and wooden planks. Today we need metal, and we shall need more and more of it as time goes on, for, even in the sphere of building, our epoch is one of iron, concrete and glass. It has to be said that our old character, especially the peasant-like, diffuse, formless character of the Russian people, was also a little lacking in metal. You know the role that is played by iron in a man's blood. If there is too little iron in his blood, he is in a bad way. Our economy is short of iron, and there is too little iron in the blood vessels of our economic organism. More metal for the national economy! More metal for the national character! Long live metal!

From the stenogram of
the 6th Congress of
Metal-Workers

Endnotes

[1.](#) The attitude of Britain to the Austro-Serbian conflict which served as the occasion for the world war was at first one of indifference. Britain rallied to the side of Russia and France only after the opening of hostilities, motivating her action by Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality.

[2.](#) According to W.P. and Z.K. Coates, **Armed Intervention in Russia** (1935), p.174, the total number of British servicemen who lost their lives in North Russia was 327. Of these, 194 were killed in action. (Martin Gilbert, **Churchill**, Vol.IV, 1975, p.383.)

[3.](#) A British businessman named Davison was arrested in Russia in 1920 and accused of involvement in a commercial swindle: as, it was alleged, some of the profits went to finance spying activity, Davison was shot. When Chicherin asked for the papers of this case he was told by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs that they had been lost during the reorganisation of the Cheka into the GPU. Mrs Stan Harding, a British journalist, was arrested in 1920 on a charge of spying, and held until March 1921. She denied the charge and claimed that she had been falsely accused by a real spy, an American. The National Union of Journalists agitated for compensation to be paid to her. See her account of her experiences, **The Underworld of State** (1925), with an introduction by Bertrand Russell.

[4.](#) Twenty-six Baku Communists were shot on September 20, 1918, after the overthrow of Soviet power in Baku. [\[11\]](#)

5. In Soviet accounts given of the fate of the 26 'Baku Commissars', the British General mentioned in connection with the killings is General Malleson, who was Captain Teague Jones's superior officer. General Thomson (not 'Thompson') comes into the story only at a later stage, in 1919, when, as British Military Governor of Transcaucasia, he refused to take seriously the allegation by the SR Vadim Chaikin that Teague Jones had ordered the killings. Trotsky was doubtless speaking from memory. A later Soviet writer on this affair, presumably confused by Trotsky's error, invents a British general named 'Malleson-Thompson'.

6. The Bulgarian Government of Stambulisky, the leader of the Peasants' Party, was overthrown by the reserve officers' organisation, supported by military units. Stambulisky was taken prisoner and, a few days later, killed. After the coup d'état the reactionary Tsankov government was formed.

7. After one of their leaders had been murdered, militants of the French Royalist organisation *Action Française* sacked the printing-works of three Left-wing papers and beat up three left-wing deputies.

8. The French Radical politician Herriot, leader of the Left bloc (in French political jargon, the *Cartel des Gauches*), describes in **La Russie Nouvelle** (1922), pp.157-158, how, while he was interviewing Trotsky in his office in Moscow, soldiers marched past, singing, under the window.

9. In December 1923 a general election in Britain brought the Labour Party into office, and in May 1924 a general election in France resulted in the formation of a Left bloc government under Herriot.

10. The resolution of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the national question [\[12\]](#), after condemning the survivals of great-power chauvinism and also the survivals of nationalism among the peoples which had suffered from national oppression, indicated the following as practical measures for regulating the national question: (a) that, in establishing the central organs of the Soviet Union, equality of rights and duties of the republics be ensured, both in relations between themselves and in their relations with the central government of the Union; (b) that within the system of supreme organs of the Union a special organ be instituted representing on a basis of equality all the national republics and national regions without exception, possible provision being made for the representation of all nationalities forming part of these republics; (c) that the executive organs of the Union be so constructed as to ensure real participation by the representatives of the peoples of the Union and the satisfaction of their needs and requirements; (d) that the republics be granted sufficiently wide financial and, in particular, budgetary powers to enable them to exercise their own initiative in matters of state administration, culture and economy; (e) that the organs of the national republics and regions be recruited predominantly from among the local inhabitants acquainted with the language, way of life, manners and customs of the peoples concerned; (f) that special legislation be promulgated providing that, in all state organs and in all institutions serving the local population and the national minorities, their own language be employed, and that all violators of national rights, in particular the rights of national minorities, be punished with full revolutionary severity; (g) that educational work in the Red Army be intensified in the spirit by instilling the idea of brotherhood and solidarity between the peoples of the Union, and that practical measures be taken to organise national military units, all necessary steps being taken fully to ensure the republics' capacity for defence.

11. The 26 'Baku Commissars', who were not all commissars, were not all Communists, either: one was a Left SR, and another a Left Dashnak. Soviet power had been overthrown in Baku in July; the 26 were killed in Transcaspia when they fled from the city, where they had been in prison, in September, after its capture by the Turks.

12. An English translation of the whole of the 12th Congress resolution on *National Factors in Party and State Development* is given on pages 279-287 of Stalin, **Marxism and the National and Colonial Question** (London, 1936).

13. In his article on co-operation, published in **Pravda** of May 27, 1923, Comrade Lenin wrote: 'The radical modification is this: formerly we placed, and had to place, the main emphasis on the political struggle, on revolution, on winning political power, etc. Now the emphasis is changing, and shifting to peaceful organisational, "cultural" work. I should say the emphasis is shifting to educational work [*kulturnichesivo*] ...'[\[14\]](#)

[14.](#) Lenin goes on: '... were it not for our international relations, were it not for the fact that we have to fight for our position on a world scale. If we leave that aside, however, and confine ourselves to internal economic relations, the emphasis in our work is certainly shifting to education.' (**Collected Works**, 4th edition, English version, Vol.33, p.474)

The International Situation and the Red Army

III. The Curzon Ultimatum

From a Speech

At the Joint Meeting of Representatives of Party, Trade-Union, Young Communist and Other Organisations of the Krasnaya Presnya District, June 25, 1923

* * *

Comrades! Our most recent history begins with Lord Curzon's ultimatum, so allow me to start with this historic fact.

You will remember, comrades, what this ultimatum contained, and you will remember that the affair dragged on not for ten days but for 41 or 42 days, and you will further remember that on some very substantial points we gave way, but on some other, also substantial ones we did not give way. In order to strike a balance, let us recall what exactly we conceded to Lord Curzon. In the first place we withdrew Comrade Weinstein's letters, which had been written not quite in full accordance with the textbook of good form. In the second place, on the question of the 3-mile and 12-mile limit for fishing, we paid due respect to Britain's long-range naval guns and recognised her right to catch fish in the troubled waters outside the 3-mile limit. We are paying out 100,000 roubles, cash down. On the question of propaganda we undertake with a clear conscience to do against Britain nothing worse than she does against us, on the principle of complete equality between the parties; and I do not doubt, and nor will you, that our word is reliable – we do not answer for Tsarist treaties, but we carry out our own in earnest. [1]

On the question of recalling two representatives of ours, Comrade Raskolnikov from Afghanistan and Comrade Shumyatsky from Persia, we answered with a refusal. In his last note, or memorandum, Lord Curzon depicts the matter as though we are recalling Raskolnikov anyway, for reasons connected with internal service arrangements, something of that sort. [2] This is an obscure passage. Anyway, we have not given any commitments to this effect: since this is a matter of internal service arrangements, it concerns only the Soviet Government and no-one else. As regards Shumyatsky, Lord Curzon's proposal was that we leave him in Persia after giving him a severe reprimand. We agreed to this on condition that a similar reprimand be given to Britain's representative in that country – and I can assure you, comrades, that he does need some reprimanding. [3]

That is the formal balance. On some substantial points we gave way, without any joy on our part, but on others we refused, and the agreement was preserved. But if you try to strike not a formal, diplomatic balance but a political balance, and ask yourself: have we, as the outcome of this attempt to seize us by the throat with a ten-day ultimatum, become weaker or stronger, then I think, comrades, that, without bragging, we can say that we have become stronger. This is not because we showed any exceptional finesse or diplomatic wisdom, but simply because the ten-day ultimatum not only failed to produce a capitulation from our side but was transformed into more than forty days of negotiations, as a result of which concessions were made, and everything boiled down to a rotten compromise

between mighty Britain and the Soviet Union. [4]

To evaluate the importance of the fact that, after exerting this pressure in the form of an ultimatum, Britain agreed to a compromise, we must ask ourselves: but why, precisely, was that ultimatum presented? To answer this question, comrades, we must survey in broad outline the situation of the other states of Europe, that is, of the European bourgeoisie. I am not going to tell you anything radically new on that subject, but merely to bring together concisely what, in general, every one of you knows from the daily news, from a number of reports, books and so on.

The European bourgeoisie are, in the present period, passing through, it may be, the zenith of the counter-revolutionary' imperialist amplitude of their power. The imperialist war gave them a shove' after the war there were waverings, they went in fear of the working class, but then the bourgeoisie recovered themselves and began to get their own back. More and more, it was conservative' reactionary, militarist parties that came to power. The modes and forms of government assumed an increasingly naked military-and-police character.

Let us examine this proposition, in relation to the principal countries.

In Britain the Conservative Party came to power, that is, the most extreme Right wing of the British bourgeoisie, of the British landowners and of the colonial rulers. In France, the *Bloc National*, which had emerged from the war, wavered, and there was the Briand period, when the ruling plutocracy of all types and forms swung Leftward. Then, with the accession of Poincaré, the *Bloc National* took a more and more Rightward orientation. This led to the Ruhr, to the armed seizure of the coalfields of Germany, and the Ruhr is still today the central problem of Europe's economy and politics, and the world's as well.

In Italy the idle and empty game of parliamentarism was replaced by the coming to power of counter-revolutionary troops of the bourgeoisie in the shape of Fascism, and open suppression of the workers' organisations. In the last few days, Mussolini has passed not only through the parliamentary commissions but also through parliament itself a new electoral law which places four-fifths of the votes at the disposal of the Fascist Party for a certain number of years – provided, that is, that this law is not smashed from below by the anti-Fascist fist of the proletariat.

Germany has no policy of its own, but depends on the demands and importunities of the Entente.

As for the smaller countries – Poland has passed since its foundation through a petty-bourgeois, nationalist and militarist Kerenskiad, under Pilsudski. After wavering and internal struggles, there is now in power in Poland a bloc of Right-wing parties, that is, of Polish landlords and capitalists, in the form of the so-called 'National Democrats', the centre, and the party of Witos, that is, the kulaks' party. From the social standpoint, this Right orientation is profoundly reactionary.

In Romania, after attempts at democratic and quasi-democratic governments, the Liberals have come to power, by way of a *coup d'état* and *de facto* violation of the constitution. [5] These Liberals are one of the most counter-revolutionary parties in all Europe. They have had and have now nothing in common with liberalism even in the most indulgent interpretation of that term, but there is nothing remarkable about that, because in Romania all official politics is spurious through and through, including the very names of the political parties.

In Bulgaria a *coup d'état* took place only recently, and rule by the so-called Agrarian Peasants' Party, headed by Stambulsky, was replaced by the accession to power of a bloc of all the bourgeois parties which had been swept away after the war. Incidentally, in the latest issue of Milyukov's *Poslednie Novosti* [6], which we received today, there is a very curious article about the *coup d'état* in Bulgaria. Milyukov is, as you know, an old friend of Slavdom, and especially of Bulgaria. Nowadays he takes a Left orientation towards the peasantry, and considers that liberalism ought to give way to peasant democratism. Nevertheless, in this article he vehemently welcomes the *coup d'état* in Bulgaria, as a victory for intelligent politics over the politics of peasant demagoguery. This article would, by itself, completely suffice to expose the policy of the Cadets towards the peasant masses of Russia.

So, then, comrades, what does the picture add up to? The Conservatives, the extreme Right, in Britain: the extreme imperialists of the *Bloc National*, in France: the Fascists in Italy: the conservative Right in Poland: the counter-revolutionary Liberal party in Romania: and, one of the latest factors, the counter-revolutionary bourgeois coup in Bulgaria. We seem to be seeing the swing of counter-revolutionary reaction flying forward to reach its highest point. Bourgeois reaction has arrived at a critical moment. To appreciate this more clearly and concretely, we will say a few words about the domestic situation in Britain and France.

In Britain the Conservatives hold power. The Liberals have become the third party, numerically. The Labour Party now forms the direct opposition. At the elections it received more votes than the Liberals. The whole British of politics now stands under the sign of the inevitable coming to power of the Labour Party. You know that Labour Party which they have over there: it is British Menshevism, reformism. Essentially the leaders of the Labour Party are political agents of the bourgeoisie. But the point is, though, that there are periods when the bourgeoisie rules through agents like Curzon, who was Britain's Viceroy of India, but there are also moments when it has to move to the Left and govern the masses through MacDonald, Henderson and so on.

The influence of the Labour Party is growing all the time. You read in yesterday's papers that Robert Smilie, one of the Left leaders of the Labour Party, won the by-election at Morpeth, on a programme of not merely maintaining the agreement with the Soviet Union but granting full diplomatic recognition. He obtained a very considerable majority of votes, over the bloc of Conservatives and Liberals.[7] This fact is indicative, comrades. Anyone who follows life in Britain will tell you that the bourgeois parties there are reckoning on the Labour Party coming to power in a year or two's time as an unavoidable fact, and that the bourgeoisie are having to accommodate themselves to the fact that their interests will be looked after not by their old, acknowledged leaders, but through the mediation of the Mensheviks of the Labour Party.

The political life of France, too, is on the brink of a change. The parliamentary general elections are due in ten or eleven month's time, and, to judge from by-election results, the feeling in the country, and, what is most important, from the objective situation in France, we may expect that the *Bloc National* will be replaced by the so-called Left Radical bloc, made up of Radical-Socialists and Socialist-patriotic reformists, a bloc of petty-bourgeois democrats. Primarily, this follows from the financial situation of the French state. Industry remains sound in France, and agriculture, although shocks have been suffered at the lowest level of the peasantry, has, in general, preserved its strength. Yet France itself faces bankruptcy. The country is in debt to the tune of 300 milliard francs: it owes large

sums to Britain and to America, and is not paying them. Finally, although it possesses the asset of Germany's obligation to reconstruct the northern *departements* at her own expense, Germany cannot pay, and is not meeting its obligation. This situation will not be helped by any military occupations, which merely ruin Germany and bring nothing, or very little, to France. Of course, Poincaré and Foch appreciate quite well that the occupation of the Ruhr will not mean that France will receive large sums in reparation payments, but will only cause further ruin and weakening of Germany, which will serve a military-political purpose – to ensure that Germany cannot get up on its hind legs again and take revenge on the French imperialism that knocked it down. But this will not improve the state of France's budget, pay the country's debts, or reconstruct the northern departments. France is now faced with the need to get clear of that miserable, lying fable about how the Germans are going to pay for all the broken crockery.

Consequently, the whole question boils down to the question of the system of taxation. Enormous sums will have to be wrung out of France's state economy, every year for decades, in order to pay for the cost and damage of the war. That is what the immediate domestic problem in France amounts to. We are not interested in the elections, we know what the mechanism of democracy is worth, but, in the given case, a new orientation of classes and parties will emerge through the medium of elections. They will seek the answer to the question of how to get France's neck out of the financial noose, how to escape bankruptcy. Can it be doubted, I repeat, that each of the upper strata of the bourgeoisie will endeavour to shift the tax burden on to the backs of the lower strata, classes and sub-classes? But that will provoke a sharp rebuff from the peasant masses and the working class. And the bourgeoisie realises that it cannot increase indirect taxation, reduce wages, lengthen the working day, and cut into the pitiful savings of the petty-bourgeoisie while maintaining the panoply of Foch's militarism. In this matter they will have to operate more artfully, they will have need of the pacifist reformists, the compromisers, the Radicals, the Socialists, and we are seeing how the French bourgeoisie, sensing that it is on the verge of financial bankruptcy, is now adopting a Leftward orientation, and the Left bloc is preparing to take over from the Bloc National. The Left bloc will signify, using our Soviet, Russian terms, a French Kerenskiad, that is, a period of flirtation with the people, of powerlessness, instability and neurasthenic outbursts.

The British and French bourgeoisies have managed up to now to rule through their extreme Right wings, but they feel it necessary to re-form and reconstruct themselves. In France a shift to the position of the Left bloc, in Britain a shift to that of the Labour Party will almost inevitably mean recognition of the Soviet Union and, consequently the liquidation of our revolution will recede into the misty distance. But, if this is so, will not the Fascists and Fochists (after our friend, General Foch) – two parties which have identical feelings towards us – will they not think that it is imperative in the period still remaining, while imperialism has not yet spent all its energies, when the fascists have just triumphed in Italy and a coup has been carried out in Bulgaria, to have a go at overthrowing Soviet Russia?

There, comrades, you have the basic reason for Lord Curzon's attempt to force us to our knees and, if possible, to lay us on our backs, by means of his ultimatum. We know, of course, that today Lord Curzon is not in a position to send, either to Archangel, or to the Murman coast, or to Odessa, even one single expeditionary corps or one single British regiment. Such an act would arouse the deepest indignation of the proletarian masses in Britain, and the Labour Party, on coming to power, would be obliged to avail themselves of this indignation. Lord Curzon was

banking on his ultimatum inciting somebody else against us. He placed his hopes on our close neighbours. Let us name them: Romania and Poland.

It is an undoubted fact that both in Poland and in Romania recently the influence of France has considerably weakened, as compared with that of Britain, but, on the other hand, Romania is hardly able or inclined at present to engage in any military adventures. In power there, as I mentioned, are the Liberals, while all the other parties are in opposition – this opposition taking the form of obstruction, demonstrations and street fighting. We must not forget that there are two problems in Romania which are fateful for the country's affairs of state – the agrarian problem and the national problem. So that it is hardly to be expected that there will be any active hostilities against us so far as Romania is concerned.

In Poland the Pilsudskiad has been succeeded by direct and open rule by the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. The Polish mark is dancing the devil's dance. It is said that in the last few days the stock-exchange has been shut, owing to the incredible fall in the value of the Polish mark. The textile industry, which plays an immense role in Poland, is in a state of paralysis, which pines for the Russian market, but there is no trade agreement with the Russian Union [*sic*]. This counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie of trade and industry which is now in power is no closer to us socially, of course, than the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia groups and cliques on which Pilsudski relies, but where business is concerned it is a more serious partner.

Do we want to enter into trade relations with Poland? Of course we do. Poland is wedged between us and Germany. Poland is obliged, where both Germany and ourselves are concerned, either to fight us or to trade with us. By virtue of its geographical situation Poland will make profits from commission and transit charges, because goods will be conveyed across Polish territory. We have no objection to paying commission to the Polish bourgeoisie, for this is cheaper than fighting. I repeat, the moment when the Polish commercial and industrial bourgeoisie came to power was not convenient for the plans of Lord Curzon. At that moment a Pilsudski might have created some military-neurasthenic or military-hysterical incident, but these people are more serious. It can be said that all the states of Europe are frenziedly feverish, but the paroxysm of this fever does not coincide in time between one bourgeois class and another. When, let's say, Lord Curzon's temperature stands at 41 degrees, that of the Polish bourgeoisie stands at 36.

This, comrades, is what explains the Curzon ultimatum and the failure of that ultimatum. And if we leave aside diplomacy – the fact that we withdrew the letters, and our payment of those 100,000 silver roubles, which is, after all, a sum that even our modest budget can manage somehow – if we leave that aside and consider the political result, we get this picture: the most powerful imperialist state in Europe had put up with us for some time, but eventually presented us with an ultimatum, obviously hoping thereby to bring matters to a decisive conclusion. During the period of the ultimatum the government in Britain itself changed, and even in the government itself there was conflict over the ultimatum. The affair dragged on, and ended with us paying 100,000 roubles for two British agents, and we yielded in respect of what is called in the language of diplomacy 'prestige' – but, since our concept of prestige does not quite coincide with Lord Curzon's, we set a different price on this imponderable product. We have become stronger, we have become more powerful, and this is emphasised most sharply by the fact that we have entered into negotiations (for the time being of a preliminary nature) with Japan, that mighty imperialist power in the Far East which, though linked with the

Entente and with Britain, agreed to negotiations in the very period of the Curzon ultimatum.

How negotiations with Japan will end I will not at this moment undertake to predict: this is no simple matter, in view of the internal situation in Japan itself. The situation there is reminiscent of the pre-revolutionary epoch here. Japan is a bourgeois country, but its superstructure is still to an extraordinary extent feudal, caste-ridden and militarist. Japan passed through its reform period almost at the same time as our epoch of great reforms in the middle of the 19th century – our semi-abolition of serfdom, introduction of the zemstvo, a certain amount of press freedom, and so on. [The reforms of Tsar Alexander II and the 'restoration of Emperor Meiji' both took place in the 1860s.] Japan, too, had its epoch of great reforms, and this culminated in a constitution, but the constitution was drawn up on a basis of social estates and castes. Capitalism developed comparatively slowly, and served primarily to increase the armed might of the state. Great progress was achieved in that sphere, as, indeed, Tsardom was made to feel on its person. But during the imperialist war Japan's capitalism developed at a frenziedly feverish pace, and Japanese industry and the Japanese proletariat developed quantitatively to a high level. At the same time, Japanese bourgeois democracy is now fighting for state power against the cliques of the military caste. Telegrams bring news every day of particular episodes in this struggle. The Japanese bourgeoisie have organised themselves into a Cadet or Octobrist party which is called 'the party of business friends' – I won't try to say this in Japanese. [8] This party is headed by the local textile king. The central point in their programme is the restoration and development of trade relations with other states. The Japanese textile industry seeks an outlet in the markets of our Far East and Siberia, and also needs our Siberian raw material. On the other hand, however, the Japanese general staff has not yet played its last card. Some comrades, it seems to me, assess the situation very optimistically, taking it that victory has been secured for the policy of agreement with and recognition of Soviet Russia. There is, undoubtedly, a very great movement among the masses, not only among the workers but also among the bourgeoisie, in favour of recognising the Soviet Union and establishing normal relations with us, but it is hard to forecast how things will work out. I consider it more likely, on the basis of all the precedents we possess, that relations will become more strained and there will be a temporary strengthening of the capitalist [sic] cliques. ['Capitalist' is presumably a mistake for 'militarist'.] I think that Japan's negotiations with us will develop far less rapidly and painlessly than some people hope. In any case, we shall put no obstacles in the way of their success: that is certain.

Such, then, comrades, in broad outline, is our international situation. We have become stronger after the trials connected with the Curzon ultimatum, but it is impossible to predict the convulsions of the capitalist organism, and no astrologer will forecast what tomorrow holds for us. It is good, of course, that the ultimatum miscarried, that neither Poland nor Romania yielded to provocation. But all the elements of provocation, Fascism and Fochism, all these factors hostile to us are in operation, and what combination they will assumed tomorrow we do not know. That is why we have listened very closely to the instructions given by Foch to the Polish generals during his visit to Warsaw. [Foch arrived in Poland on May 2, 1923 and spent over a week there, attending military parades and visiting army units.] He said, we are informed, that in the next war the principal weapon will be aircraft, and victory will be ensured by chemical warfare.

Foch is absolutely right. We must concern ourselves with chemical warfare, not to

mention aircraft. We are now in Aviation Week, and I think that it will be a very good thing, as I have already said at another meeting, if, after this week, we make it a regular practice to answer every attack by the Fascists or the Fochists by building aeroplanes. They present us with an ultimatum – we build an aeroplane which we name 'Ultimatum', and so on. And since they offend us frequently and a great deal, we shall eventually read a whole stretch of history in our Soviet skies. And the more resolutely we carry out this work, the more we shall succeed in reducing the number of offences committed against us.

From the archives

Endnotes

- [1.](#) The Soviet Government bound itself 'not to support with funds or in any other form persons or bodies or agencies or institutions whose aim is to spread discontent or to foment rebellion in any part of the British Empire'.
- [2.](#) Curzon wrote: 'His Majesty's Government now understand that, in accordance with the normal arrangements governing the movements of members of the Russian diplomatic service, the transfer to another post of M. Raskolnikov, against whom the main charges have been made, has already been decided on.'
- [3.](#) The British representative in Persia was Sir Percy Loraine.
- [4.](#) **The Annual Register for 1923** wrote (p.58): 'In appearance, the result was a distinct success for Lord Curzon's diplomacy, as Russia had given way on all the main points. But if the object of his first note had been, as was widely believed, and as its tone seemed to indicate, to provoke a rupture, it was rather the critics of the Government who had reason to congratulate themselves.' The Third Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, meeting in June 1923' resolved that 'the enlarged executive congratulates the Soviet Government on not allowing itself to be provoked by British imperialism but, instead, by a clear and decisive policy which involved certain sacrifices, on having avoided the rupture which Britain's ruling classes wished to precipitate.'
- F. Conte, who used the Trotsky archives and Louis Fischer's notes of his conversations with Rakovsky, says that it was Trotsky himself who composed the Soviet reply to the Curzon ultimatum (**Un Révolutionnaire-diplomate: Christian Rakovski**, 1978, pp.97, 99).
- [5.](#) King Ferdinand of Romania was in poor health, and the Liberal leader Bratianu feared that Crown Prince Carol might get rid of him, if he became King, so he forced Carol to renounce his claim to the throne, and set up a 'Provisional Regency Council' packed with his own nominees.
- [6.](#) **Poslednie Novosti (The Latest News)** was the newspaper which Milyukov edited in Paris.
- [7.](#) Smillie had a majority of nearly 7,000 over the Liberal who stood against him. The Conservatives had not run a candidate, so as to 'keep the Socialist out'. The previous MP [?], a Labour 'moderate', had been elected with fewer votes than those cast for the Liberal and the Conservative who opposed him.
- [8.](#) Jitsugyo Doshikai (the Business Co-thinkers' Association, founded by Muto Sanji as a party for liberal elements, remained a negligible force in Japanese politics and was short-lived.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923 [\[1\]](#)

From an Interview with the American Senator King

[\[2\]](#)

* * *

'Is it possible that the USSR may intervene in the event of revolution in Germany?'

Before all and above all we want peace. We shall not despatch a single Red Army soldier across the frontiers of Soviet Russia unless we are forcibly compelled to do so. Our peasants and workers would not allow the Government to initiate any sort of military action, even if the Government were crazy enough to incline towards an aggressive policy. Of course, should the German monarchists be victorious, and should they then, having come to an agreement with the Entente, receive a mandate from the Allies for military intervention in Russia (this plan has been put forward more than once by Ludendorff and Hoffmann), we should fight, and I hope, be victorious. But I do not believe that this will happen. In any case, we shall certainly not intervene in any internal civil war. That is quite clear. We could intervene only by making war on Poland. And we do not want war. We do not conceal our sympathy with the German working class and with its heroic struggle for liberation. To be perfectly precise and frank, I will say that, if we could ensure victory for the German revolution without incurring the risk of war, we would do everything we could to that end. But we do not want war. War would also harm the German revolution. Only that revolution shows itself to be viable which succeeds by its own forces – especially where a great nation is concerned. We are wholly on the side of Germany against predatory and bloody French imperialism. We are heart and soul with the German working class in its struggle against exploitation, both foreign and domestic. And at the same time we are wholly for peace.

'What is the state of relations between Russia and Poland?'

If Americans want to obtain a manual of good breeding, patience and tact, I recommend that they use the volume containing our diplomatic correspondence with Poland. In her dealings with Poland Russia has shown truly angelic patience. Despite the Treaty of Riga, Poland has refused to recognise our government, which has now been reorganised on the basis of our Union constitution. Poland has pursued and is pursuing a malevolent policy towards us. But we keep in mind only too clearly that war between us and Poland would mean an all-European conflagration, which would wipe the remnants of European civilisation from the face of the earth. After such a war, Americans would visit Europe in order to study here the graveyard of an old culture.

'Nevertheless, is not the Soviet Government pursuing militarist aims, since it maintains a powerful Red Army, and does this not constitute a threat of armed intervention in support of revolution in Europe?'

And, likewise, of intervention by our navy in the event of revolution in the United States? ... Certainly we have an army, and we consider it not at all a bad one. We

have 600,000 soldiers. That is not a small number; but in comparison, for instance, with France, or with our nearest neighbours, our army is very small. If you take into account our population, the extent of our territory, our frontiers, our alluring natural wealth, you will have to admit that ours is an army of very limited size. We have already proposed once – and should America give us her support, we are prepared to renew the proposal – to reduce the size of our army to the minimum necessary for maintaining internal order, provided that our neighbours make similar reductions in their armies. In view of our still difficult economic situation, it would be madness on our part to try and enlarge our army. We have achieved modest but solid economic progress during the last couple of years, and we hope that our economic development will proceed at a faster pace during the next two or three years, if we can manage to remain at peace. Under these conditions, any military adventures would signify a terrible threat to our country's economic revival. Russia has no inclination towards aggressive war, if only because of her enormous distances and insufficiently developed rail communications. However, these same conditions, together with our severe winters, ensure to the full our capacity to defend ourselves, as has been proved more than once, beginning with Napoleon's campaigns, and earlier ones too, and ending with the recent interventions. All our constructive work in the military sphere is based on this fact. We are now creating a purely defensive territorial army, gradually transforming the Red Army's field forces into a militia, retaining only the cadres, that is, the commanders, to act as instructors and so on. A standing army is easy to turn into an instrument of aggression, but a territorial militia is, in itself, a guarantee to the whole world of a peaceful, purely defensive policy.

'How does the Soviet Government expect to restore trade relations with other countries when it refuses to recognise its old debts?'

Our own debts we pay and shall continue to pay, but we have no desire to pay anyone else's. Already in December 1905 the Petrograd Soviet, the forerunner of the present government, warned foreign powers and foreign capitalists that the Russian revolution would not recognise the debts incurred by the Tsars, or any other forms of assistance given by foreign capitalists to the Tsarist regime. This may seem unjust; but the planters of the Southern States, during the civil war of the 1860s, also considered unjust that act of civil war whereby the owners of Negro slaves were deprived of their right of ownership. However, it is thanks to the victory won in that civil war that America has grown to her present might. History does not advance in accordance with the line laid down in textbooks of international law. We may deplore this fact, but life is not based upon jurisprudence. Is it permissible, though, to undermine, on account of the past, potentialities for joint work in the present and the future?

You ask: where is the guarantee that we shall not repudiate our own obligations? I reply: in the logic of things. It would be simply suicidal on our part to repudiate obligations which we ourselves have assumed, if we are interested in steadily maintaining confidence in us on the part of the business world. I can assure you that, so long as private property continues to exist in America, we shall recognise American investments in Russia. We are aware of the numerous administrative, fiscal and other obstacles which foreign entrepreneurs encounter at present in our country. But these obstacles are to a considerable extent the result of the absence of properly-regulated relations. We, for our part, are ready to give every sort of assurance to serious American firms who would like to make long-term investments in our industry. The advantages accruing from this would be mutual. Relations between states, especially when their social systems are different, cannot be based

on sentimental considerations. There is no need for that. We are, of course, very grateful to the American people for the generous help it gave to our famine-victims. But business relations cannot be based merely on feelings of gratitude. They must be governed by considerations of mutual advantage. The relative geographical situation of our two countries precludes the possibility of any threat of a military-imperialist nature. Consequently, relations between us can be regulated by purely economic considerations. I am firmly convinced that the American commercial and industrial world will very soon recognise the importance of the Russian market. The United States has in recent years undergone a phase of mighty industrial boom. By the law of economic development, this boom will be followed by depression and crisis. The first symptoms have already appeared. If it is not to reduce production, America must find external markets. Thanks to Poincaré's policy, Europe is condemned to increasing ruin, for a period of many years. America's European markets will not expand, they will contract. Russia is poorer than Europe, but Russia is not sinking into ruin, it is on the upgrade. Consequently, Russia, and the whole Soviet Union, constitutes a natural market for American industry. The American farmer, too, is interested in seeing to it that the Russian peasant does not become a subject graingrower in the service of Europe, producing cheap grain and undermining prices on the world market. It is to the interest of the American farmer that American capital should participate actively in the industrial development of Russia, because this would at once increase our domestic consumption of grain, thereby reducing the amount of grain that we export. Big American firms could accelerate our industrial development, and in so doing obtain very large profits for themselves.

There is also a very important moral (but not in the least sentimental) factor which facilitates rapprochement between the Soviet United States and the United States of America. In our newspapers and technical journals you will often come across the words 'Americanism' and 'Americanisation', used in a very favourable, and not at all a disparaging sense. Russians are very eager to learn from the Americans rationally organised methods of production, scientific organisation of work, and this forms a moral basis for a bond with America. We know that your big-business circles are still very hesitant, but we have learnt patience and endurance in our struggle against Tsardom. Still more can we wait patiently in this case: common sense is on our side.

'Is it possible that you may go over from the New Economic Policy to War Communism?'

The New Economic Policy is an absolute necessity for our 90,000,000 peasants. If we were minded to smash our own heads, we should do away with this policy. There is, consequently, no need for any solemn declarations or manifestos in order to confirm the stability of the New Economic Policy. The conditions of our internal life ensure its complete stability.

Pravda,
September 30, 1923,
No.221

Endnotes

1. The occupation of the Ruhr industrial area by French troops, which deprived Germany of the centre of her iron and steel industry, dealt a heavy blow to Germany's economic and financial

position. The Cuno Government, being helpless to fight France, proclaimed passive resistance. The French command replied to this by expelling those officials who resisted and by bloody acts of repression, and later cut the Ruhr off completely from the rest of Germany. The German mark began to fall headlong. In February 1923, after the seizure of the Ruhr, the dollar stood at 22,000 marks: in July the fall of the mark became catastrophic, and by August 8, 1923 the exchange rate had fallen to 3,300,000 marks for one dollar. The workers' discontent began to manifest itself in mass strikes in the Ruhr region, and later in Central Germany and Silesia. Red Hundreds began to be organised, in opposition to the Fascist detachments which had been formed. The extremist parties – the Communists on one side, the Fascists on the other – grew stronger and stronger. Bavaria became the centre of German Fascism, while Saxony and Thuringia became the stronghold of the Communists. On August 11 a general strike began in Berlin, as a result of which Cuno resigned. His place was taken by Stresemann, the leader of the People's Party. His cabinet was joined by Social-Democrats, including Hilferding, who took the post of Minister of Finance. Stresemann announced that he would agree to fulfil the reparations undertakings, on condition that the Ruhr was evacuated and that there was no interference in Germany's internal affairs. The negotiations which he conducted with France on this question proceeded very slowly and led to no positive results. The German mark continued to fall catastrophically. Living conditions were made more and more difficult and the situation became increasingly acute. On September 27 Stresemann proclaimed a state of siege throughout Germany. All executive power was transferred to the Minister of Defence, Gessler, and President Ebert issued a manifesto proclaiming the end of passive resistance in the Ruhr region. Civil government commissioners were appointed for all parts of Germany. Relations became especially strained between Stresemann's government and the Zeigner government in Saxony, which at the beginning of October was made up of Left Social-Democrats and Communists and was forming Red Hundreds. The commander-in-chief of the Reichswehr in Saxony, General Muffler, issued an order for the dissolution of the proletarian Hundreds and Committees of Action. As the Saxon Government refused to submit to this order, Seeckt, the Reich head of the Reichswehr, moved army units into Saxony, which began to carry out arrests of the leaders of the proletarian Hundreds. On October 26 Stresemann demanded that the Saxon Government resign, on the grounds that the Communist members of this government had called for forcible action against the Reichswehr. The Saxon Government rejected Stresemann's ultimatum. In reply, on 29 October the Reich Commissioner Heinze occupied the Government building with units of the Reichswehr and dispersed the Government. Shortly before this, on October 23, a workers' revolt had broken out in Hamburg, and had been suppressed by the Reichswehr, and on October 21 the Rhineland separatists, backed by the French, had proclaimed an independent Rhenish Republic at Aachen. At the beginning of November the Reichswehr also occupied Thuringia, where there was a Left-wing government which included Communists.

In Bavaria the Fascists came out openly against the central government. Their movement was headed by Ludendorff and Hitler. On November 8 they overthrew the Kahr Government, but, as the Reichswehr did not join them, their revolt was put down on the following day. As a result of these events the Stresemann Government managed to retain power. The policy of the Stresemann Government was continued by the Marx Government, which was formed at the end of November, with Stresemann as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The speeches and articles in Chapter Four are devoted to all these events, which might have led to a workers' revolution in Germany.

2. Senator King was one of a group of five American Congressmen who spent several weeks in the USSR. President Harding had just died, and there were hopes that his successor, Coolidge, might prove to be more friendly to the Soviets.

In his conversation with 'Johnson' (C.L.R. James) in 1939, Trotsky rebutted the charge that this interview was a symptom of 'degeneration': 'In revolution it is always wise to throw on the enemy the responsibility. Thus, in 1917, they asked me at the Soviet: "Are the Bolsheviks preparing an insurrection?" What could I say? I said: "No, we are defending the revolution, but if you provoke us ...!" It was the same thing here. Poland and France were using the Russian Bolsheviks as a pretext for preparing the intervention and reactionary moves [in relation to Germany]. With the full consent of the German comrades I gave this interview, while the German comrades explained this situation to the German workers. Meanwhile, I had a cavalry detachment under Dybenko ready on the Polish border!'

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

Reply to Greeting from the Artillery Units of the West-Siberian Military District

To the Red Army men, commanders and political workers of the artillery units of the West-Siberian military district

* * *

Dear Comrades! Hearty thanks for your comradely greeting. The situation in Europe is extremely disturbed. The ruling bourgeoisie is showing more and more clearly that it is incapable of ensuring any sort of peace and order for the peoples. The danger of new blows against the Soviet Union is extremely great. Should danger thrust itself upon us, I shall count confidently on the Red Army men, commanders, and political workers of the artillery units of the West-Siberian Military District.

Izvestiya,
October 5, 1923, No.225

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923 [\[1\]](#)

Letter to the Editorial Board of *Rote Fahne*

* * *

Dear Comrades! Madness and chaos reign in Europe. The three southern peninsulas [\[1\]](#) are officially in the grip of Fascism. [\[2\]](#) French militarism intends to strangle the German people. But when one opens a new issue of **Rote Fahne** one feels that the German people, represented by its working class, is alive and great, and able to cut its way into the, future.

Rabochaya Gazeta,
October 17, 1923,
No.234

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Pyrennean peninsula (Spain), the Apennine peninsula (Italy) and the Balkan peninsula (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece).

[2.](#) The term 'Fascism' was used rather loosely in the Comintern at this time. In 1931 Trotsky acknowledged that it had been wrong to call the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1921-1930) 'fascist'.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

Report to the Third Moscow Provincial Congress of the All-Russia Union of Metal Workers

October 19, 1923

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We are passing through weeks and months such as rarely occur in a thousand years, and which are even, perhaps, without precedent in history. Before the October revolution we saw as the event in world history that was most important and closest to us the Great French Revolution and the events which followed it, including the Napoleonic Wars. But those events are utterly insignificant compared with what is now approaching in Central Europe. The proletarian revolution in Germany has matured. We believed that world revolution would follow the world imperialist war. Six years after, unceasing class battles continue in Europe. In 1918 the Hohenzollerns were over-thrown in Germany. A Socialist Government was formed there. Copying the Petrograd example, the ministers were called commissars. The working class had come to power, but it was led by Social Democrats. The Social-Democrats acted as though they were plenipotentiaries of the bourgeoisie for liquidating the proletarian revolution. The Social Democratic ministers gradually reduced themselves to nullity, yielding all power to representatives of big capital. The country's economy collapsed. The mark fell so fast that even our nimble Soviet rouble could not keep pace with it. Twelve millions of Germany's working people are under the heel of foreign capital. Up to 75 per cent of the coal and iron-ore of the Ruhr has been seized by the enslavers. Germany has no way out of the social crisis. Either collapse, impoverishment, cultural savagery, or proletarian revolution. Renewed attempts are being made to resort to the help of the Social-Democrats. But, at the same time, the power and influence of the Communist Party over the masses is growing.

For a revolution to succeed, it is necessary that the economic conditions for it shall have ripened. Have they ripened in Germany? Yes, they have. German industry is concentrated, and is so well organised technically that it is surpassed only by America. It will be considerably easier to organise a socialist economy in Germany than here, owing to our backwardness. The cultural level of the German worker is sufficiently high for him to carry through the revolution. Thus, technical and political conditions are present which are favourable for revolution in Germany. What are the conditions where class composition is concerned? Here, at the time of the October Revolution, there were three million workers out of a total population of 150,000,000, most of whom were peasants. In Germany, of the population of 60,000,000, fifteen million are industrial workers and three million agricultural workers. That is an imposing force. One more condition is needed, namely, that the class shall want and shall be able to take power. The Social-Democrats who led the German proletariat gradually degenerated into an agency of the bourgeoisie. The line of conduct of the Social Democrats during the imperialist war proved to be bankrupt from the class standpoint. After the war, the working class of Germany

hurled itself towards power. But between it and power stood the Social-Democrats.

In the last few years the Communist Party has begun to come to the forefront. There is no doubt that this party, as the leader of the workers' movement, wants to take power. The question remains: can it? It is quite beyond question for us that revolution is inevitable in Germany, that the working class is ready for it. Since 1918 the German working class has shed much blood for the conquest of power, but has not succeeded in conquering power because its leaders were too weak for their role. Since the Third Congress of the Third International the importance of the German Communist Party, the new leader of the working class, has progressively increased.

The present crisis in Germany has grown out of the occupation of the Ruhr. Stresemann surrendered to French imperialism. But French usurers' capital did not want to talk with the vanquished. The German bourgeois state is in its death-throes. Essentially, there is no longer a united Germany. Bavaria, with its population of nine millions, is under the rule of moderate Fascism. [1] Saxony, with its population of eight millions, has a coalition government of Communists and Left Social-Democrats. Neither state takes any notice of the central government, of Berlin, where the helpless Stresemann now rules. Parliament has ceded to him its powers, the powers of impotence. Stresemann holds on only because neither the Communist Party nor the Fascists have as yet finally seized power. But the Left Wing of Germany's political front continues to grow.

What are the chances for the working class in the impending struggle?

We already possess our revolutionary coup d'oeil. Technically, the country is ready. The level of the working class is sufficiently high. The class is led by a Communist Party which manifests the will to power. But it is not sufficient to calculate resources, they have to be put to use. Will the German Communist Party be able to make use of conditions now present?

What is the difference between the conditions that existed here at the time of the October revolution and the conditions in Germany today? We had an armed mass of oppressed people, the army of that time, which followed our slogans. The working class of Germany is confronted by the state's army of 100,000 men, including 3,000 officers. The Treaty of Versailles forbids an army any larger than that. This army is recruited from volunteers, who join for a twelve-year engagement. The army is scattered all over a country of 50 million inhabitants (if we exclude the Ruhr), of whom more than a third are proletarians. This force is not a reliable support for the bourgeoisie, especially in present-day revolutionary conditions. Then there is the state police force of 135,000 men. It is made up of members of trade unions, most of whom are Social-Democrats, with a Menshevik outlook. Few in number, elderly, burdened with families, they are hardly likely to be eager to fight for the cause of Stinnes and capital. [2] The third counter-revolutionary force consists of the Fascist battalions. These are led by general staff officers who are well skilled in the art of massacring people. They are familiar with railway transport matters, in so far as these are germane to their purposes. The numbers of the Fascist battalions are a military secret. But there are grounds for thinking that they amount to between two and three hundred thousand men. They are made up of sons of the bourgeoisie, members of the petty-bourgeoisie and of the reactionary-minded section of the peasantry, and lumpen-proletarians.

These are the forces on one side, and on the other side stand the Workers'

Hundreds. [*Hundertschaften* is sometimes translated as 'centuries'.] What are their numbers? We do not know. That is a military secret of the German working class. But we can assume that, in a country with 15 million industrial and three million agricultural proletarians, the proportion in the Workers' Hundreds must be adequate.

Such is the relation of forces.

At one meeting I was asked whether it was not opportunism on the part of the Communists of Saxony to enter a compromiser government. This is not opportunism but a revolutionary measure. Remember that in August 1917 we proposed to the Mensheviks and SRs that we form a bloc against the counter-revolutionary forces. Then, later, we had the coalition with the Left SRs owing to the need to find support among the opposition-minded peasantry, who at that time followed the Left SRs.

The Social-Democrats of Saxony found themselves gripped between pincers. On the one hand was the working class and its representative, the Communist Party, and, on the other, General Müller, acting on behalf of General Seeckt and the central government. Workers' Saxony and Fascist Bavaria, the *places d'armes* of the opposing sides, were gathering their forces. General Müller demanded that the Workers' Hundreds be disbanded, and prepared to strike a blow at Saxony, bringing up troops and artillery to its frontier. The workers refused to obey the central government's order transmitted by General Müller. We are on the brink of civil war, if Müller and Seeckt put their threat into effect. The government of Saxony has been compelled to appeal to the workers of all Germany to support the Saxon proletariat. The central committee of the German Social-Democratic party has asked the Government what is the significance of the campaign against Saxony. Just imagine how the average worker in Berlin will react to the news that a workers' coalition government has been formed in Saxony, and that Seeckt, as agent of the central government, is moving against it. The workers of Germany, and, in particular, the workers in railway transport, are preparing a strike in order to paralyse the Fascist blow against Saxony.

The pace of military developments is getting swifter throughout the country. Events are proceeding according to plan. Circumstances are taking shape which are extremely favourable for the working class. But Germany is not alone. She has neighbours, and she does not occupy such an extensive territory as we do. Will the German workers keep power in their hands, given the present international situation, that is the question. The main enemy of the German revolution is Britain, that time-honoured enemy of all revolutions. Britain is helpless on land. Her previous strength was based upon the mutual antagonism of two powerful adversaries on the continent – for example, France and Germany. Britain's helplessness on land was shown particularly clearly in the affair of the Curzon ultimatum, which has left a notch in our memory in the shape of several aeroplanes. No less vivid an example of Britain's helplessness on land is her position on the Ruhr question, and also in relation to Turkey.

The revolution is taking place on land, and on land, as we have seen, Conservative Britain is not dangerous. Germany's strongest and most dangerous neighbour on the Continent is France. The Communist Party of France is strong, but it would be inexcusable optimism to overestimate its importance.

However, what does this mean – that the German revolution will be crushed by

foreign soldiers? We have the example of the German occupation of the Ukraine, which required an army of 250,000 men. And in the Ukraine there were far fewer towns, and an insignificantly developed network of railways. A foreign occupation of industrialised Germany would need between 1,500,000 and 1,750,000 soldiers. It has been observed that occupation troops become revolutionised very quickly, and to some extent disintegrate as a military force. The French army numbers 700,000 men. France's own army would not be sufficient if she were to decide to occupy a revolutionary Germany, and other countries, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, could supply her with no more than 500,000 extra men. This means that France would have to meet the shortfall in the numbers of the army of occupation by calling up eight age-groups. In our country such a call-up would produce a contingent of one million in a single year. It was my lot to spend the first three years of the war in France. And I saw what effect the losses suffered in the imperialist war had upon French society. For a nation of 39 millions, distinguished by its meagre growth of population, the loss of one and a half million men was colossal. There was hardly a single family in France that had not had some of their kinsfolk killed in the war. In France today there are many Italian, Spanish, Czechoslovak and Polish workers. If the French peasant finds himself burdened, over and above the 300 milliards war debt, with a war of occupation and the call-up of eight age-groups, he will not put up with it. Intervention by France in revolutionary Germany is not only not practicable, it would be plain madness. However, we do not know what madness a moribund bourgeoisie will venture upon in order to save itself.

It is hard to suppose that Poland would risk advancing on Berlin. All it could gain would be a tuft of the bear's ear. It is said that war with Poland is inevitable. But that is not so. There are many reasons for thinking that there will be no war with Poland. What would such a war mean for us? It would cause us unjustifiable economic and cultural harm and strike a monstrous blow at our constructive work. We do not want war, and we must and will do everything possible to avoid it. We are wholly on the side of the German workers. We would eagerly stretch out a hand to them over the head of Poland in order to encourage them, where necessary. The German workers do not need military support in their domestic struggle. It is a poor look-out for a revolution if it cannot conquer by its own forces. But what the German worker who has begun his revolution cannot do without is Soviet grain. Just as the German worker needs our grain, so the Russian peasant needs an outlet to the European grain market. Our grain prices are disastrously low. Given the present price-conjuncture it is going to be hard to ensure that the peasantry will go forward in single economic harness with the workers. The German proletariat has command of the industrial products that we need. Reciprocal exchange of goods must begin between Germany and the Soviet Union, in the interests of both sides. The geographical key to this exchange is in the hands of Poland. Poland can serve us as a bridge, or can become a barrier. If she proves to be a bridge for our traffic we will pay her in cash. If we cannot convey our grain across Poland to the German workers, and in exchange receive the manufactured goods we need, we shall suffocate economically. Consequently, if Poland proves to be a barrier between us and Germany, she must find herself between pincers. We are ready to pay dearly for peace, but we will not allow our country to perish economically and the German proletariat to die of hunger. After the war with Poland we sought to obtain a common frontier with Germany, but we had Wrangel in our rear and were unable to get what we wanted. Now we are offering to Poland, in exchange for peace and transit across her territory, facilities for transit to the East across Soviet territory. That is our position in the present international situation. [3] Our demands are

realisable, but whether they will be realised it is impossible to say with any certainty. The odds in favour of peace are 51 to 49. The moment calls for unusual self-control, and we need to prepare for war as though it were inevitable. In this connection we are now paying particular attention to the state of our army, our aircraft and our war industry.

Some comrades suppose that, because the revolution is maturing in Germany, we do not need to bother about everyday work, about NEP, about trifles. This mood must be repressed. In fact it is not possible to skip out of everyday preoccupations. On the contrary, where everything is concerned that you have to do in the sphere of everyday work, you must now do it three times as well, three times as much, three times as fast. The German revolution does not require of us that we brush aside the practical tasks of the day. On the contrary, our current practical work has now become more responsible than ever.

I repeat, war is undesirable, it is not inevitable, but it is probable. If it should come, it will be a war that has been forced upon us. We must not lose our nerve amid the events that are approaching. The country will understand that we wanted to avoid war, but could not. The working masses, headed by the organised working class, will follow us and we shall emerge from this new trial with honour and in triumph.

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Bavarian Government 'of moderate Fascism' was a reactionary separatist government which aimed to restore the Wittelsbachs to the throne of Munich and take Bavaria out of the Reich. Although it gave refuge and protection to Right-wing elements from all over Germany, those of them who were 'centralists' (for a united Germany), such as the Nazis, were bound to clash with it – as duly happened, in the 'beer-hall putsch' in November 1923, when the Bavarian police killed 16 Brownshirts, to whom Hitler dedicated the book **Mein Kampf**, that he wrote in prison after this experience. (This was the original allusion of the line in the *Horst Wessel Song* which speaks of 'comrades shot down by the Red Front *and by the Reaction.*')

[2.](#) Stinnes, a well-known German capitalist who headed a very big industrial grouping which included enterprises in the coal industry, iron and steel, engineering, the electro-technical industry, etc., and owned steamship lines and a number of newspapers, wielded great influence in the political life of Germany.

[3.](#) There was no question, in 1920-1921, of an actual 'common frontier' between Soviet Russia and Germany. What was sought was a common frontier with Lithuania, which state, out of fear of Poland, was disposed to co-operate with Russia. At the Russo-Polish armistice negotiations Joffe proposed a frontier which would have given Russia direct access to Lithuania and, through that country, to Germany (East Prussia). But the Poles insisted that they must have a common frontier with Latvia, and their seizure of Vilna effectively separated Lithuania from Russia.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

Report to the Eighth All-Russia Congress of the Transport Workers' Union

October 20, 1923

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Comrades! A report on the international situation covers nowadays a great variety of subjects, and does this, so to speak, at a variety of levels. Our international relations with the capitalist countries of Europe and America are developing, with vacillations this way or that, very slowly, on the whole, in the direction of recognition of the Soviet Union and development of economic relations with us. But, today, events of a quite different order are forcing their way into this slow process. First and foremost there is the German revolution. You will not ask me to give you, today, a detailed account of our international relations in the narrowly diplomatic sense of the word, because all those questions are now sinking into the background under the influence of facts of colossal importance which have their centre in Germany.

To complete my prelude, I will merely note that both America and Europe are now once more entering a phase of commercial and industrial crisis. Europe barely emerged from such a crisis two years ago. America, however, has in the last two years experienced a tremendous boom in trade and industry, so that it had no need of external markets and could calmly leave Europe, including us, to our own fate. In that period American capital turned its back on us. But now, a few months ago, symptoms of commercial and industrial crisis have appeared in America. The domestic market is insufficient: America needs an external market: Europe as a whole cannot provide this market, since its purchasing-power is falling. Our purchasing-power has recently increased, even if only slowly. Hence the great upsurge of attention to and interest in the Soviet Union on the part of American capital. This fact may prove to be of very great importance for our economic development, but, even so, it has become of secondary or even tertiary importance because the behaviour of America, like that of all Europe, and of ourselves, will depend, first and foremost, immediately and directly upon the way in which events in Germany develop, how they turn out, and how they end.

A few months ago we voiced some suggestions as to the tempo at which the German events would proceed. Some of us could depict this tempo as slower, some as faster. But today, comrades, there is no longer any need to guess. Events are unfolding in Germany, linked one with another, like a system of cog-wheels. And when we now look at Germany even through the lenses of Rosta telegrams, the German press and our own press – that is, when we look at Germany from afar – we see with complete clarity and distinctness a precise mechanism of developing revolutionary events. Germany has already entered a period of direct and immediate revolution, that is, of struggle for state power between the basic classes of society. I do not have, of course, to expound to you in detail the conditions which

make revolution possible and guarantee its success. I will recall them only in broad outline. For a proletarian revolution to be possible there must be, first, a certain level of development of the productive forces; second, the proletariat must be of a certain size and play a certain role in production; and, finally, there is the so-called subjective premise, that is, the proletariat must want to conquer power, and know how to do this. Germany has been ripe for the proletarian revolution for years and years already. German industrial technique is the highest and most concentrated of any in the world, and can stand comparison even with American. The German industrial proletariat, which accounts for 15 millions in a population of 60 millions (including children and old people), forms the over-whelming majority of the country's inhabitants. To them must be added the three million agricultural workers. I repeat, we see here a country in which the proletariat constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population. But where the matter of the subjective conditions for the revolution was concerned the need for the proletariat to *want* to take power and to *know* how to do this – these conditions were lacking. They were lacking before the imperialist war, which was why that war occurred. They were lacking in November 1918, when, after the defeat of the German army, power passed into the hands of the Social-Democrats. At that time, too, the working class moved spontaneously towards power, but in the preceding decades it had created out of its own ranks a party superstructure, the German Social-Democratic Party, which absorbed the elite of the working class; and this superstructure, in its turn, became a hostage to the ruling classes, suffered transformation, became an apparatus for taming and restraining the working class. And we had in Germany the fact that the proletariat was in power through the mediation of the Social-Democrats, but the Social-Democrats, having come to power, saw themselves not as the revolutionary representatives of the proletariat but as a political agency of the bourgeoisie. That was the meaning of the revolution of November 9, 1918. In accordance with its whole nature and spirit, German Social-Democracy gradually handed power over to the bourgeoisie.

And only when the internal situation, in its economic and financial aspects, had become absolutely hopeless did the bourgeoisie again beckon the Social-Democrats back to power and again form a coalition with them.

That is the story of the last few months, when a coalition between the bourgeoisie and the Social-Democrats has been formally in power in Germany. Only after the defeat in the war was the Communist Party of Germany formed out of underground groups. Unlike our Party, with its quarter-century of revolutionary traditions and the tempering in underground struggle that went with this, in Germany the Communist Party, that is, the genuine revolutionary party of the proletariat, is a creation of recent years. The German working class was duped in November 1918. It is natural that it should observe a waiting attitude towards the policy of the German Communist Party, letting this party reveal itself, prove itself in action, and win the confidence of the workers. With the revolutionary impatience of a young party, the German Communist Party made an attempt to seize power without preparation. That happened in March 1921. It was cruelly in error. The Third Congress of the Communist International, in July 1921, read the German Communist Party a lesson that was both severe and salutary. It told the German comrades: your task still consists not in directly fighting for power but in fighting to win the trust of the working class. To some of the German comrades, as also to some of the Russian comrades, that lesson from the Third Congress seemed opportunist, temporising and insufficiently revolutionary, but in Germany today there is not a single Communist who would not admit that the lesson was a salutary one. Since then – through 1921, 1922 and 1923 – the German Communist Party has fully mastered

Bolshevik tactics, that is, the combination of true revolutionariness with realism with firm taking into account of the state of relations and the prospects. Under the slogan of the united front of the working class, and then of the workers' and peasants' government, the German Communist Party is, step by step, winning the confidence of ever larger sections of the working class. And since the occupation of the Ruhr by France, in the course of this year, when the German economy, deprived of iron ore and coal, has finally been driven into a *cul-de-sac*, when the hopelessness of the situation has become completely obvious, when the bourgeois parties are competing with each other only in helplessness, when the Social-Democrats have no programme other than support for a bourgeoisie which is helpless and has lost all its resources – in this period the Communist Party is increasingly rising before the working class as the only leader, the only possible saviour not only of the proletariat but of the entire German people.

From that moment, and especially since July of this year, it has become clear that the German revolution is drawing close to the gates of history. And now the question arises – what will happen at the decisive moment? Will the German Communist Party, having won the confidence of the majority of the working class, prove capable, will it find in itself sufficient tempering, will-power, resolution, to carry through an armed uprising and by battle take state power? This period has been characterised by disputes and arguments about what a revolution is, what is meant by an armed uprising. For a certain time the German Communist Party has been looking forward to the revolution as something objective and weighty which will come. The more conscious elements in its ranks and in the Comintern itself put the question like this: the revolution has already arrived, it is already all around us, but precisely in order that the revolution may not pass us by, or jump over our heads, we, as a Party, must set ourselves the immediate task of smashing the enemy in open revolutionary battle. In order to smash the enemy it is necessary to counterpose to him an organised force, it is necessary to have a plan of struggle, and, finally, it is necessary to have behind one certain stages of struggle: later, it is necessary to go over, from the plane of agitation, propaganda and events foreseen, on to the plane of military-revolutionary clashes, armed uprising and the seizure of power.

Going over from agitation and propaganda to direct and immediate struggle for power is always a very painful process for any revolutionary party. It is one thing to fight for influence over the masses, the millions, and quite another, having put oneself at the head of these millions, to undertake the immediate task, in the given conditions and circumstances, against the given enemy, of carrying through an uprising, of seizing power. Here the vanguard of the working class has to take a tremendous political and psychological leap forward, to disentangle itself from the purely propagandist sphere of work in order to lead the class in making a very great social overturn.

You know, comrades, that in our country this turn was not effected easily or simply, that there were vacillations, despite the fact that our Party had incomparably greater tempering and more revolutionary experience than the party in Germany. It is to be feared that in Germany the internal vacillations in the Communist Party will be more substantial, more important, and therefore more dangerous, than they were with us on the eve of October 25, 1917. But the German party has something that we did not then have: it has first, our experience, and, second, the ideological help of the Communist International. Thanks to this, undoubtedly it has already dealt with its internal difficulties more easily (even if you consider that it has already dealt with them thoroughly) than we were able to do six

years ago. So far as we can judge, from afar, and to the extent that we can form a clear picture of what has happened, the Communist Party has now acquired the resolution necessary if it is to carry out the supreme task of the Party and the proletariat, that is, to seize power.

Are the objective conditions for the impending struggle favourable or not? What are the forecasts, the auguries? Before such decisive battles, comrades, it is, of course, never possible to calculate the forces precisely, and, still less, to draw a precise conclusion. If that were possible where social battles are concerned, such battles would never take place. I have often had occasion to refer to the simple consideration that, even when a group of workers go on strike against a capitalist, it is impossible to know precisely, in advance, how the strike will end. If this were known beforehand, then either the workers would not begin their strike or the capitalist would give in to them without a strike. Every struggle develops its inner forces: these inner forces have an influence on the market, they evoke either sympathy or the absence thereof among other workers, sympathy by one capitalist for another, and so on. If that is what happens in a strike, how must it be in a revolution of the proletariat, in which colossal, numerous, immeasurable forces are engaged – in which what is involved is a country of 60 million people? In such a case, comrades, it is impossible to say beforehand that, here, victory will be absolutely guaranteed.

It is just for this reason that revolution, struggle, becomes inevitable, that only through revolution, through armed uprising, can victory be won, and it is impossible to predict precisely what the outcome will be. But, at the same time, in both military and revolutionary conflicts, one can and must estimate the relationship of forces, the real resources, and consequently, the real possibilities. As regards the numbers of the enemy, of the two hostile camps, there is colossal superiority on our side. About that I have spoken already. An industrial proletariat 15 millions strong, highly cultured and centralised by virtue of the very character of German industry, constitutes a force such as never before entered the revolutionary arena in such dimensions. What have we on the other side? We have trustified, centralised capital and landlordism, and the Fascist fighting squads maintained at their expense, squads which are dependent not just in the theoretical sense, but quite directly dependent, upon Stinnes. Fascism is the fighting organisation of commercial and industrial, large-scale financial, banking capital in Germany, which, in turn, finds its embodiment in Stinnes. He is in the exact sense of the word the boss, the dictator of Germany. We have talked about the concentration of industry according to Marx, as set out in textbooks: we have talked about how it tends to become reduced to a small number of magnates of capital, and so on and so forth: and now we have in Germany a situation in which the boss, the economic boss of the country, is, essentially, one man – Stinnes. The French Government is unwilling to negotiate with the Stresemann Government – it negotiates with Stinnes. In Germany there is an illegal army, a Fascist army, which various sources of information tell us numbers between 200,000 and 400,000 fighting men, and this army is financed by Stinnes. The German press is in his hands, and so on. That is the basic force of concentrated capital, which has created its own army, just as in our country, in the Tsarist period, after 1905, the landlords formed units recruited among the Ingushes or the Circassians [\[1\]](#), the most ignorant elements in Caucasia. Fascism is the organisation of Stinnes's Ingushes, for the defence of private property, the stock exchange, capital and so on and so forth. What is there in between? Between the revolutionary proletariat and the Fascists we have the petty and middle strata of the bourgeoisie, ruined and semi-ruined; the intelligentsia, ruined or becoming ruined; and also relatively considerable elements, though even so constituting only a tiny

minority, of the working class. At the top of the state, in its organisation and its press, Social-Democracy is still a big power, but it already reflects the power of yesterday; its support, the mass of the working class, is slipping away from under its feet with every passing day and hour. The latest telegrams, the latest despatches from Germany give a very clear picture precisely of this process. I will say something about that when I come to the question of Saxony. The central democratic nucleus is German Kerenskyism: to the Right of it is Fascism, to the Left of it is Communism. This central nucleus is dwindling and dwindling, because the workers, and not only the workers, but also broad strata of the bourgeoisie and even the intelligentsia and the peasants (not to speak of the rural proletariat) are increasingly gravitating leftward. Elements of the central democratic bloc are breaking away rightward, moving towards Fascism, in which they see salvation, and we observe a growth of the extreme wings, with an intensification of contradictions and weakness at the centre. This is why the central government in Germany is now a miserable fiction. The German Parliament, the Reichstag, has abdicated its own powers in favour of the ministry it elected. If we Communists were still in need of one more demonstration, one more proof, of the utter rottenness of democratism, of bourgeois parliamentarism, here would be our example – the German Parliament, a democratic body elected on a basis of universal suffrage and so on. When maximum effort is required of it, this parliament liquidates itself and grants extraordinary plenary powers to the ministry it has itself created – and this ministry, in its turn, hands over its plenary powers to Seeckt: Seeckt appoints his plenipotentiary generals: in particular, in Saxony, Müller. In our country Kolchak grew out of the Constituent Assembly at Ufa: in Germany there emerges from the democratic Reichstag, as though by a conjuring trick, General Seeckt, and from General Seeckt proceed other offshoots in the form of generals – Müller and others. Parliament is dwindling before our eyes, and along with its annihilation goes the annihilation of German Kerenskyism, German democratism. Furthermore, comrades, we see how Germany is disintegrating geographically, in accordance with whichever social forces are predominant in each particular region. There is no united Germany today. I do not even mention that about 12 million of Germany's inhabitants are under enemy rule, enemy occupation, mostly by France. But the remaining 48 to 50 millions do not form a united social and state entity, either. We have Bavaria, with a population of about 9 millions, which is now essentially an independent state. Beside it, to the north, we have little Thuringia, and to the east-north-east is Saxony. Thuringia and Saxony together have a population of 7½ to 8 millions, if my memory does not let me down, that is, a little more [*sic*] than in Bavaria. In power in Bavaria is the Fascist Kahr, who is the link between those Fascists (the party of Prince Rupprecht) who want to break clean away from Germany and those Fascists who want to create a united Germany (the party of Seeckt, Ludendorff, etc.). But since both the German Separatists, that is, those who want to break away, and the German Fascists, those who want to restore German unity, desire, above all, to defend private property, there is a bridge between them, and on that bridge stands the Bavarian dictator, Kahr. In this connection some comrades at our meetings in Moscow sent up to me a written question asking whether our comrades over there have not committed an act of opportunism – those Communists who, after several years of ruthless struggle against the Menshevik organisation, against the Social-Democrats, have now joined with them in the same government.

Undoubtedly, this step they have taken is surprising, at first sight. Yet this is a quite correct step, and it testifies to the colossal political success that this coalition represents for us. I will speak about this presently, but first I will remind you that

we ourselves were not without sin in this respect. During the period of Kornilov's movement, Comrade Lenin wrote, in our central organ of that time, that the Bolsheviks were proposing a compromise, that is, that under certain conditions, Messrs Mensheviks and SRs, we will form a bloc with you. Neither the Mensheviks nor the SRs joined that bloc: too little time remained before their death, and they did not want to bring nearer the hour of its coming. But the proposal was made. And after October, quite soon after, we formed a coalition government with the Left SRs. That is still fresh in everyone's memory. The bloc with the Left SRs ended tragically, though. There came a moment when one section of the Council of People's Commissars, a section of the Left SR Commissars, sat in one of the buildings belonging to the Cheka of that time, and fired shells at the Kremlin. [\[1b\]](#) I saw one of those shells with my own eyes. That end to the coalition was not, of course, actually included in the programme when the coalition was formed; but if a balance be struck, then it turns out that we were the gainers, because the break-up of the coalition meant at the same time the liquidation of the Left SR party. Our party proved to be the master of the situation. Therefore, under certain conditions (I am quoting this case so as to clarify the situation) even the entry of Communists into coalition with an essentially petty-bourgeois party which still commands the allegiance of a certain section of the workers or the poor peasants, is a step which, though apparently opportunist, is in essence revolutionary. It is an action taken in order to accelerate development, to bring nearer the ruin of the party with which we have formed the coalition. What we are seeing in Saxony is the same phenomenon, though under different conditions. Saxony is a country inhabited by members of the textile proletariat, a highly compact, densely populated part of Germany. The Saxon proletariat is very revolutionary in outlook. The Social-Democratic Party in Saxony, under the pressure of this proletariat, is the most Left-wing section of the German Social-Democratic Party as a whole. We put forward the slogan of the united front, and the Social-Democratic workers, especially in Saxony, demanded that it be realised. Under their pressure, their leaders, those Left-wing Social-Democrats most of whom are articles of very dubious quality, found themselves obliged, nevertheless, to enter into a united front, a bloc, for the purpose of forming coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia. We joined these governments as a minority: our people have two ministries (one of them is in charge of the affairs of the Council of Ministers), and the others are the majority. [\[2\]](#) But the very fact of the formation of the coalition government in Saxony meant a mortal blow for the German Social-Democracy. This can now be said with full confidence, and the most striking facts provided by today's post leave no room for doubt of it. Indeed, you all know very well the profound attachment felt by the worker for the organisation which first awakened him, raised him up and organised him, making him a conscious being. This sense of an intimate bond is felt by the German workers in relation to the Social-Democratic Party. That party has certainly betrayed him, but, all the same, once upon a time, under Hohenzollern, it awakened him and through decades it educated and enlightened him, and it is very hard for workers, even those who know that their party is following the wrong path, to break with it. This is why, in spite of all the betrayals and baseness of German Social-Democracy the mass of the workers, discontented, grumbling, pushing their party forward and sideways, have nevertheless not broken with it, have not taken the step that would carry them over its threshold and into the Communist Party. That is a very painful step for a worker to take when he has been connected through long years with a certain organisation, and it now turns out that there is no need for him to take that step in such an abrupt form. Let the workers see that the Communists, whom the Social-Democrats have denounced as a party which is the undoing of Germany and the German working class, a party with which one can

have nothing in common and whose members are vassals of Russia, and so on – that the Communists have turned out to be, in a certain part of Germany, in the same government and in the same fighting Hundreds with Social-Democratic workers. The wall which German Social-Democracy has diligently raised and strengthened between its own and the Communist workers, has now been broken through, and, since the mass of the Social-Democratic workers are psychologically disposed towards a revolutionary policy, when the breach in the wall became apparent, they rushed towards the Communists. This is happening in various ways. While they do not join the Communist Party, they are ideologically linked with it, and when they do join it they will support it absolutely. Here are the latest facts from today's news. In the Saxon city of Chemnitz (this is the birthplace of the great hangman Noske [3]: Noske was a proletarian, a tobacco worker, one of those traitor-proletarians of whom there have been not a few in the history of various countries), in Chemnitz, where Noske was the absolute boss, where he enjoyed unlimited trust, in this Chemnitz, during the first week of the current month, sixty factory committees consisting of Social-Democrats went over to the Communist Party. In Berlin, in Brandenburg, all over the country, the influence of the Communist Party has increased to a colossal extent in recent weeks. As regards Saxon Social-Democracy, today's information says that the Social Democratic organisation in Saxony *geht in die Brüche*, that is, it is falling to pieces. The Social-Democrats, that is, the very ones who entered into a coalition with us, in which they were in the majority, should, it might have seemed, have been the masters of the situation; and if some Left Communists, who cannot think very straight, are saying in Germany that they are supporting the Saxon Social-Democrats, then it must be said that they are supporting them in the same way that the rope supports the hanged man. Politically, therefore, the result of the coalition is truly brilliant so far as we are concerned.

But this still does not solve the problem. In Saxony our party's influence is especially complete. But we are not alone in Saxony. Also in Saxony is General Müller, sent by Seeckt, and General Müller has the Reichswehr, that is, the German army. In addition, he has, by a special order, brought the Saxon police under his command. Besides this there are the clandestine Fascist organisations which are also moving towards Saxony and which to some extent, exist in Saxony as well. At their head stands General Müller. He calls on the Saxon Government to dissolve the Workers' Hundreds. The Saxon Government, which is based on a most democratic Landtag, refuses to do this. General Müller arrests some leaders of the Hundreds. Along with this we have also other facts which point to the existence in Germany of a situation such as is provided for in no constitution. The Fascist Rossbach, who had organised rebellions and so on, was in a Saxon prison, and then he was released. The Saxon Government ordered his arrest. The central government of Stresemann could not avoid confirming this order: he had to be arrested for attempted revolt against the Government. Rossbach has moved to Bavaria, another part of the same country. There he takes part in public meetings and enjoys the full protection of the Bavarian Government. The Bavarian Government is organising on its territory, alongside the Reichswehr, that is, the official army, a Fascist army, on which it is spending money from the state treasury. The Stresemann Government, which sits in Berlin and is already almost powerless, declares that it will not permit any coups from either Right or Left. Where Bavaria is concerned, though, it dares not raise its voice, whereas to Saxony it speaks in the language of Fascist generals. The Government itself has no control over the army, as I said when I spoke about Seeckt and Müller. There are Social-Democrats in Stresemann's government. The Social-Democrats are losing ground more and more, because the masses are

moving towards the Communists. So as not to lose their last shred of influence the Social-Democrats have to pretend that they are not in favour of the campaign against Saxony – but the campaign against Saxony goes on. **Vorwärts** writes: 'We demand the lifting of the state of siege. We protest against General Müller's campaign against Saxony.' But General Müller is Seeckt's agent, Seeckt was appointed by the Stresemann Government, and the Stresemann Government contains Social-Democrats. You see, comrades, there is no making head or tail of it in these state and governmental relations between the Stresemann Government and the governments of the different parts of Germany. This chaos is a little reminiscent, or even not a little but quite considerably reminiscent, of the way things were here on the eve of the revolution in 1917. We had, on the one hand, Kronstadt, which recognised the Bolshevik government that did not yet exist at that time (it recognised this government in advance): there was Petrograd, where the Soviet was already ours, but had over it a Central Executive Committee containing Chkheidze and Tsereteli: there was the Ukraine, with the Rada, Kerensky's commissars, Bolshevik armed forces, and so on. They all issued orders to each other, nobody listened to anybody else, and all were preparing for the ultimate showdown. That is the situation we have today in Germany. It is, in the fullest sense of the word, so to speak, five minutes to curtainup. This is the moment we are now living through in Germany. But the raising of that curtain will be no easy operation. The Social-Democrats have no power in Berlin, of course. In the government is Stresemann, with whom Poincaré does not want to talk (he prefers to talk with Stinnes), and who now constitutes an imaginary quantity. But General Seeckt is a real quantity, and so is General Müller. Why so? Above all because they have 100,000 soldiers and 3,000 officers. That is all that the German state is allowed to have, under the Treaty of Versailles. As you know, the French restricted the German army to a very small size. In addition, Germany has 150,000 policemen: they are called 'Schupo' and 'Sipo'. [*'Schutzpolizei' and 'Sicherheitspolizei'.*] Previously, they were subordinate to the towns and the municipal administrations, but now, through Seeckt's order, they come under the command the Reichswehr, that is, the army command. In addition there are the 200,000 or 300,000 men of the Fascist battalions, which are headed by officers of the General Staff who are familiar with the art of exterminating masses of people, and who know very well the German railway network, know very well how to move battalions from one end of the country to the other, in order to smash the workers, deprive them of their leaders, and so on. [4] This is a dangerous foe, a foe possessing in Berlin an organisation based on forces which are inconsiderable from the social standpoint. On the other side stands the proletariat, 15 million strong, which has created and armed its Hundreds in Saxony and throughout the country. How many of these armed Hundreds there are I do not know, and, of course, if by chance I did know (but I don't), I should have no right to talk about it at an open meeting. This is today a military secret of the German proletariat – how many Hundreds it has, how many weapons, and where these are. And between these two forces there must begin in a very short time, apparently (if our whole picture of the German scene is not deceptive), a decisive struggle for power. Today's telegrams inform us that diplomatic relations have been broken off between Bavaria and Saxony: you have probably read this. These are two parts of Germany. But Germany has its old constitution, it is a federation made up of different parts, each part has its own diplomatic representatives, and yesterday Saxony and Bavaria broke off diplomatic relations with each other. Bavaria is bringing up to the frontier, and has to a considerable extent already brought up, part of the Reichswehr, together with Fascist detachments. On the Saxon side of the frontier stand the Saxon Hundreds. Meanwhile, General Müller, that agent of the central government, or, more

correctly, of the dictator Seeckt, is moving artillery into Saxony. The Saxon Government is not obeying the order to dissolve the Hundreds: on the contrary, it is calling on the workers throughout the country to organise these Hundreds. The trade-union organisations in Berlin are saying that they will answer any attempt at a campaign against Saxony by calling a general strike. In reply to the danger from the Fascist bands, who plan to make use of the railway network, the railway workers threaten to strike. This situation cannot continue for months: it probably cannot continue even for weeks.

It would not be at all surprising if we were to receive tomorrow, or the next day, the first telegrams about the beginning of the decisive battles. How will these battles end? I have given you the general picture – the social forces, the state of organisation, and have listed, so to speak the enemy's effectives. But what is to happen next? What happens next depends on the energy of the proletariat, on the resolution shown by its party, on its selflessness. That is what the outcome of the struggle will depend on. Does the proletariat have a good chance of winning? Certainly it does. The internal relation of forces is extremely favourable to the proletariat, to its victory. I did not mention (I will mention it now for the sake of elucidation) the point that 100,000 soldiers is a tiny number in a country of 50 million people. They are scattered in various parts of the country, and when the revolutionary movement embraces the whole country, when the whole country is seething, these 100,000 soldiers of the Reichswehr, scattered about in companies and battalions, will feel like hunted animals. Among them (even if they are to be regarded as being mostly hostile to the workers) the majority are peasants' sons: rumours will circulate among them, panic will inevitably spread, and, just because of their fewness and isolation, this may break the backbone of the army. As regards the police, they consist, in many parts of Germany, of workers who belong to trade unions and are Social-Democrats. They have not openly announced themselves as Social-Democrats, for policemen are forbidden to belong to political parties, but they are allowed to belong to trade unions. In Berlin the policemen are all Social-Democrats. At a guess, about one-third of the police will fight against us – in Bavaria, say: about one-third will be neutral, and about one-third will fight on our side. Thus, by and large, the police, as a real force opposed to us, will disappear. There remain, consequently, the Fascist organisations. The leaders of the Fascist battalions are thoroughly hardened counter-revolutionary fighters. They are members of the old German officer corps who hate the working class and the revolution with the age-old hatred of enslavers, oppressors, Junkers, landlords, capitalists, and so on. They will fight ruthlessly. But their battalions are made up of sons of bourgeois, students, ruined petty-bourgeois, even, in part, of the more ignorant, desperate, patriotically-minded workers of the lumpen-proletarian type. This is a rather motley crowd, and one cannot be sure that, when the decisive moment arrives, they will all follow their Fascist leaders. Today men are joining the Fascist battalions, some from despair, others in order to get a meal, but at the decisive moment a very substantial section of this army will scatter to the sidelines, especially if the revolutionary onslaught evokes wavering in the regular army, the Reichswehr, because the Fascist battalions form, by agreement with the government, part of an official organisation of the legal army, and it is through this that they possess a centralised apparatus. If this centralised apparatus goes to pieces under the pressure of the revolutionary storm, the Fascists will become so many scattered battalions, guerrilla bands. They will, of course, shed a lot of workers' blood, but in this case their hope of success, let alone of ultimate victory, will amount to very little.

That, comrades, is the internal situation. It indicates that the odds are in favour,

and very much in favour, of the German proletariat. The latter can and will take power – everything points to that. Will it be able to *hold* power, in view of the international situation? Alas, I have already used up a whole hour of your time with the first part of my report, and I will try to keep the second part as brief as possible. Will the German proletariat hold power, I ask, given the international situation? Germany is not alone on the map of Europe. Her neighbours are France and Belgium, neighbours who are her conquerors, enslavers and oppressors, along with to the south-east and north-east, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The other neighbours, such as, say, Holland, or, across the strait, Sweden, the Scandinavian countries, or Switzerland and Austria, are not of great importance. These states can play no independent role and, generally speaking, will not themselves intervene in the German revolution. Who may intervene? Britain, and, after her, France, together with Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia. That is the direction from which danger threatens. And here the question concerns us directly, concerns the Soviet Union, for, of course, if the German revolution were to lead to a European war, an imperialist war, that would affect us in most direct fashion. And we need here to evaluate the situation, so as to have a clear appreciation of what the morrow may hold.

I said that Britain may intervene. But on this score we must today clearly appreciate Britain's impotence on the continent of Europe. It is important to appreciate this not only for the German revolution but also for ourselves. Britain is powerless on the continent of Europe. The more clearly we realise this and the more firmly and distinctly we repeat it, the more useful that will be for our international policy, in the sense that Britain will do less brandishing of her threats and ultimatums. In point of fact, Britain is a purely maritime state. She has played a tremendous role in Europe. But how and when? Whenever there were two countries in Europe fighting each other for mastery. When France was fighting Germany, with approximately equal forces, Britain stood behind them, supporting, over a long period, first one and then the other. This has been so even earlier, when Spain was strong: in the same way, Britain would now support her, then weaken her. Britain has been playing this role for many centuries now. She utilises the struggle between the two strongest states in Europe, and supports the slightly weaker one, with money, technical assistance and goods, against the stronger one. And the balance of power in Europe depends on Britain. She gets, as it were, a lot of satisfaction at little cost. This is her age-old policy. Why did Britain intervene in the war of 1914? Because Germany had grown too strong. Germany had grown so strong that Britain could not achieve a balance of power merely. by giving support to France. In this case Britain had to depart from her traditional policy. Now she had to roll up her sleeves and get involved in the war, in the struggle. She managed this by conscripting quite a large number of British workers and hurling them on to the European continent. And the result was that she supported France so strongly that the latter ultimately crushed Germany. So now the hegemony of bourgeois Europe belongs exclusively to France. Germany is prostrate at France's feet, and France does not even want to talk to Germany about the terms of Germany's surrender. But from the very moment when France obtained complete hegemony, complete mastery, Britain was rendered completely helpless. France announced: 'I shall take the Ruhr.' Britain replied: 'That is not in my interest.' They had a big row, which went on for a long time. Why was it not in Britain's interest? Because she needed to raise Germany up a little against France, so as to restore the balance of power. And what did France do? Curzon's protests notwithstanding, France went into the Ruhr and took it. And what did terrible Britain do? She resigned herself to what had happened. Terrible Britain threatened Turkey, but the

Turks, who enjoyed good-neighbourly relations with us, organised an army, not without support from us.

What did Britain do? She set the Greeks against them. She had absolutely no forces of her own. What did the Turks do? They defeated the Greeks and marched on Constantinople, against terrible Britain, who hurried away from that city.

Comrades, from the standpoint of international relations, this is a most important fact in the epoch through which we are living. Britain is impotent on the continent of Europe. We are not, of course, going to complain about this.

What can Britain do to the German revolution? Deliver an ultimatum? But that would not suffice. Consequently, the question comes down to what France, not Britain, will do. If France decides to intervene, then Britain could make herself useful to France by assisting her with the money she badly needs, by blockading German ports and shipping, and so on. Britain's role would be that of a quartermaster and a pirate. But the decisive role, in the sense of occupying Germany, would have to be played by France and her land-based vassals – Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Is this possible? Will France decide to do this? That is the fundamental question.

In this matter too, comrades, it is, of course, impossible to make absolutely precise prophecies, and say: no, certainly not. But it is necessary to analyse the situation, and our analysis shows that there are very many reasons for thinking that it would be too much for France. To occupy a country, a revolutionary country, with a population of 60 millions, a country in which 59 per cent of the population, if not more, live in towns and only a minority in villages, a country which is crisscrossed by a chain of railway lines, would not be a very easy task. We had here the experience of the Ukraine. Altogether, something like 250,000 German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers were committed. The Ukraine is not Germany: in the Ukraine there are few towns, the railway network was poorly developed, and the Germans did not venture far from the towns and the railway lines. And what was the result? Elemental peasant revolts raged all around them, the German soldiers grew more demoralised month by month, and, later on, these were the most revolutionary regiments during the German revolution, when they returned home. If we make the appropriate calculation – and there have been not a few occupations, in history generally and in recent times – if we make this calculation, ascertain the average figure, and ask how many soldiers would be needed to occupy a revolutionary Germany, this calculation will tell us that a reliable occupation would require 1,700,000 men ... One million and three-quarters. That is a large number. The whole French army contains only 700,000 men. That is the peacetime army. If we add to this the armies of all France's European vassals, we are still far short of one-and-a-half millions. But, comrades, the army is needed for other purposes besides the occupation of Germany. If France wants to occupy Germany, and decides to go ahead and do it, she will need to keep part of her army at home, to force her own working class to reconcile itself to this occupation. After all, it is not for nothing that France maintains this army in peacetime. She needs to keep at least half a million soldiers in the home country and in the colonies. That is the minimum. The same applies to her vassals. In other words, for France to be able to decide to occupy Germany she would need to proclaim forthwith the mobilisation of at least five or six age-groups, or, as the French say, classes. Would that be feasible? Everything points to its not being feasible without creating very great tension, without very serious domestic conflict. Let us not forget that in France there are no more than 39 million Frenchmen. In the imperialist war France lost one-and-a-half million men.

Germany's population is increasing fast, but France's population is declining – slowly, but declining. In France there is not a single family that has not lost a son, or a brother, or a husband, or a father, and so on. For France the mobilisation of an age-group does not mean what it does here. With us, one age-group gives us almost a million men. Our country is immensely spacious, its population is multiplying splendidly, and here a million men is a very small number, whereas in France, with her diminished population of thirty-eight and a half millions, a population from which one-and-a-half million men were torn away only recently, where there are not enough workers (owing to the shortage of young manpower there are now in France a very large number of Spanish, Italian, Polish and Czechoslovak workers, who cannot, of course, be conscripted), it would be necessary to mobilise Frenchmen French peasants, and the French peasant is burdened with taxes, because the national debt amounts to 300 milliards. The French peasant has only just returned from the trenches, since over there they mobilised, in the true sense of the word, elderly men, old men of 45. They returned not long ago to their holdings, which are burdened with taxes, and now they are being told that, after their final, complete and glorious victory which cost them a great deal and for which they are to have to go on paying, they must contribute approximately another 500,000 men, in order to consolidate this victory conclusively, with the prospect of a European war.

The French Communists, the French comrades, consider that such a measure would not be practicable without some very substantial coercion, that is, bloodletting and so on. That is one difficulty. And, on the other hand, it will not be possible to mobilise another few hundred thousand Frenchmen and throw up to a million soldiers into Germany, so as to force Poland and Czechoslovakia to throw in some three quarters of a million men, and maintain them there at the expense of a ruined, impoverished Germany which the occupation will impoverish and ruin still further. That would mean maintaining, at the expense of that same working class, soldiers who, in the cauldron of revolution, would become demoralised just as the German soldiers became demoralised here. In short, one cannot but appreciate Poincaré's difficulties. It would not, of course, be very flattering to him if, next door to his place, a victorious proletarian revolution should develop, and so his job is no easy one.

But that does not mean, comrades, that the French bourgeoisie will in no circumstances undertake this job. When a class which has been accustomed to ruling is threatened with ruin, there is no madness to which this class may not resort. And when I analyse the conditions for an occupation, I do this to show that the job is not so easy, and that in this case everything is not 100 per cent on our enemies' side but, on the contrary, perhaps only 25 per cent, with history awarding 75 per cent to us.

In any event, there can be no doubt that the French bourgeoisie will go on hesitating for a long time yet. Various groups and parties will contend with each other before the decision is taken regarding such a diabolical adventure. Consequently, the German revolution will be given a breathing-spell of two, three or four months, and you and I know well what a breathing-spell means. To obtain a breathing-spell means to obtain everything. Then there is Poland. France cannot cope with the task on her own: she certainly needs the help of Poland. May Poland intervene? Will she intervene? Here, comrades, one cannot be a prophet (this is, in general, a thankless role, as was already pointed out in Biblical times), but for a Marxist, who analyses concrete conditions, it is not only permissible but obligatory to analyse the conditions and predict what is more and what is less probable. Here, in

connection with Poland, I must first and foremost speak out against the philistine attitudes or opinions which sometimes overflow on to us, penetrating even the ranks of our Party, to the effect that war with Poland is inevitable, that it is something decided, almost sealed. Comrades, if we were to surrender to this fatalism, nothing but the greatest disasters would result there from. It is said absolutely nowhere, in no book, in no Party programme, that we are to go to war with Poland. Is such a war out of the question? Not at all. Unfortunately, no. What are the chances that we shall get through this epoch in peace? That is impossible to say; but I think that there are more chances for than against a peaceful outcome, precisely for the same reason which would make it so hard for France to occupy a revolutionary Germany. I have already talked about that. Poland would not, of course, even think of presuming to fight on her own, in isolation: she could only be drawn in by France if a gigantic coalition is formed for the purpose of crushing Germany, and, after that, probably, trying to run that roller over our spine, too, if the affair reaches the stage of a gigantic plan embracing all Europe. By herself, of course, Poland can have no such plan, though she may cherish the notion of exploiting intervention in Germany's domestic affairs in order finally to seize Danzig and East Prussia, that is, to grab a tuft of the bear's ear by means of this intervention. This is a policy of petty thieving. But there is another aspect to this question, which is of no small importance for the German revolution, for Poland and for us, and, above all, in a direct way, for our peasants. We have become a grain-exporting country: our entire future, in the economic sense, during the next few years, depends on whether we shall be able to export grain. Our accursed 'scissors' [\[5\]](#), which in recent months not only have not closed but have opened out, we can close from both sides – improving the state of our industry, in which a great deal is still unsatisfactory, and increasing the export of the peasants' grain, thereby raising the price of grain inside our country. In order to export our grain we need to have channels, either overland or maritime. Germany is for us the most important market for our peasants' grain. Without our grain the German worker will not survive, and his revolution, his Soviet revolution, will not maintain itself. America will not feed him: or, if she does, it will be as she fed us a little, in the third, fourth or fifth year of the Soviet Republic. If such a calamity were to befall as to cause Germany to be fed with the grain of the ARA, American philanthropic grain, that could happen not earlier than after a certain interval; but in the first year of the revolution the American merchant will certainly not give any grain to the German republic. Britain, most probably, will blockade Germany's ports, just as she blockaded ours. Consequently, only one possibility remains, namely, to supply Germany with Russian grain, with the grain of our Soviet Union. There are two channels by which this could be done: by sea (this would not be free from danger, since Britain rules the waves) and by land, across Poland. Thus, for the German revolution our grain is a matter of life and death, just as the German market is a matter of life and death for our own economic development. We need the German market for our grain, and we need German goods, the products of German industry, for our peasants and workers. Speaking generally, there are in the world no two countries whose economic structures and interests so fully complement each other to the extent that the Soviet Union and Germany do; Germany, a super-industrial country with a very high level of technique and culture, and ourselves, with our boundless spaces, our boundless potentialities in agriculture and our technical backwardness and low level of culture. A practical union between these two countries, economically and in every other way, would constitute the greatest power that has ever existed in the world. But between these two countries lies Poland. You can easily convince yourself of that fact if you look at the map; and Polish diplomats do, from time to time, look at that map and convince themselves

of it. This also makes the present international situation rather serious. It all comes down to a simple commercial request for freedom of transit. The Poles ought to allow us free transit to Germany, to the West: we will give the industry of Lodz transit for its manufactures to Persia and anywhere else they like. Freedom of transit. When these questions were raised in the Polish press, many Polish politicians replied that this could not be done, that Poland must not be forced to take up a position in the pincers between Germany and Russia. That is not at all convincing, for these pincers exist as a geographical fact. They exist: a state cannot move from where it is located. Poland lives where she lives, between us and Germany. When we were negotiating with Poland at Riga we proposed that on a certain piece of our territory we be given a common frontier with Germany, that we be provided with direct access to Germany. We should then, of course, have disturbed Poland a great deal less. But Poland, taking advantage of the circumstance that we had Wrangel in our rear, not yet put down, presented us with unheard-of conditions which were obliged to accept, and by force of these conditions we found ourselves cut off from Germany: Poland now divides us.

Under these conditions, however, Poland can play two roles: the role of a bridge between us and Germany, or the role of a barrier, an impregnable wall, between us and Germany ... It depends on Poland's politicians. We should prefer that Poland played the role of a bridge. On that bridge she could set up turnpikes and demand of everyone crossing the bridge a high payment for the right of transit. We are ready to pay such a charge. Poland would enjoy all the advantages of her geographical position between the pincers: but if Poland should prefer to become a barrier between us and Germany, that would mean that she wants to starve the German workers to death and to deprive us of our outlet into the European and therefore the world, market. The question can only be put like that. The question of free transit to the West is a question of life and death both for us and for the German working class. Will Poland allow us this transit? But why should she not? Why should the Polish bourgeoisie not take this step, which would bring them profit and would also spare Eastern Europe some fearful complications? We understand by transit, of course, real right of transit, that is, that we are to have the possibility to send our grain to Germany without interruption, and for this to happen Poland must not be at war either with us or with Germany. If Poland were to go to war with Germany, our link would disappear, and we should not be able to transport the grain. So there must be a reciprocal undertaking not to interfere in German affairs. A clear and simple programme. This must become our programme in relation to Poland. Is it a programme of peace or of war? A programme of peace, absolutely. I say, quite seriously, that, for us, war would be a very severe trial, and we need to be clearly aware of that. We have only begun to recover, we are still far from having made ends meet, the 'scissors' are still important ... War today, if it were to be forced upon us, would mean not a struggle of the small-scale sort, but what the text-books call a major war, that is, a war that would involve millions of fighting men and would last for months and months. It would mean a monstrous blow struck at our economic and cultural development, and, of course, no less a blow, but probably an even bigger one, struck at the economic and cultural development of Poland. In general, it is extremely hard now to predict what the consequences of such a war would be, of a war which would involve a number of other countries, but the danger exists that in that war the German revolution might go down in blood and ruins. We are above all interested in the German working class solving its own problems internally, with its own forces, while peace prevails around Germany, so that civil war in Germany does not become transformed into imperialist war around Germany and within Germany itself. That is why all our efforts, the efforts of our

diplomats, must be and will be directed at defending peace, defending it to the end. Whether they will succeed is hard to say, because, probably, one of these days, sooner or later, the contradictions that exist in Europe will lead to a bloody international conflict: but defending peace and saving both ourselves and the German revolution from war for as long as possible is one of the most important of our state tasks. That is why it is absolutely wrong when people say, in a philistine manner, in philistine circles, that, anyway, we shall fight Poland. That is not how the question stands. It must be said that if we were to put the question like that the rank-and-file worker or peasant would not understand us. War would be no laughing matter, I repeat, and to commit millions of workers and peasants to war today, to mobilise hundreds of thousands of peasants' horses and carts, to lay burdens on the backs of the peasantry and the working class, to do all that without absolute necessity would be the purest madness and a very grave crime. Talk of going to war to support the German working class is abstraction. What can be a better way to support the working class than to ensure its supply of grain – and this we shall do if we obtain the right of transit across Poland. The best support for the working class will be for Poland not to strike through Poznan at Berlin; and that support we shall provide if we get from Poland a mutual obligation to abstain from armed intervention in German affairs. This is our programme, and this programme we must take to the masses, to the workers and peasants of both sexes, so that they may realise that we are not betraying the German workers, that we are doing all we can to save them, but in the form which is helpful and necessary for them: that we shall fight with all our forces and resources to maintain peace, to the utmost limit of possibility. This is our programme. Is the success of this programme guaranteed? I have said already that it would be naive to offer any sort of guarantee. We do not know how the course of events in Germany will be reflected in France, in Poland and so on. We do not know what limit there will be to the adventurism, bloodthirstiness and predatoriness of the ruling classes of the various countries. Consequently, we cannot guarantee in advance to anyone, to the masses of our country, that current events will not lead to a bloody conflict, and we say that it is necessary to be prepared. If the danger of war were to be measured at no more than 33 per cent, it would still be necessary to be all of 100 per cent prepared, for, if our destiny should turn out, after all, to be a destiny of blood, we must not be beaten. But in this preparation a very important factor is ideological preparation both of ourselves and of the working classes who march behind us and with us. Every citizen in our country must clearly understand the policy we are now pursuing. And this is not a policy of light-minded playing with war, with the fire of a European conflict: on the contrary, it is a political, systematic, stubborn, sustained and consistent struggle to preserve peace around the German revolution, and we need, comrades, to see to it that the broad masses of our country, together with their Soviet Government and their diplomats, live through, step by step, all the stages of the German revolution in the international situation, so that they may think out every measure, every step, that is taken by the Soviet power, aimed at securing peace through transit and a mutual undertaking not to interfere in German affairs. If you go up to a peasant (I am putting the question in its nakedly pure form) somewhere in Penza province, where they are not sure what Germany is, or where, and say: 'Comrade, or peasant, we are going to make war on Poland for the sake of the German workers – give us your cart, give us your horse, give us your grain', that peasant will not understand you, he will recoil from you. But suppose we show him, in a practical way, that in fighting for the German workers we are fighting for his own interests, because he needs to export his grain and to receive industrial products from Germany, and that by this peaceful pressure, these negotiations and so on, not omitting to take any measure, any step, we shall

manage to solve this problem peacefully. But suppose we do not manage this, suppose Poland becomes a barrier between us and Germany? If the ruling classes of Poland should dare to make a murderous and suicidal attempt to suffocate the two peoples that are separated by Poland, namely, the Germans and ourselves, then, of course, war may, and inevitably will, develop from such an attempt. But if it developed under those conditions, it would be a war imposed upon us against our will, contrary to all our efforts, it would prove to every peasant – I do not need even to mention the workers – that this was historical fate, that we, together with them and at their head, had done all we could to help the German workers by peaceful means. This, comrades, is the most important pledge of success in difficult historical trials, in war, when the people consciously pass through a whole epoch of preparation, when they understand that we are trying to get out of the bloody ring that encircles us, to do everything to secure for our peasant the possibility of that peaceful economic development which was shown to him, as a prospect, at the Agricultural Exhibition, and likewise in relation to the worker, who has to raise the level of our industry. If, I say, after we have made all these sincere and honest efforts, the masses think through them along with us, and if war nevertheless begins, there will be no division between the workers' and peasants' government and the working class, or between the working class and the peasantry.

Then the immense bloc formed by this revolutionary country will say to itself: there is no other way out – and then we shall fight, and fight well, and vanquish our foes.

Stenographic report of
the Eighth Congress of
the Transport Workers'
Union

Endnotes

[1.](#) The Ingushes and the Circassians (Cherkesses) are Moslem peoples of North Caucasia. The so-called 'Savage Division' of the Tsarist Army was recruited from among these and other Moslem peoples of the Caucasus region.

[1b.](#) On the revolt of the Left SRs, July 6-8, 1918, see Volume One, pages 353-408.

[2.](#) In the Saxon government Böttcher was Minister of Finance and Heckert Minister of the Economy, while Brandler was given charge of the state chancellery. In the Thuringian Government Korsch became Minister of Education and Tenner Minister of the Economy.

[3.](#) Noske was born at Brandenburg, near Potsdam. He did not move to Chemnitz until he was aged 34. Soon after his arrival there he became editor of the local Social-Democratic newspaper, and then was elected to represent Chemnitz in the Reichstag.

[4.](#) An allusion to the so-called 'Black Reichswehr'. In January 1923, taking advantage of the French invasion of the Ruhr, Lithuania seized Memel and Poland raised the question of annexing East Prussia. In response, the Reich Government and the Reichswehr command took steps, in violation of the Versailles Treaty, to form a reserve army out of the various para-military nationalist organisations.

[5.](#) The image of the 'scissors' was derived from the graph showing the movement of prices of agricultural produce and manufactured goods: the two lines crossed and then increasingly diverged, like the blades of a pair of scissors, with agricultural prices falling and industrial prices rising.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

The Present Situation and Our Tasks in Building The Army

Report to the 3rd All-Union Conference of Political Workers in the Red Army and the Red Navy, October 21, 1923 [\[1\]](#)

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Revolution And War

Revolution and war have often gone together. We know of cases in history when war has produced revolution, and vice versa.

The explanation is that both war and revolution mean a very great upheaval in society, when an old, familiar equilibrium is upset, and an external upheaval produces an internal one, or the other way round.

There are common features in the nature of war and of revolution. These common features concern very closely the work in which we are both engaged. In order that war, and victory in war, may be possible, certain social, political and organisational preconditions are needed. It is necessary that the economy of a society shall be such as to make war possible, and it is necessary that the mass of the people shall agree to the war or, at least, shall not actively oppose it. But these factors do not by themselves, of course, determine success in war. There has to be an organisation which knows the art of war, which is capable of creating a war plan, allotting the roles, moving forces into action, and ensuring victory. This organisation must be an army.

There is an analogy here with what determines the success of a revolution, though, of course, the analogy is far from complete. For a revolution to be possible as a *successful* revolution it is necessary that the economy of the given country shall have attained a certain level of development; it is necessary that there shall be in society a class which is interested in revolution; and, finally, it is necessary that this class shall be headed by an organisation which knows how to conduct a revolution, to develop it and to crown it with a triumphant seizure of power.

An attempt to seize power in the absence of the social and political preconditions needed is called in German a *putsch* – that is, as it were, an abortion of an armed uprising. But, on the other hand, if the premises for revolution are present, that is, if a revolutionary situation exists, if there is a class which is interested in revolution and which constitutes a decisive force, but there is not a party, an organisation that can lead it, or if this party is weak, if it lacks a clear plan, then the most favourable revolutionary situation can end in failure. It is just the same with war. A war can fail even in the most favourable circumstances, that is, when there is unanimity among the broad masses and they are ready to fight. If the organisation is bad, the strategy poor, the tactics backward, if the units are not coordinated, then the very

best of international situations can end in failure. I speak, comrades, of these common features of war and revolution because today they have been particularly closely brought together. We have assembled our political workers in the armed forces at a highly important conference. We are going to decide on our immediate tasks, but we are going to do this in the circumstances of an exceptionally responsible historical situation. What is the reason for this? The revolution in Germany and the potential danger of war resulting from this revolution. Both for revolution and for war very careful preparation is needed, and in no case can one place one's hopes in improvisation, or in the protection of Grandmother History. That grandmother told our fortune in 1917 and 1918, and did it not at all badly. But our enemies have learnt a lot in these last six years, and it is not possible to operate now with those rather simple methods with which we operated in 1917.

The Failure Of The Bulgarian Revolution

In the last few days we have had an example of the failure of a revolution for which the premises were favourable. I mean the revolution in Bulgaria. [2] The Bulgarian government, which came to power by a *coup d'état*, is upheld by Wrangelite bayonets. [3] The political parties which made the *coup d'état* constitute a very small force. The Communists are strong. The majority of the country and the peasantry, almost 100 per cent, are against the Tsankov government. Given any degree of serious preparation, we could, in the opinion of comrades who know Bulgaria (I also have some knowledge of the country, from personal observation, but that was a long time ago: my last visit to Bulgaria was in 1913) – according to all the evidence, we could have been victorious in Bulgaria, but this has not happened. Why not? The social and political premises were present. The bourgeois parties had thoroughly discredited themselves. They were replaced by the Peasants' Party. The leadership of this party, the Stambulsky Government, discredited themselves. All sympathies shifted Leftward and were transferred to the Communist Party. The enemy's armed forces were infinitesimal. And yet we were beaten. What was lacking was a clear, distinct plan of action and a decisive blow at an appointed moment and at an appointed place. One must not confuse a revolution with an armed uprising. A revolution is a combination of gigantic events, a revolution cannot be appointed for a certain moment, one cannot allocate roles in it beforehand: but when a revolutionary situation has been created, the revolutionary class is then confronted with a practical task: 'Take power!'

This is essentially a military-revolutionary task. For this the enemy has to be thrown on his back, the initiative has to be taken from him, power has to be wrested from him. This presupposes a plan, an initiative, the fixing of a date, and a whole series of military operations. If the moment is let slip, the situation may alter radically, and the disintegration may set in among the ranks of the revolutionary class, with loss of confidence in their own strength, and so on and so forth.

The Situation In Germany

Where Germany is concerned, these dangers are, naturally, not precluded. At present, though, everything points to the growing less from one day to the next. The problem of the German revolution is, of course, incomparably more important than that of the Bulgarian revolution. All the same, one cannot deny that it would have been a splendid gift to us from history if, five minutes before the revolution in

Germany, power had been seized in Bulgaria. But that, alas, did not happen. The curtain is now going up on the German drama, the scale of which will be very much greater than that of the revolution in Bulgaria, and here, too, those dangers of which I spoke are not out of the question. There are no revolutions that are guaranteed success beforehand. But, at the same time, it is becoming clearer and clearer to the masses that there is no longer any way out for Germany along the road of reform and parliamentarianism. The situation has fully matured for revolution also in the sense, that the basic class of society, the proletariat, is the class of decisive importance, which predominates absolutely in that country. In Germany there are 15 million industrial workers, and also between three and five million agricultural workers [4], who constitute a very militant element. There is nothing like this in any other country. Finally, let us take the frightful fall in the value of the mark, which unbalances life in its simplest, everyday relationships, day after day, cutting the ground from under the feet of every workingclass woman, every housewife, every worker, ramming it into their heads that they cannot go on living like that. Today the telegraph has brought us the news news that the dollar has risen in value to 12 milliard marks.

Along with this we see an extraordinarily rapid growth in the influence of the Communist Party in Germany. It is a young party, which was born during the imperialist war and assumed its present form after November 9 1918. [5] This party has suffered many setbacks. It met with defeat in March 1921, when it tried to seize power although the working class has had not yet been prepared for this. You will remember how the Third Congress of the Comintern severely condemned the mistake made by the German Communist Party. This caused discontent in that party's Left wing. But the lesson proved useful. Since then, the German Communist Party has become the leading party of the German proletariat. The political shifts of recent weeks have confirmed this quite definitely. Messages from Berlin tell of the fatal effect upon German Social-Democracy of the coalition formed, in Saxony and Thuringia, by the Left Social-Democrats with the Communists. Voices have been raised against these coalitions within the Communist Party itself. The misgivings were to the effect that Social-Democracy is compromising itself more and more, and its Left wing is nothing but a manoeuvre to transfer more and more, of the betrayed masses to the Left wing of Social-Democracy. After the danger is past, Social-Democracy will pull in its Left wing and show its true face. This was the criticism put forward in our own ranks. The opponents of coalition said that if we enter into a bloc with the Social-Democrats we shall enable them to grow stronger. The Comintern and the German party thought otherwise. We are, to be sure, waging a merciless fight against the Social-Democrats. Fighting calls for very complex manoeuvres. Among such manoeuvres are the deliberate conceding of certain positions, retreats, withdrawals, and so on. It is the same in politics. The Communist Party has already achieved so much influence in Germany that the attraction towards it felt by the Social-Democratic workers is very great, but this is not sufficient to break through their old organisational shell. It is a characteristic of the worker that he cherishes a very great feeling of gratitude and love, a sense of duty, towards the organisation which awakened him to conscious life. All the older and middle generations of the German workers were awakened by Social-Democracy. The services it rendered cannot be denied, but, later, Social-Democracy deceived the workers, exploiting its influence over them in order to bind the worker masses hand and foot. Among the working class the attitude to Social-Democracy as the party which awakened them was maintained. Consequently, although the German workers clenched their fists against Social-Democracy, a considerable section of them have nevertheless remained under its banner. The task of the

coalition, at this moment which immediately precedes the decisive battles, consisted in breaking through this shell, this organisational conservatism. What we have here, of course, is not a coalition formed in order to carry out a socialist programme on the basis of parliamentary democracy. No, what this is, essentially, is a militaryrevolutionary manoeuvre aimed at obtaining a strong position, and armaments, on a certain piece of territory, before the hour for decisive action strikes. That is how the Executive Committee of the Comintern understood and understands the experiment in Saxony. And all our information shows that the fact that the Communists have joined with Social-Democrats in the same government has shaken the organisational conservatism of the Social-Democrats to the Communists. Thus, where the Social-Democrats are in power, the fact that the coalition exists has not strengthened the Social-Democratic organisations but has caused the masses to flow over to our side. The Social-Democrats are breaking up. The influence of the fact that there is a coalition government in Germany is everywhere having a devastating effect on Social-Democracy. In Berlin the Left turn being made by the Social-Democrats is extremely marked. So, then, this move has altogether justified itself.

The coalition has yet another significance for us. In Germany today a class struggle is going on which has been reduced to a very simple formula – the struggle of the proletarian masses against the fighting detachments of the Fascists. I say that it is a very simple formula because in Germany today the machinery of state hardly exists in practice. This class struggle, which has attained the final stage, finds territorial embodiment in the fact that we have not only the armed Hundreds of the proletariat all over Germany but we also see that a *place d'armes* for the revolution is being prepared in Saxony. On the other hand, Bavaria is a *place d'armes* for the Fascist kulaks, led by officers of the Kaiser's army. We have two camps, sidebyside. Saxony and Thuringia constitute our *place d'armes*, where the worker masses are rallying more and more to our banner, and where we are organising Workers' Hundreds. It is characteristic that diplomatic relations have now been broken off between Saxony and Bavaria: this rupture means that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are definitely organising civil war. The Germans are a systematic people and even conduct their revolution in a systematic way. When you look at the revolution which is developing in Germany you see before you a sort of strict system of cogwheels, working with complete accuracy, as in the mechanism of a clock. It is to be expected that twelve o'clock will strike, and, evidently, that will happen soon.

I have already mentioned that there is now no government in Germany, that the parliament, elected on the basis of universal, equal, secret (and so on) suffrage, has renounced the government chosen by itself in favour of giving power to General Seeckt. The real machinery of state in Germany at the present time is General Seeckt, who is familiar with the machinery for exterminating the masses, with his Reichswehr of 100,000 men and with the forces of the Fascist shockbattalions (200,000 men according to some accounts, 400,000 according to other sources), which this summer carried out campmusters under the protection of the official Reichswehr. At the head of all these forces stands General Seeckt, who also has under his command the Schutzpolizei, who numbers several hundred thousand men, General Seeckt is beginning, through General Müller, an offensive against Saxony, by calling on that state to disarm the proletarian Hundreds. On the other hand, Berlin has tried to dismiss General Lossow [\[6\]](#), to which the Bavarian Government has replied that, if the central government insists on dismissing Lossow, then, for its part, it will demand neither more nor less than the dismissal of Gessler. And this Gessler is the Republic's War Minister: so that Bavaria has not only broken off diplomatic relations with Saxony, it is beginning to talk with the *Berlin*

Kerenskys in such a masterful tone that they have put their tails between their legs and withdrawn their demand for the removal of General Lossow.

That is the situation. It cannot go on for long. *Either* the workers' Hundreds will be dissolved, which would mean a powerful blow struck at the German revolution (I do not say; its defeat) by which of course, the proletarian forces in Germany would not be exhausted, but which would mean, without any doubt, that in a skirmish between outposts the workers suffered defeat. *Or* General Müller, paralysed by the Kerenskyism in his rear, would not be able to carry out his threat, which would be an excellent thing for the revolution, after his presentation of an ultimatum. It would raise the spirits of the workers, and the very course of the revolution would become more cheerful and confident. *Or else* General Müller moves in his Reichswehr, the Workers' Hundreds refuse to let themselves be disarmed and then civil war begins. One way or another – but, although the present situation in Germany may last for days, perhaps for weeks, it can hardly last for months.

I named just now the basic forces of the enemy, the 100,000-strong Reichswehr, the size of which was laid down by the Treaty of Versailles. This is an army of volunteers, consisting almost exclusively of peasants, who have been subjected to the appropriate processing by their Fascist officers. To a certain extent the 135,000-strong police force is also a weapon in General Seeckt's hand. It is composed mainly of urban workers, except in Bavaria and Wurtemberg. Whereas the Reichswehr consists of young countrymen, 95 per cent of whom are unmarried, the police are workers, the overwhelming majority of them with families, who have been driven to join the police force by unemployment and other circumstances. In PrussiaBrandenburg this police force is to a considerable extent made up of Social-Democratic workers, and forms the guard of the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Severing. The law forbids policemen to belong to political parties, but allows them to belong to trade unions, so that these policemen are in most cases members of the free (Social-Democratic) trade unions. Competent persons estimate that onethird of these policemen will certainly fight against us (mainly in the rural areas), one third will stay neutral, and about a third will fight alongside us, or will help us. Thus, arithmetical calculation shows that the police force will be paralysed, and it will be eliminated as an independent force. Here, of course, everything depends on the policy, the tactics and strategy that we develop. But what is most important is that we should not look on the Reichswehr and the police as something united and monolithic. Such a conception is radically wrong. The young German Communist naturally exhibits, as a rule, more or less the same psychology as our young Red Army man. When he first gets into an awkward situation in battle, it seems to him that his enemy is something terrible, fearless and so mighty that, if this enemy brings his weight to bear, it will destroy and crush him, for he, the poor devil Petrov from Penza province, is a weak creature, and he feels sick at heart ... That is why an important element in the training of Semyonov, or Petrov, is educating him so that he knows that the enemy, too, is also a man, that he, too, has a heart that can feel sick ... And we, having learnt very well how to link ourselves with the masses, have all that we need in order to fulfil that task properly.

As regards the Reichswehr the situation is, of course, somewhat different from what it is with the police, but, nevertheless, one must not forget that the Reichswehr consists of 100,000 peasant lads who are scattered all over the country. In those cases when the army succeeds in resisting during a revolution, this is usually due, to some extent, to the fact that the army feels that it forms a compact mass that is made up of regiments, that each of these knows that other regiments stand beside it, so that it is confident that with this mass the revolution can be

defeated. But if the army is broken up into scattered companies and battalions; which are being washed over from all sides by the waves of a stormy revolutionary movement in which millions and millions of proletarians, petty-bourgeois and poor peasants are taking part, then, under these conditions, the units of the army will feel extremely insecure and may give way to panic, and a revolutionary party can help them on in that direction. If, among the units of the Reichswehr, there are even just a few units which say to themselves: 'There's nothing to be done, brothers, let's throw down our rifles', that can produce decisive results. But preparation is required: one must study the experience of previous revolutions. And if we think of the Reichswehr as being impregnable, and do not try to break it up from within, that will be bad, because, though the French have pruned the German army down to the minimum, they have still left it just sufficient of the mechanisms of mass murder to be able to crush a revolt of the German working class.

There remains the Fascist army, which enjoys the protection of the state. If it has not been legalised, that is not because of the existence of notverychaste German Social-Democracy, but because of the existence of Poincaré, who keeps watch to see that the Fascist army does not grow into a big force. The command apparatus of the individual Fascist units is excellent. As regards fighting material, they are made up of sons of bourgeois, students, pettybourgeois and even some workers of the lumpenproletarian type. Their ranks are not completely homogeneous, and it is not certain that, when the moment of decision comes, they will lay their lives on the line. The way the Fascist units will behave will depend on how the Reichswehr behaves. The Fascist battalions are emerging from clandestinity into an official organisation of the Reichswehr: they and the Reichswehr have the same service of communications and a common command, and their mobilisation will be effected by means of the Reichswehr's apparatus. If this apparatus, that is, the official army, is fully maintained in being as a central apparatus – and that depends on the scope and sweep of the revolution and on the policy of our party – it will be a very substantial disadvantage for us. If the revolutionaries can manage to break the backbone of this organisation, the Fascist battalions will thereby be transformed into so many guerrilla detachments, and it will be much easier to deal with them.

There is also, of course, yet another kind of preparation to be done. Germany's railway network is an instrument of exceptional power. It is more than 60,000 kilometres in length. If, at the decisive moment, this network proves to be in the hands of the Fascists, they will be able to throw their units into the industrial areas, they will be able to manoeuvre. It is quite obvious that this is a question of exceptional importance.

If the railway network were to be left in the hands of the reaction at the decisive moment, the reaction would be able to bring up support from the kulak regions – from Bavaria, East Prussia and so on. What have we got with which to prevent that happening? Above all, the railway proletariat, which will be fully able to go on strike at the most important points and to blow up railway bridges and so on. To ensure this, obviously, a good counterorganisation of the revolutionary party will be needed, with secret commanders placed at the principal railway junctions. I am not, of course, describing what exists, because I do not know about that – I am merely talking about what follows from all the experience of our own revolution. How the German comrades are acting, and what they will do tomorrow, we cannot know, but this is what follows from our experience and this is what we should do if we were again to be placed in such a situation and had again to seize power. Since revolutions happen infrequently, and in the course of six years something

may have been forgotten, I consider it necessary to remind this gathering that, in these cases, one needs to have a very wellorganised counterapparatus on the railways, because, if the revolutionary commanders have at their disposal some tough fighting squads capable of stopping the movement of trains, in opposition to the Fascist battalions, it is possible to hold up and paralyse the Fascist apparatus. And, since what is fundamental is on our side, for the 15-20 million German workers will, at the decisive moment, be on our side, this will, of course, make easier all the other manipulations, including the purely military ones – it will make them easier, but will not render them unnecessary. I must say that when I was talking privately with some Russian comrades who had observed life in Germany two or three months ago, when the situation there was not so ripe as it is today, and I asked how things were in certain organisational spheres, and got the answer: 'We don't know, but we suppose that, when the revolution begins, these things will be dealt with by improvisation,' I replied that revolution improvises a great deal, but it does this only for those who have prepared for it seriously and carefully, taking everything into account, and that revolution will certainly not improvise anything for the benefit of scatterbrains. I even said that, though Grandmother History helped us a great deal on one occasion, that does not mean that she will again tell our fortune favourably.

In order to ensure military success for a revolution one needs to want to achieve this success at any price, and actively to strive for it, breaking down all the obstacles in one's path. Will the German working class find in itself the necessary will to seize power, to fight and win the overwhelming majority of the masses, to make the direct leap at the throat of the enemy, so as to knock him down and take power? This transition is always accompanied by a very big internal crisis for the Party, because it is one thing to win influence over the masses, over the workers, to unite them and lead them, and another thing to say: 'The moment has come, all forces must be concentrated and the signal given for the insurrection, staking everything on the one card.' That requires that the party show great resolution, and here the internal inhibitions may be very strong.

There has been no armed uprising in Germany yet – it has put only one foot over the threshold. The German Communist Party lacks the tempering our Party had in 1917, it has no great past of underground activity, but it does have experience of serious struggles, for it has been its fate to pass through no few of these, although, in the past, they ended in rather serious defeats. Today the German Communist Party has a great advantage over us, as we were in 1917, in that it can draw on our experience and it enjoys the guidance of the Comintern, which, in turn, is sustained, in giving this guidance, by that same experience of ours. One may therefore hope that the internal upheavals and frictions within the party, which are unavoidable whenever a revolutionary party goes over from agitation and propaganda to the conquest of power, will be reduced to the minimum. So far as can be judged from the information we have about the conduct of the German Communist Party, the danger that it will run away from the events as they develop, that this party will, to speak plainly, funk it, is minimal, if not completely out of the question; but only events themselves can test whether this is so.

Our conclusion is that history has fully prepared the conditions for an armed insurrection in Germany, and General Müller has been given by history the task of accelerating this process, the development of which may assume a very rapid tempo in the very near future. Given a correct line by the party, the odds in this conflict are in the proletariat's favour. I did not specify to you the numbers of the armed forces of the revolution, for fully comprehensible reasons – first, because I

do not know them, and secondly, because, even if by chance I had known them, I should have had no authority to reveal them. But fifteen million industrial workers and between three and five million agricultural workers are capable of producing from their midst sufficient armed units to deal with the enemy. In general, the auguries are favourable, although, of course, as in war, it is impossible to give precise forecasts. War is not an exercise in arithmetic. That applies even more to revolution. History requires that the two contending sides test against each other the strength of their respective foreheads, and only through conflict itself is the outcome of the conflict determined, not through any process of calculation, of bookkeeping. That is why, though one can estimate the course of development and weigh the chances for and against, it is never possible to prophesy the outcome of a conflict with mathematical certainty. In the given case, of course, the fundamental data are favourable.

But the German revolution will not be decided by the internal relation of forces alone. Germany is situated in a capitalist encirclement, and a victorious German revolution will not leap out of this encirclement, which is formed, principally, by France, Belgium, Britain (across the Channel), Poland and Czechoslovakia. These are the decisive states. There are, in addition, Austria, Switzerland, Holland ... They will not play any active part but, of course, if the big neighbours decide to pursue a policy of strangulation, the little ones will be able to help by pulling on the ends of the rope, and so on. But we need to reckon with the conduct of the principal imperialist states. Let us start with Britain. Yesterday I was speaking about this to the metalworkers, and I say again now that Britain today is powerless on the continent. Britain presented us with an ultimatum, and we made certain concessions, not because she could have routed us but because we were interested in restoring economic relations to normal. The powerlessness of Britain appears to contradict the conception of her as being an extremely rich country, a strong maritime power, with her stock-exchange, her City and her Navy (although in this matter she now has a very big rival in the shape of the United States). But Britain was strong on the Continent only so long as there were two more or less equally matched land powers fighting each other in Europe. Britain always supported the weaker against the stronger. If the weaker outgrew the stronger, then Britain would switch her sympathies. By adding her weight to the scales of Europe's destiny, she would decide it. Intervening directly in the war of 1914, she broke violently with her own traditions, and put a big army on the Continent because Germany had too far outgrown France. You know that the patriotic British trade unions have always held pacifist ideas, at least with regard to wars on land, because their leaders were more inclined to live off their fatherland than to die for it. These pacifists supported their government only with great reluctance. During the war Britain helped France too energetically, and France emerged as the hegemon (the master of the situation) in Europe. Now, whenever Britain tries to intervene in European affairs, France doesn't give a damn. We were able to see that in the case of the Ruhr. British diplomacy protested at first, but then gave in. An even more striking case was Britain's policy in relation to Turkey. Britain declared Turkey to be an enemy of the human race. And what was the result? When Turkey (I mean Ankara) began to get to her feet, what could Britain do? She set Greece upon her. Turkey defeated Greece. In the end, Britain left Constantinople and the Turks marched in. Britain's impotence on the Continent was obvious.

Naturally, the most mortal enemy of the German revolution will be none other than the British bourgeoisie. It has more than once already formed a coalition against revolution, for example, at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. But Britain's arms are short. She is not a land power. She could support

France if the latter were to take the path of intervention, only by blockading German ports and delivering war materials and so on to the armies of occupation. But can France intervene? That is the fundamental question. That she can intervene in one form or another is beyond doubt. But in what form? At present she has occupied the Ruhr and is preparing to leave it. The German revolution will have to reckon with this fact, and it would be madness if the German working class, in its armed uprising, were to go against the Franco-Belgian army of occupation in the Ruhr. By doing that it would acquire a powerful enemy, much more powerful than the Reichswehr, and would make it easier for Poincard to intervene further, since he would in such a case seem to be acting defensively. But we suppose that the German Communist Party will not do this. We, in our time, made very big concessions when the Germans occupied the Ukraine. We did not touch the Ukraine in those days, and we offered to the British and Americans to leave both Archangel and our Far East in their hands. A revolution is often obliged to make concessions, but these do not last for ever. There were times when we were squeezed into a ring around Moscow, but we worked with our knees and elbows and pushed that ring back far enough. It must be presumed that the German comrades have knees and elbows that are no worse than ours. Therefore they can reconcile themselves to a Germany without the Ruhr, since that situation will be only temporary. [7]

However, may not France, despite the peaceloving policy of the German workers, intervene in order to suppress the German revolution? That is a question which is as much political as it is military. What occupation means we know well. There have been not a few occupations here in recent years, and not only here. We made a careful calculation of the forces needed for occupation purposes, and this was the result. In order to occupy Germany, with its cities and its close network of railways, and to occupy it seriously and lastingly, one would need not less than one million seven hundred thousand soldiers. The German and Austro-Hungarian occupation troops in the Ukraine numbered 200,000, though that occupation was only partial, with no more than the towns and the most important railway junctions occupied. Communication by rail was interrupted by the guerrillas, and guerrilla activity prevailed almost continuously in the countryside. This situation affected the German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers, who subsequently returned to their homelands as revolutionary regiments. For an occupation of Germany that would be prolonged and serious (and otherwise there would be no point in engaging in such a venture) France would need an army of 1,700,000 men, with the prospect that these soldiers, surrounded by an ocean of revolutionary workers, would become increasingly demoralised. Naturally, the German and French Communists would, for their part, help this process along, that is, they would form Communist cells in every regiment, set up underground French printing presses and carry on agitation, both spoken and written, in the French army; and the army of occupation, placed in a revolutionary milieu, would constitute material very favourable for planned and persistent agitation.

True, France would not act on her own. She could unload part of the burden of occupation on to Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia. But, so far as we can judge concerning the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, the relation between the classes there is such that, although this country is a vassal state of France, it would nevertheless be unlikely to engage in military intervention, and would, in any case, be the last country to take this road. But even if both Czechoslovakia and Poland were to support an interventionist adventure by France, the latter would still have herself to supply not less than a million soldiers. At present, France has an army of 700,000 men. In order to carry out an intervention France would, therefore, have to conscript an additional 300,000, approximately. But the army's numbers are to a

considerable extent determined by its domestic tasks as well. And if Poincaré now has 700,000 soldiers, that is evidently because he needs them for some purpose inside the country itself, and so it is unthinkable that France could send the whole of her army into foreign territory. Consequently, if Poincaré were to intervene, he would need, for the occupation of his own country, an army at least no smaller than the one he has now, that is, an army of 700,000 men. In other words, he would need an army of 1,700,000 altogether, which means he would have to carry out a new mobilisation of five, six, perhaps seven agegroups. And to do that in France would be more difficult and more risky than in any other country.

The French population can be taken to number 39 millions. In the imperialist war the French lost one and a half million men. As is well known, the population of France is not increasing but decreasing. Already before the war it was steadily decreasing, and that trend continues. There is not a single family in France which has not had a husband, brother or son killed in the war, or has no war-disabled kinsfolk. What mobilisation would mean, given these conditions, is not hard to realise.

In our country, when we mobilised one age-group, we had a million men ready for service. Our country is enormous, our population is quite adequate for the greatest undertakings [*laughter*] and, to speak absolutely seriously, it is easier for us, with our ponderous mass of peasants, to call up men than it is to mobilise horses and carts (you know this is so), because in the latter case the very basis of the peasant household is affected. If a son goes off to the army, sufficient labour-power nevertheless remains. In France the picture is quite different. There, mobilisation and another war would mean the risk of losing the last remnants of the adult male population. Already today the male population of France is inadequate, and there are today in France, working as labourers, Italians who have fled from Fascism, Spaniards who have fled from their Fascism, Poles and Czechoslovaks. They cannot be mobilised because they are foreigners, it is Frenchmen that are needed, but the French the worker, the working woman, the peasant woman – do not want this. And France's politicians can only shudder at the thought that they may have to mobilise a few more age-groups, and send a million soldiers into Germany, with the prospect that they will become demoralised. The ruling classes of France will think ten times before they make up their minds to do that. I do not mean to say that this is out of the question. When a ruling class is threatened with danger there is no rashness, no madness to which it will not resort. But the ruling class will think ten times before deciding on *this* action, and then another ten times – and that signifies and provides us with a breathing-spell. What a breathing-spell means we know: a breathing-spell that lasts for a few months can save a revolution.

The German Revolution and Poland

How do matters stand with Poland? Here I pass to a question which is of decisive importance for us, which, in our agitational work inside the army, will determine the fate of our army, its capacity to fight and its conduct in the events which are developing, in those dangers which are not excluded. First of all I must repeat what I said at the provincial congress of the metalworkers. It would constitute a very great danger and disaster if the conviction were allowed to take root in the revolutionary elements of the working class, and especially in our own party, that war with Poland is inevitable, that revolution in Germany is tantamount to war

between us and Poland. Such notes sometimes creep into agitation and into some resolutions that are passed. In the course of six years we have become terribly dab hands at writing resolutions, and with us every resolution is a revolutionary one: 'We shall support the revolution with our fists ... to the last drop of blood ... long live the Communist International.' Of course we must support the revolution, and of course it is right to hail the Comintern. If necessary we shall shed our blood, too – but all at the right time ... And where Poland is concerned there is very great danger that in our political agitation we may trip the catch. The Communist vanguard may go forward, not looking behind it, and the reserves may not keep up with us, just as happened during the Sebastopol campaign, according to the song composed in honour of General Read [.7b\]](#) This danger is just as much political as military. I can formulate my idea crudely like this. Addressing a meeting of the village soviet, the agitator says: 'We must support the German revolution to the last drop of blood. Brothers, give us your horses.' I fear that this sort of agitation will not produce entirely satisfactory results ... This question, comrades, which I have just formulated in an ironical way, is a question of life and death for us.

We need to think much more concretely and practically about our relations with Poland. The prospects must be thought out in a very realistic way, and then the broad masses must be aroused to think about these relations and prospects along with us. In the first place: how could a war between us and Poland arise? From the standpoint of the revolutionary philistine this is apparently a very simple matter. There's a revolution in Germany: right, that's it then – 'Give us Warsaw!' [\[8\]](#) Such a view is absolutely wrong. First of all, the German revolution has not yet conquered, and, secondly, it is not enough to say 'Give us Warsaw!' in order to take that city. *[Laughter]* We have some experience on that score. How might war occur, if we put the question seriously, if we reject the frivolous view that arises from abstract thinking? From what cause might war begin?

If Poland were to take the road of occupying Germany, that would mean extreme danger for us as well. But Poland could not take that road alone, but only along with France, Belgium and the other allies. If the ruling classes of Europe succeeded in forming a grand coalition to crush the German revolution, they would undoubtedly set themselves the task of, this time, destroying the revolution at its root, and, therefore, annihilating our Socialist Soviet Union. We should then face the task of fighting for our existence, waging a lifeanddeath struggle. A situation like that would be clear to the most ignorant peasant. If we put aside the possibility of a great imperialist coalition – and the odds are not much in its favour so far as the immediate future is concerned – what role could Poland play in the event of victory for the German revolution? Would Poland say: 'Give us Moscow, or Kiev'? It is hardly likely. Would she say: 'Give us Berlin'? Again, that is hardly likely. The possibility is not ruled out that she might follow a policy of grabbing whatever could easily be grabbed – that is an international characteristic of all ruling classes. This does not mean, of course, that we agree to reconcile ourselves to this characteristic of theirs. But it is quite obvious that even a successful attempt to seize Danzig would still not decide the fate of the German revolution, and for that reason it is hardly likely that we or Poland would go to war in the absence of other, more serious reasons.

Bridge or Barrier?

But there is another question which is directly connected in a much closer, more

vital and more concrete way with the fate of the German revolution and with our own economic destiny. This is the question of the feeding of the German revolution. The people of Saxony and of Berlin have no grain. It is just for that reason that doom is being predicted for the revolution. Doom was predicted for us because we were an agricultural country and had no industry. Doom is being predicted for the Germans for diametrically opposite reasons. Danger is present in each of these cases. No revolution can survive without grain. And, in the event of victory for the German workers in Berlin, they will have no need for our Red regiments to advance on Warsaw. The German workers will conquer by means of their own forces, and the German revolution will be lasting only if it conquers the internal enemy by internal forces. And so it is to the interest of the German proletariat that peace should prevail around its frontiers. Another European war might bury the German revolution under its own ruins. The question of preserving peace in Europe is a question of self-preservation for the European revolution, and for our Union in particular. The German workers need grain, and we have more than enough of that grain, so that the low prices paid for it are hurting our peasants. Only in that way, that is, by exporting grain, can one blade of the 'scissors' be brought up to normal, while the other one must be lowered through the expansion of industry and reduction in the prices of its products. Export of grain means export either over land or across the sea. The sea route may, in the event of a blockade, turn out to be severed, and so the only outlet to the foreign grain market that is left is the overland route, that is, through Poland. The German proletariat needs grain, and it can get this only from us. Here we come to the real solidarity, which is based on the complete identity of interest between our workers and peasants and the German revolution. We must put the question in this way to the army, too.

We need, first and foremost, comrades, to point to the map, and to do this every day. See, this patch here is Germany. This one here is the Soviet Union. Wedged between them is Poland. Here are the railways by which we can send grain abroad. This map must enter into the consciousness of the Red Army man: without it, your agitation will be, if you will pardon the expression, so much claptrap. If we cannot supply Germany with grain, the German revolution will suffocate, and so will our Union. Every peasant in Penza province will understand that. There is no other route than the one through Poland, so that the conclusion is clear. This must be the basis of our agitational work in the Red Army. What is involved here is not the principle of international solidarity, that is, it is not a matter of abstractions which, unless you fill them with concrete data taken from the current situation, serve no purpose at all. We must ensure that the link between our fundamental interests and those of the working people of Germany becomes clear, comprehensible and tangible to every Red Army man. When we were negotiating with Poland at Riga, we strove to secure a direct junction with East Prussia, but Poland did not agree, although even if she had, the Polish Corridor would have remained. Poland lies between us and Germany. What will Poland be, a bridge or a barrier? We do not demand of the Polish Government that it carry out our policy, just as we do not intend to carry out the policy of the Polish bourgeoisie. We demand freedom of transit, paying cash for every *verst*. Otherwise, we are done for. If the peasants appreciate that, at the same time, the German revolution will be done for as well, that will be very good. In any case, our agitation must proceed from the fact that if we are unable to export grain to Germany, in exchange for which we shall obtain industrial products, we shall suffer suffocation from our grain, and may perish therefrom. Thus, the whole question comes down to this – will Poland be a bridge or a barrier?

The Polish chauvinists say that they 'do not want to find ourselves gripped between the Russo-German pincers'. This is a popular expression in Poland 'the

Russo-German pincers' – as though the existence of the pincers is due to our ill-will. This is a matter of geography, and there's nothing to be done about it. Nations cannot change their location by their own free will. In what case can Poland serve as a bridge to the Germans? If, decisively rejecting the idea of acting as a barrier, she were to say to us, clearly and distinctly: 'I will serve you as a bridge: pay me in cash,' that would be a very agreeable thing, a splendid outcome. But transit presupposes, of course, the absence of war. It would not be possible to convey grain through Poland if Poland were at war with us, or with Germany – there would be no rail links, no means of conveyance, no transit. Transit presupposes that neither we nor Poland intend to go to war, that we and Poland bind ourselves not to intervene in the armed conflict in Germany. Without that undertaking, the grainharvest of Penza will not reach the German market, nor will the products of German industry reach the Penza peasant. These facts are mutually dependent. This is a realistic programme, comprehensible to everyone. We are fighting to ensure peace around the German revolution. The German revolution will deal with its internal enemies by means of its internal forces. We shall feed the German worker with grain, not for nothing but in exchange for the products of his industry, for machinery which will be supplied to us through Poland, in accordance with a treaty concluded with Poland. We shall do everything we can to achieve such a treaty. To arrive at it is a task for our diplomats, and we shall support our diplomats to the end in their efforts along that road. If transit is assured, both sides will thereby bind themselves not to fight each other and not to interfere in Germany.

This is our programme for political education work in the army in the forthcoming period. This will safeguard us against the danger of tripping the catch, for otherwise it could happen that the vanguard would rush ahead and the reserves fail to keep up with it. It is not only the peasant but the worker as well who, very often, fails to understand what is meant when people talk to him about supporting the German revolution. The peasant and the worker want peace, and the Soviet Government takes this desire of theirs for peace as the foundation of its policy.

But this does not mean in the least, comrades, that we do not have to prepare for war. Everyone will appreciate that this situation is not such that we, conscientiously following a policy of peace, can be absolutely sure that all our partners will sing in harmony with us. That has not yet been proved.

Is there danger of war? I began by saying that war and revolution, revolution and war, often go together. The German revolution will be a rather big stone dropped into the water of European relations. This water is not so calm even now, but if a rock falls into it, the waves sweeping across Europe will be very high, equilibrium will be upset, much will be unsettled, and the danger of new upheavals will be very great. This will have its effect on the mood of the bourgeois classes, and in particular on those whose home is Warsaw. There is danger of war.

However, what are the odds where war is concerned? If there were in the world a form of bookkeeping by which one could calculate the chances for peace and the chances for war, I should be inclined to expect that these are the figures that would emerge – for peace, at least 51 per cent, and for war, no more than 49 per cent, at the most pessimistic estimate. But even if the chances for war were only 10 per cent, we should still have to be 100 per cent prepared, for if we were to become subject, unprepared, to hostile action, as a result of that 10 per cent possibility of war, we should be defeated a full 100 per cent. Consequently, our preparation for war must, in any case, go full speed ahead.

Our Tasks

This preparation does not presuppose any leaps, but means, above all, improvement and elaboration of all the work which we have been doing up to now. This is, of course, bound up with the fact that the state will have to devote more of its resources to the army and the navy than hitherto. The possibilities for military-technical, military-industrial and military-political work will become more extensive, the number of workers engaged in this work will undoubtedly increase, the military-political apparatus will be strengthened and consolidated, but, along with this, the work itself will have to be carried on at a different tempo, in line with the period which we are entering. We shall all have to brace ourselves accordingly!

Among our new tasks, which are not so numerous, the most important is the development of our territorial system. You are well enough acquainted with this task. There will be a speech specially concerned with this question on the agenda of our conference. We have certainly, by introducing this system, written a new and rich chapter in the development of our Red Army. Before the musters of the territorial divisions took place [8b] there were very many doubts: would it come off, would we succeed in going over, in the revolutionary epoch, to the militia system? We carried out an experiment, and the muster of ten divisions went well, which means that the sociopolitical preconditions have, by and large, proved to be favourable for us. Secondly, our military apparatus has, with the help of the Soviet apparatus, coped, on the whole, with the tasks that faced us where the territorial formations were concerned. There are defects, of course, but we must check the result and correct these in the future. We shall expand this experiment. We propose to carry out musters of the transitory element of no less than twenty territorial divisions. It is, I repeat, a factor of exceptional importance also for our tasks in the sphere of mobilisation – here we have a free hand, since we can locate the cadres of the territorial divisions just as required, assigning them to districts in accordance with our plans of development and our strategical plans. Consequently, political and educational work in the areas where the territorial divisions are recruited is one of our most important tasks. This applies, first and foremost and most acutely, to the Ukrainian divisions, because we have in prospect the creation of territorial divisions in Right-bank Ukraine. You all appreciate how tempting this is from the military standpoint, how greatly it will reduce the work to be done in concentrating our forces, but, on the other hand, considering the particular makeup of the population in Right-bank Ukraine, it is necessary to reinsure ourselves politically in every way. This also applies, of course, to the territorial divisions in all other parts of the country.

As we expand this experiment, treating it as of the greatest importance, the question of the class essence of the territorial divisions will acquire its full weight. You know that Jaurès, the French Socialist who was assassinated on the eve of the war, wrote a book about the militia-type army, organised, as he conceived it, on democratic principles and exclusively defensive in character. In building our territorial divisions we are, in many respects, following the path indicated by Jaurès in his book **L'Armée Nouvelle**, but, where politics is concerned, there is a gulf between us and him. We are building our militia divisions not on a democratic but on a class basis – in the Ukraine, though they consist 70 per cent of peasants, they are under the leadership of the working class. And since we are now living under the conditions of NEP, the kulak is beginning to raise his head, capital is becoming concentrated in trade, and the huckster is starting to play an ever greater role both in the village and in the town, for we must not forget that the lower links in the

economy are controlled by commercial capital, and this is growing fatter and fatter. The problem of the homogeneity of our army faces us, therefore, in its full seriousness, and the solution of this problem depends on how correctly, in the eyes of the Red Army man, we manage to carry out a purge, a filtering of the army, to eliminate both hucksters and kulaks. It must be reaffirmed, as a very strict law, that there is no place for hucksters and kulaks in the territorial divisions, any more than in the Red Army generally. This is especially important because both the kulak and the huckster seek to get into these divisions, since this would furnish them with a passport of political reliability. It is no great privilege for a kulak to hold an official 'wolf's ticket', so he tries to get into a territorial division, presenting himself as a patriot of his fatherland, in order to acquire civil legitimisation by way of the military apparatus. But we shall not give him this legitimisation. This must be seen to by the military workers who share with the local Party workers responsibility for the recruitment of the territorial divisions.

Where our field divisions are concerned, we have the problem of establishing a regime adequate to the scale of the approaching danger. It is necessary that there shall emerge vividly from all our educational work, all our propaganda, an awareness that more severe and responsible times are beginning: that the commanders, the commissars, the political workers and every single Red Army man shall be filled with this consciousness, and that there shall be no more cases of non-appearance for duty, evasion, absence without leave and straight desertion. I do not say that we shall begin with naked administrative pressure where these matters are concerned. No, first of all, we need moral and political preparation, we need to create a solid public opinion.

Everything that I am saying applies also, of course, to the Red Navy, for circumstances may take shape in which the Red Navy will have to play no small part in forthcoming events, if we should be forced to defend the Soviet Union in arms. You will not, of course, ask me to develop this idea here. But the conclusion does emerge from all our plans that the Navy may, under certain conditions, be called upon to perform highly responsible work. This follows from the geography of our seas. May the sailor comrades redouble their efforts along the road to further successes.

The public opinion of the army and the navy must understand, on the basis of an evaluation of the entire situation, that hard days are coming, and that the responsibility borne by every one of us will be multiplied many times over, and in this situation failure to report will acquire great importance. The musters went well, on the whole, as I have said. But there are also certain facts, which are, to be sure, quite exceptional in character: for example, of the reinforcements for the Bessarabian Division which were due to come from the Poltava area, 50 per cent deserted and even, apparently, organised themselves into bands. The proportion of men reporting for duty with the territorial divisions was 98 per cent. Is that good? It is excellent. But 2 per cent did not turn up, and that is a pimple that may become an abscess. You know that, during the war, letters used to be sent to the army from Voronezh province saying that Petka was staying at home, and that was that. You know what the consequences sometimes were. I want to point out that if there is no clear and plain regime where this matter is concerned, these 2 per cent who fail to turn up may cause more and more loosening, and shake the firmness of the entire organisation. We must therefore devote strict attention to strengthening the army in this respect. Failure to report for duty must be treated as a grave offence incurring a definite punishment. Success in this direction is conceivable, of course, only if it proceeds parallel with internal unification of the army. Broadly speaking,

things are going pretty well in this sphere, but the comradely solidarity of the Red Army man with the commander and the commissar must be raised, in view of these circumstances, to a greater height than before. Any and every illegal action, injustice or lack of care where the Red Army man and his needs are concerned must be banished and eradicated. Things in everyday relationships that at first sight may seem trifles which, though negative in character, are of secondary importance, now become crimes of tenfold gravity. There must be a systematic armed struggle against arrogance, rudeness and formalism, so as in good time to weld the army together and consolidate it.

To return to the subject of failure to report for duty. In the report by the Ukrainian comrades I found also the following passage which is highly alarming, even though, as I have said, it is, of course, an exception. 'It is to be noted that the political workers tried to get out of working in the territorial units ...' and so on. The attention of the Central Committee and the Party committees needs to be drawn to this. If this harmful example were to spread, it would threaten us with great calamities, and it would then become quite impossible to talk of establishing solidarity in the army. Such phenomena will disappear as soon as the party, right down to its deepest levels, takes account of the seriousness and responsibility of the situation.

The national factor assumes very great importance now. In so far as we are now going over, on a wider scale than before, to the forming of territorial units, which are directly linked with the local population, the national factor and the national language acquire heightened importance. In many localities attempts have been made to carry on political talks in the local national language. This must be welcomed, and efforts in this sphere must be increased tenfold. We must not allow political problems to be made difficult, first, because they are difficult in themselves, and, second, because they are presented in an unfamiliar language.

Of no less importance is the question of the youth, of relations with our Young Communist League members. In order to increase the sense of responsibility, both ours towards the youth and that of the youth towards the revolution, and, in particular, to increase the significance of precallup preparation, as the only serious basis for our future territorial-militia army, we need a closer link between our military-political organs and the Young Communist League. Yesterday a plenary meeting of the YCL's Central Committee was held, at which they discussed problems connected with military work. One of the comrades raised the question whether it might not be necessary to reconsider the position regarding YCL cells in the army. I gave a categorically negative reply. Such a move does not follow from the situation. On the contrary, the more acute the international situation becomes, the less permissible is it to multiply organisations within our army. We have the Party organisations, which are combined in complex ways with the army organisations, and both are headed by tried and tested old workers who possess experience. If we were to create yet another organisation, in the form of YCL cells, that might lead to very undesirable friction and difficulty. While we are obliged to reject this idea, we must, at the same time, redouble our care for the Young Communist League members who join Red Army units, so that they may not lose their Young-Communist outlook, so that we may educate them to become tomorrow's Party members.

The question of comradely solidarity, attention to everyday conditions, care and respect for the individual personality, is connected with the question of sobriety in the army. And this is a very serious question – the fight against *samogon*. [\[9\]](#) In

those places where *samogon* is in full flood, campmusters proceed less well, and the formation of territorial divisions falls to go smoothly. We therefore need to wage ruthless fight against *samogon*. And the more serious the situation, the sterner must this fight be.

We have to try and increase the number of Communist rank-and-file soldiers in the units. At that same plenum of the Young Communists' CC I was asked if a slogan could not be issued for YCLers to join the army as rank-and-file soldiers. We cannot, of course, issue such a slogan. We cannot survive without political leaders in the army. We do have to calculate who is to serve as an ordinary soldier and who as a political leader. But it will be possible to form an unshakable nucleus in the army only if we increase the percentage of Communists who carry bayonets.

These are, in fundamental outline, the tasks of our internal work in the army. Parallel with this work must go, and is going, more intense work in the sphere of war industry, because our capacity to fight will be 50 per cent determined by our success in the sphere of war industry.

I come back to the question to which I have devoted the greater part of my report, that of the moral preparation of the army, the navy and the entire population, because these are all inseparably interconnected. You know how the territorial musters that were held excited the people, and what a beneficial effect they had on the people in many places. Consequently, the method of educating the Red Army which we are adopting at this time will to a considerable degree also be a method of educating the masses of the people, and it will proceed from concrete, practical explanation of the question at issue and wellfounded stepbystep progress. I will try once again to formulate where the danger lies. We know too much, and our listeners often know too little. We all have an evaluation of the developing events – the connection between war and the German revolution, and the prospects of this revolution – firmly fixed in our minds. All that has settled profoundly into our thinking, and, therefore, when we expound a question, forgetting the listener, we skip from one subject to another, and the listener gets the impression that he is looking at rainy weather through a fine sieve – he sees that something is appearing there, indistinctly, but he can't make out what it is, exactly. We write well and in a revolutionary way: 'and we will pour out our blood', and 'we will support', and so on, but the resolution does not sink into the listener's head. To be sure, people adopt the resolution, they vote for it, but often they only do this because they trust us in advance – and sometimes they do it from indifference, which is worse.

What do we need? We need to ensure that a notch is cut in the consciousness of the listener, by which, as though mounting a ladder, he can rise from one stage to the next, so that he remembers today what was told to him yesterday. That is why I directed your attention to the map. The listener's attention has to be riveted to the map, and he must point out and name here is Russia, here Germany, here Poland, and this is the way the grain is to go. We have to awaken him, to make him follow events day after day, for the situation is subject to change. He must be involved in the course of events, and not fed merely on abstract declarations about the German revolution in general, about duty, about the Comintern, and so on. The situation changes from one day to the next: and what does the ideological life of a conscious person mean if not that he follows this movement day by day, takes account of what has happened, forms hypotheses, looks forward to the next day, to fresh events, and tests his hypotheses, finding confirmation or refutation? His consciousness, his thinking, anticipates something, gets ready for something, and he becomes a generally conscious person. The level of the conscious person can vary:

Marx on one level, and, on a different level, a young peasant from Penza. But the latter, too, must be an actively thinking citizen. We have to approach him in such a way that he works over everything with his own brain and advances from one day to the next, so that he receives every fresh event concretely explained, and knows the essential character of the policy of our neighbours, the essence of events as they develop. It is impossible to keep the army in ignorance for one or two months and then suddenly unload a whole mountain of facts on it. Agitation must be carried on in such a way that the peasant's brain organically absorbs certain facts and relations: then he will work along the right lines. And in order to attain this result we must, above all, ruthlessly banish from our explanations and our agitation that official discourse which is often observable among us, and which sometimes recalls, in an extremely repulsive way, the official discourse of former times, with its conventional terminology, with its 'How glorious' and its 'God save the Tsar'. [10] We are a revolutionary party, a revolutionary class, a revolutionary state, and we cannot tolerate lying official discourse in any circumstances. I became especially aware last summer of the existence of this official discourse among us. There fell to my lot the privilege of being ill for a few months. While undergoing treatment in Caucasia I read a whole number of historical sketches about our army units. During the last few years numerous symposiums have been published here dealing with regiments, divisions and armies. It is a splendid fact that we are looking back over our past, and drawing the conclusions from it – but in these writings there is also more than enough of official discourse. How is this expressed? Let us speak bluntly. It is expressed in the conventional, bombastic lies of false romanticism. It is made to appear as though there is no division, no regiment that is not absolutely ideal: as soon as it was born, as soon as its umbilical cord was cut, a bogatyr at once strode across the face of the earth – and where failures occurred, that was clearly due to the fact that the enemy's numbers were enormous whereas there was only a handful of us. Comrades, this won't do! This is not right for us! It suited the Tsarist Army, but it is not right for us. It is a most harmful thing. The glory of the Red Army has no need of these artificial procedures, and our young Red Army men and their commanders can only be corrupted by such lying official discourse. I do not speak from any moralistic standpoint, from the standpoint of Kant, with his 'categorical imperative', the obligation always and everywhere to speak the truth (I should like to see where in the world anyone lives in accordance with that imperative). Nor do I speak from the standpoint of the harmonious society of the future, in which, of course, everything will be truthful, in which there will be no conditions conducive to lying (fear, hatred, enmity). I speak of what exists today, what is happening before our eyes. Lies and cunning, trying to catch people out, trickery, treachery – all these are facts and methods inseparably bound up with the class structure of society and its internal struggle. And, indeed, how can one overcome an enemy without deceiving him? What is camouflage but lies expressed in colours, figures and shapes? We most willingly leave abstract preaching of the obligation to tell the truth to priests and to British politicians, the biggest liars in the world. We can free ourselves of this official discourse. But whereas we can deceive the enemy, deceive him wherever we can and to the best of our ability, we can in no case deceive ourselves. And official discourse is selfdeception, a crust of lying words, expressing rituals, which gradually accumulate and are presented to new entrants to the Red Army for their edification. But very great harm comes of this. From all the historical sketches steeped in official romanticism one thing emerges, namely, that all our regiments consisted of heroes and all their actions were heroic. Now, there are two possibilities. Either the young comrade, if he is intelligent, will not believe this. Then he will not believe, either, on another occasion, when we are telling him the truth: he will be filled with mistrust of the Red Army's ideology.

Another group will regard all this official romanticism as something that does not concern them. Finally, a third group will believe, sincerely and naively: and when in his first skirmish under fire, a young commander gets the shits (nothing can be done about it, this happens to the best of us), he will say to himself: 'I'm good for nothing, I'm not at all like those real heroes I read about in the books.' Under the influence of official romanticism he forms a false conception of reality which, in the end, may kill his confidence in himself – and without that, no-one can be a fighter, let alone a commander.

It is quite a different matter if we give a living, truthful picture of the past of our regiments, of their failures and shortcomings, of the cases of panic that occurred. Then the novice who finds himself in some serious trouble under fire, if he gets confused and his heart shrinks, will not give in to despair but, knowing what life in battle is like, will make an effort of will in order to overcome his disagreeable feeling. We have no need of selfdeception as an educational method.

Official self-deception has a further serious consequence the corruption of the army. Where official discourse set in, it corrodes the army, like rust, in all directions. Official discourse finds expression for instance, in false reports. The army suffered from this during the civil war, and we must rid ourselves of it at all costs. False reports result from a feeling of false shame and false official pride, from the need to present some mistake one has made in a wellcombed form. The falsity of this official discourse does not, of course, occur in 100 per cent of all reports, it usually comes to not more than 15 per cent, or 33 per cent, or, at most, 50 per cent. These reports make their way up from below and are concentrated at the level of the higher command. Cosmetics and camouflage are found at every level of the military hierarchy. It thus happens that when such reports have passed up through the various channels, the staff of a division or of an army have been given a picture utterly different from the reality. The question of truthfulness in reports is one of the most important questions in educating a soldier, increasing his sense of responsibility. Truthfulness in reports is the precondition for making correct dispositions and issuing the right orders, because one needs to have a good idea of what the situation really is if one is to decide what to do next. This question is, I repeat, one of exceptional importance, and the task which follows from it can be performed only if we declare war on official discourse in all its manifestations. [\[11\]](#)

The army must be a selfacting organism, which thinks critically and estimates situations. This does not in the least rule out discipline: on the contrary, truly revolutionary stern discipline can be based only on critical thinking by the entire army. If the army rids itself of all official discourse, lying and conventionalism; if this army does not subscribe automatically to resolutions at meetings but forms its opinion because it has taken account of the situation; if we carry on our work in this way, increasing internal cohesion, comradely spirit and criticism, which are combined very well with strict discipline, we shall not only raise our army to a higher level but shall draw into conscious political life, along with the army, also the ponderous masses of the peasantry. More concreteness, clarity and practicality, in all our political education work! Its guiding idea will, as before, be the struggle for peace, but in the new situation created by the German revolution. Don't exaggerate, don't rush ahead, but march in step with events. We shall pursue a policy of demanding transit and non-intervention. In the event that, nevertheless, we find ourselves under the necessity of going to war, this fact will be understood by the most backward peasants as the result of inescapable objective circumstances. We made every effort to safeguard peace and, nevertheless, war has been forced upon us – so we must defend ourselves to the end. Methodical

work must be carried on against official discourse in the army, preparing the soldiers' public opinion against all possibilities and difficulties. This is our basic task, and if we do fulfil it, then, should war be forced upon us, we shall fight as no one has ever fought before!

From Concluding Remarks

Comrades, so as not to forget it, I want to mention a particular detail, a formal question which may seem a very minor one, but which has its importance. This is the name to be given to our territorial divisions. We call them sometimes 'militia', sometimes 'territorial'. The word 'militia' is not suitable because in our country we call the police the militia. The peasant and the worker know that. And yet here we have part of the army. 'Territorial division' – you would have to give the peasant an encyclopaedic dictionary for him to know what this means, and then he won't say it, and this term won't enter into popular usage. What does 'territorial division' mean? Some comrades say, in a fit of despair: don't call it anything, just say 'division'. It would be very tempting to call it simply a division, like any other, field division. But the trouble is that it differs from a field division, and everyone notices that it differs somewhat from a field division: in its mode of recruitment, its structure, in everything, it is decidedly different. Consequently, anybody who is at all interested wants to have a name to call it by. What is it to be called? There is an old, discredited name which I proposed, but which met with a rebuff. I should have your support for it. It is: *opolchenie*. [12] I see how, already some of you are shaking your heads. This is at present, of course, comrades, merely a modest proposal which I am not forcing on anyone, but which I should like to be discussed and weighed by a commission or in some other way. Eventually we shall have to decide on some name. '*Opolchenie*', '*a division of the opolchenie*', '*the Red opolchenie*' – that doesn't sound bad to me. The traditions of the word are bad. To the soldier of the old army it still evokes bad associations, bad memories, but this won't be the case with the youngster. And if we take the word *opolchenie*, this is, in my opinion, a splendid word: in the first place, it is not a foreign word, like 'militia' or 'territorial', but a real Russian word. From it we get '*opolchatsya protiv vraga*' (to take up arms against the enemy), we get the word '*polk*' (a regiment); we get '*opolchit krestyan*' (arm the peasants); '*preyratitikh v polk*' (for a regiment of them); '*opolchit rabochikh*' (arm the workers); '*opolchit protiv vraga*' (arm against the enemy) what could be better, it's a most splendid word. I think that this could well find acceptance. The oldtime *opolchenie* was something quite different. That's over and done with. But this is the Red *opolchenie*, the workers' and peasants' revolutionary *opolchenie*. Give it your consideration, please, comrades, and perhaps I shall find support among you. But at present these divisions are roaming about nameless, like lost souls.

'But what', one of the comrades has asked, 'may British imperialism do, in Persia and Turkey, if we intervene in military operations? May it not leave the world revolution without the oil of Baku? And, in general, is there danger from that side?' There is danger from every side, including that one, of that there can be no doubt. Should the great storm burst, the enemy will, of course, try to harm us absolutely everywhere. What can one say about this? We have to keep a sharp eye on Caucasia, as 'You did not say anything about the role of Romania.' True, I did not; and it is indeed hard to say anything about the role of Romania, for Romania's role has always in the past been hard to define. As you know, Romania is allied with Poland, but Romania always betrays her allies. She always betrayed them in the

past, waiting to intervene in a conflict at the moment when it seemed to her that the chances were absolutely sure, but sometimes she miscalculated. So far as we know, the Polish general staff does not, in its calculations, count on Romania as a reliable ally, because it knows the character of the ruling caste of that country. One thing can be said, that if a really big counterrevolutionary European coalition is formed, then, probably, Romania will join in the dance, because the chances of victory will be great. If, however, this is not formed – and putting together this world coalition is no simple or easy matter – Romania will keep to a waiting position. This position will, of course, depend also on what our forces look like, both in the Ukraine and in the other areas directly adjacent to the western frontier of our Union. In any case, one thing is certain, that in Romania neither we nor the German revolution have a friend that is quite obvious.

‘What role will be played by the buffer states – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – in the event of revolution in Germany? What should our attitude be towards them?’ I think that what I said about Poland applies also to them, to a greater or lesser extent. Everything that I said applies, on a smaller scale, to these states. Our policy towards them should be the same, that is, insistently peaceloving – not passively peaceloving, but insistently. Love of peace sometimes requires that a man bang his fist on the table, demonstrating the need to preserve peace to someone who does not want to understand this.

‘Is it possible that revolutionary Germany may be occupied by France’s coloured troops, what is the likelihood of this, and, if so, what would the prospects be?’ It is, of course, possible that France may throw in 200-300,000 coloured troops – but not more than that, because the development of colonial troops is a slow process, owing to the inadequate cultural level of the native population. The prospects, I should say, are two-edged. These black units are inclined to indulge in unrestrained violence, atrocities, and so on, owing to their cultural backwardness, but, on the other hand, they are also inclined to mutiny, to offer passive or active resistance, to massacre their officers: they can yield to propaganda – not Communist propaganda, of course, but a way to approach them must be found. There are not many literate men among them. The Arabs, of course, are more cultured than the Negroes, but it is quite possible to work among the Negroes, too, since there are Negro revolutionaries, Negro Communists. So that would be the specific form of our general task of disintegrating the armies of occupation.

‘How are we to understand the interview you gave to the American senator?’
[Laughter] [\[13\]](#)

I think that this does not call for explanation. I talked with the American senator in extremely popular language, and what is comprehensible to an American senator should be all the more comprehensible to a worker in the field of political education in the army. What did I say to him? I said to him what I said in my report given here, only more simply and briefly. That peace must at all costs be preserved, that we feel great sympathy with the German revolution, but have no intention whatsoever of sending troops to Berlin to help. I told him that we shall not send one single soldier beyond the borders of our Union unless we are compelled to do this by pressure from hostile forces. This is a quite correct idea, which I invite you to share.

Speaking seriously, how do we pose the question, and how shall we pose it? The sixth anniversary of the revolution will soon be here. What slogans shall we issue – shall we say: ‘Long live revolutionary war!’ or ‘Long live peace!’? For my part, I shall

vote for the slogan: 'Long live the peace!', and I think the Central Committee of the Party will issue that slogan. 'Long live the victory of the German revolution!' 'Long live peace between the peoples of Europe!' That is what I said to the senator, and, from the impression I received, it seemed to satisfy him.

Another question: 'Does the Polish ruling class not know that victory for the revolution in Germany will predetermine the same thing in Poland?'

This is a mere abstraction, and so a way of posing the question which is inadequate for practical struggle. Of course, if the Polish ruling class as a whole were to come to the conclusion that the revolution will conquer, become consolidated, and last for years, then, naturally, the result would be that it would have, for the sake of self-preservation, to start a struggle against that revolution. But the essence of the matter is that the revolution has not yet triumphed in Germany, and its outcome is not predetermined. In Poland itself different trends are in conflict within the ruling classes, and these estimate differently the chance of the revolution in Germany. All this has to be taken into account. The revolution in Germany will go through various stages, with ebbs and flows. The ruling classes of the neighbouring countries will hope that this revolution will soon collapse, that it will be a passing phenomenon. An attempt by the extreme Right, imperialist wing to intervene immediately will encounter opposition from the middle and pettybourgeoisie. One must not imagine the ruling class of a bourgeois country as one whole creature with one single mind, which evaluates all events in perspective and logically deduces the corresponding decisions. A fierce internal struggle goes on there, evaluations change, moods fluctuate, decision replaces decision, and so, in this way we gain time. This is that breathing spell of which I have already spoken. It is not, of course, out of the question that intervention may occur already in the initial phase; but there are, as I have said, many obstacles in the way of that happening.

Concerning the abstract agitation, the official discourse, about which I spoke at the end, let me quote, as an example, a few lines from I won't say which report. Here is what it says: 'The recent events in Germany created enthusiasm in the majority of the units. The series of resolutions adopted by different units testifies to the general readiness to support the German proletariat. There is no other material on the revolutionary mood of the Red Army men.' When I read that, I shook my head over it. I should be very doubtful of the correctness of the actions of political workers who estimate in such simplified fashion the enthusiasm of our regiments: they subscribed to a resolution, therefore they are ready to go to the aid of the German workers. I doubt that very much. I think seriously, comrades, that in this responsible period we need to break ourselves of this sort of bureaucratic way of estimating. This question is no laughing matter.

Endnotes

[1.](#) The report on *The Present Situation and Our Tasks in Building the Army* was published as a separate pamphlet by the Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow, 1924.

[2.](#) The peasants' revolt in Bulgaria, led by the Communists, against the reactionary Tsankov Government, took place on and after September 20, 1923. It broke out simultaneously in several parts of Bulgaria, but was savagely suppressed by the government, with the help of the Wrangelites. Some of the rebels fled to Yugoslavia.

[3.](#) Some of Wrangel's forces, after their expulsion from the Crimea, settled in Bulgaria, where

they tried to preserve their military organisation. Stambulisky sought to disarm and evict them and so, together with the Macedonian nationalists who hated him for his policy of friendship with Yugoslavia, they helped his opponents to seize power. The Bulgarian Communists took up a stance of 'neutrality' when the coup occurred. The Executive Committee of the Comintern rebuked them for this and on June 23, 1923 issued an appeal to the workers and peasants of Bulgaria in which they said: 'Stambulisky's government persecuted the labour movement in the interests of the village bourgeoisie and the village usurers ... But if Stambulisky's Government persecuted the workers, Tsankov's Government wants to annihilate them. Whoever mistakenly thinks that the struggle of the now triumphant White clique against Stambulisky is a struggle between two bourgeois cliques in which the working class can be neutral will now be taught better ...'

4. **Kommunistichesky Yezhogodnik (The Communist Yearbook)** gives the number of agricultural workers in Germany as 7,000,000. But this figure, obtained by statistical combinations based on pre-war data, is certainly exaggerated. We have taken the minimum figure. [*Note by Trotsky*]

5. November 9, 1918 was the day of the German revolution when Wilhelm II was overthrown and a republic proclaimed. See note 70 to Volume One.

6. General von Lossow led the Reichswehr contingents in Bavaria. He and his men took an oath of allegiance to the state of Bavaria, on the blue-and-white flag of the Wittelsbach monarchy.

7. The line that a victorious revolution in Germany should be prepared to 'reconcile' itself, even if only temporarily, to the French occupation of the Ruhr was, of course, irreconcilable with the line put forward by Radek in his famous 'Schlageter speech' of 20 June 1923, at the meeting of the enlarged ECU (*Leo Schlageter – the Wanderer into the Void*, in **Labour Monthly**, September 1923). Schlageter, a Nazi, had been shot by the French in May, for sabotage of their railway communications in the Ruhr. Radek appealed to the nationalist-minded petty-bourgeois of the Schiageter type to rally to the German Communist Party as the leadership that could bring about Germany's liberation – national as well as social. Humbert-Droz, the Comintern representative in Paris, reported in September that the German Communists' flirtation with German nationalists, encouraged by Radek, was causing uneasiness in the French Communist Party. At the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, in 1924, during the post-mortem on the German events, one speaker said that, as soon as the Ruhr conflict began, some comrades had begun to act politically as though Germany, an advanced monopoly-capitalist country, had suddenly sunk to the level of a semi-colony like Morocco.

7b. A song with humorous verses composed by L.N. Tolstoy, making fun of the unsuccessful offensive by General Read on the river Chernaya, during the Sebastopol campaign.

General N.A. Read was killed in the battle of the Chernaya (1855), while making Russia's last attempt to relieve Sebastopol. L.N. Tolstoy, then a young officer serving in the Crimea, wrote some verses in which he mocked this failure. They included these lines:

*Any fool will do: you
had
Better sent out there
Read,
And let me look on.*

8. 'Give us Warsaw!' was the most popular slogan of the Red Army during the successful phase of the Russo-Polish War of 1920.

8b. The possibility of carrying out an extensive experiment in constructing the armed forces of the Republic on militia principles was first made widely known in January 1923, at a conference of commanders of military districts, fronts and independent armies. On January 12 of that year the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR issued an order for transforming the first ten divisions into territorial divisions. The first musters of these divisions were held between October 5 and 15. These musters took place with hardly any failures to turn up for service and with a great show of enthusiasm. The results of the first musters emphasised with unquestionable clearness that it was possible, under the conditions of the Soviet Union, to apply the territorial

principal of recruiting to the army.

[9.](#) *Samogon* is home-distilled vodka – ‘Russian potheen’.

[10.](#) *God save the Tsar* was adopted as Russia’s official national anthem in 1833. A religious hymn, *Kolslaven* (‘How glorious’), was also sung on state occasions.

[11.](#) The preceding passage anticipates the theme of Trotsky’s article *Functionarism in the Army and Elsewhere*, in **Pravda** of December 4, 1923, which was included in his book **The New Course**.

[12.](#) The *opolchenie* was originally the *levée en masse* raised to oppose invasion e.g., against the Poles at the beginning of the 17th century and against Napoleon in 1812. Between 1874 and 1917, however, this name was given to the territorial reserve consisting of men over normal military age, or unfit for normal service (like the German *Landsturm*).

[13.](#) See *From an Interview with the American Senator King* in this book.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

Speech

At the Celebration of the Fifth Anniversary of the Russian Young Communist League,
October 29, 1923

* * *

Comrades! Permit me to convey to you, on the fifth anniversary of your glorious League, a fraternal greeting from the Red Army and the Red Navy. Greetings are now no matter for surprise to you, comrades. As I read in the evening paper, you received greetings today from Toronto, Chicago and Buenos Aires. But I hope, all the same, that you will not refuse to accept this greeting from the Znamenka. [\[1\]](#)

Comrades, when one looks at the Young Communist League, which renews itself, year after year, from the springs of the worker and peasant youth, one is forced to compare it with what existed not so long ago, about 20 or 25 years ago. About that period you can get an impression from Gleb Uspensky's description, in **The Manners of Rasteryayeva Street** [**The Manners of Rasteryayeva Street** was published in 1866.], of the life of the workers and working-class youth in Tula in the middle and later years of the last century; or from Gorky's description of a provincial town, **The Small Town of Okurov** [**The Small Town of Okurov** was published in 1910.], or from the picture of his childhood which he has set before us in his latest writings. If, I say, one looks at you and compares what one sees with what used to be, it is obvious what a long stretch of history's road we have traversed, dear friends, during these last few years. There, in the Okurov of yesterday, the life of the petty-bourgeois, the life of the workers (not much different from that of the petty-bourgeois), the old habits, the Old-Testament beliefs, the whole daily round of life, was like a corked bottle, with no outlet to the free world. But now you, the worker and peasant youth, have broken not only ideologically with the swamp of Rasteryayeva Street. Remember how, in Uspensky, the districts where those workers and working-class youth lived who made accordions were at daggers drawn with the youth who made samovars – they formed two camps, two hostile worlds. [**Tula was 'Russia's Birmingham'.**] It is this group exclusiveness, this isolation, this dullness of the old way of life that you have overcome: you now have links with Chicago and Buenos Aires, and it is no accident that your brothers and sisters in spiritual arms send you their greetings on the fifth anniversary of your League.

There is the yardstick for that stretch of history's road that we have traversed in these five years, long as five centuries. Your League was – and this has to be said not merely for a day of celebration – your League was and is an historical factor, a force which is participating in the creation of new forms of social life. Your League has made great sacrifices in this period, and, in so doing, it has not weakened, it has grown taller each time by a whole head. The struggle was waged on a variety of fronts, but each time that we suffered defeats, whenever a difficult hour came our way, when the Party and the Soviet power gathered strength to defend themselves or to strike a blow, we turned to your League, which was then still quite young. And on each occasion there came forward from your ranks a fresh wave of

devoted fighters who felt that they were part of the working class and who died in its ranks and under its banner. As far back as those days when, before Kazan, before Sviyazhsk, the foundations of the armed forces of the Soviet Republic were being laid [2] a valiant handful of youngsters rushed thither from Moscow. Many of them fell in the fighting before Sviyazhsk. And constantly, whenever our fronts expanded, and when sometimes – and this happened several times – the ring of fronts clenched closer and closer around the Moscow centre, your League produced ever fresh detachments which linked their fate in blood with that of the Red Army, and, later, of the Red Navy.

Two years and more ago it became possible for us to reduce the size of the army. The Young Communist League went over from a war footing, if not to a completely peacetime footing, then almost to that. A period of study began, a period of struggle against the still mightily laters of Okurovism, the deposits of Asiaticism, of lack of culture, of barbarism. The Young Communist League member began, starting with the ABC, to mount to the heights of materialist philosophical thought, while cold and hungry, sharing in this, as in everything else, the fate of the whole working class. Two years and more ago a large section of the YCL devoted their efforts to advancing our backward culture and technology. It was you, members of the Young Communist League, who created the factory workshop school. At every congress, at every responsible meeting of the trade unions YCL members now speak, and the older generations listen to the strong, metallic voice of the incoming shift of the proletariat. History has swung a large and heavy hammer in order to forge the character of your generation. Hardly have you left the field of battle, hardly have you applied your young mouths to the sources of knowledge and technique, than you hear already the new alarm-bell which warns of the approach of another terrible conflict. I speak of the events in Germany, which are engrossing our thoughts and our will.

Each day brings news, by radio or by telegraph, of how the class struggle in today's half-dismembered and utterly ruined Germany is growing more acute and moving towards its inevitable culmination. We already see how French imperialism has resorted to open dismemberment of Germany. Bavaria, backed by French bayonets, is acting like an 'independent state'. In Koblenz sits the traitor separatist government of the new Rhineland 'Republic'. In that same Koblenz, 125 or 130 years ago, French Royalist émigrés took refuge from the thunder and lightning of the great French revolution of that time, but, today, German monarchists are taking refuge under the protection of French bayonets from the thunder and lightning of the advancing new wave of proletarian revolution. The starving German worker is coming forward in the role of pioneer of a new phase of class battles. [Applause] Yes, we applaud from our hearts the revolutionary ardour of the German proletariat, of the Communists who are their true leaders. We look distrustfully at the behaviour of the so-called 'Left' Social-Democrats. We follow with a keen eye the development of the civil war, which has already passed through a number of hard stages. So far, comrades, the German proletariat has not grasped the wheel of victory with its iron hand. Difficult hours, days, weeks and perhaps months still lie ahead. We are separated by distance from the German workers. But from here, from this Red celebration of the Young Communist League, we call to the proletarians, men and women, of Berlin, Dresden, Chemnitz and other cities and districts: 'Brothers and sisters, we are with you in spirit!'

The conflict that is rending Germany is upsetting the equilibrium of all Europe. We do not know what tasks and trials the morrow is preparing for us. We do not know that they will be, but we foresaw them in the comparatively calm days of the lull.

Not for nothing did your League, amid its studies, assume patronage of the entire Red Navy! What were you saying when you did that? You said thereby that you were clearly aware that stern struggle still lies ahead, that, while fighting against barbarism and backwardness with pencil, pen, compasses, hammer and pincers in hand, you do not want, you do not dare to forget how to use the rifle and the machine-gun. In this period you have given thousands of YCLers to our Red Navy, and if it is now advancing and growing, a large share of the credit for this belongs to you. You took an active part in the education of those about to be called up. We are now going over gradually, step by step, to the militia system, which in its organisation and spirit corresponds better to the whole nature of the workers' and peasants' state.

But a territorial-militia army will only attain the necessary level, and only then will ensure the defence of the Soviet Union, if we raise to the necessary height the military preparation of our young people. We have got down to this task. We need an air fleet, and our Young Communist League, which in fire is not consumed and in water is not drowned, is rising also into the realms of air, so as to widen its horizon and to bar the aerial approaches to the strongholds of our workers' and peasants' republic. We need a powerful air fleet, and the Young Communist League will take an ever larger place in the building of this fleet.

Thus, step by step, the Red Army and the Red Navy have been and are being interwoven with the destiny of your League. The army is made up of young men, the navy, after the release of a series of age-groups, has become young too, and that you are young there is no need to say. It is enough to look around this hall. And this intimate closeness between the generation under arms and that which is as yet only preparing to take up arms, this fraternity between them, is indissoluble. While the YCL is flesh of the flesh of the working class, the Army and Navy are becoming merely the prolongation and development of the YCL. At this time when Europe is shuddering in convulsions, when danger is becoming more and more immediate, we call upon you, comrades, while not diverting your efforts from study, work and production, to give an ever greater share of your attention to the Red Army and the Red Navy.

On your fifth anniversary, the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR has resolved to entrust to your Central Committee a banner, as the outward expression of the bond which united the army with you in past battles, and which will grow still stronger as time passes, for we are entering a period of struggle, approaching new trials. What destiny awaits us nobody can say precisely. But we do know that struggle awaits us! In this struggle your League, under the banner of the Comintern, will fight on those lines to which history will assign us. May this banner be among your battle-flags. The Red Army and the Red Navy have no doubt that this banner will not be disgraced, that it will become for you a sign of honour, struggle and victory.

Pokolenie Oktyabrya

Endnotes

[1.](#) The building occupied by the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR is situated in Znamenska Street, Moscow.

[2.](#) On the fighting before Kazan, see Volume One, pages 307-352, and the notes to these pages.

The International Situation and the Red Army

IV. The Events in Germany in the Autumn of 1923

Order No.282

By the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR and People's
Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, October 30, 1923, No. 282 Moscow

* * *

The sixth anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [*sic*] is arriving under the sign of great and terrible events impending in Europe. As we see how the predators of world imperialism are striving to tear to pieces the body of the German people, as we see the heroic efforts being made by the German working class to defend their country's independence and open their road to the socialist order, we are more than ever filled with resolution to safeguard the independence of the Soviet Union and its future. Our ardent sympathies are with the working people of all countries. Our efforts are directed at preserving peace. But the military vigilance of the Soviet Government will not slacken so long as the predatory schemes of imperialism are still in being.

On November 7, on the sixth anniversary of our great revolution, the troops will march with ceremony before the working people. In our parade, as always, there will be no frivolous fervour, no warlike challenge. Our procession will be a demonstration for peace between the peoples. But, more than ever before, it will be an expression of our common readiness to repulse anyone who encroaches on our peace and our labour.

The International Situation and the Red Army

V. Building the Air Fleet

The Air Fleet is on the Order of the Day

* * *



The air fleet, the lightest and most mobile form of weapon, has proved to be ... slow and heavy in take-off. Only through very great efforts and after the loss of much time has the question of the air fleet at last been put on the order of the day. All that remains now is to take care that further work in connection with the air fleet and around it, including agitation, follows the right road, for there is not a little danger that it may go astray.

First of all, about agitation. This is, of course, very important. Agitation in prose (if this be good) is a good thing, and agitation in verse (if this be good) is even better. But what we have most to fear is the danger that agitation may be too abstract and all-embracing, that is, simply empty, which would mean that in a very short time it would be brought to naught by the automatic pressure of universal indifference. In general we have quite a lot of 'agitations' which resemble what the Germans call 'straw fires' – they flare up with a crackle, and at once go out, leaving behind a handful of ashes. We do not, of course, need agitation about the air fleet for its own sake – what we need is an air fleet, numerous and technically perfect. Agitation must be subordinated to this task, illuminating it from the technical, industrial, general-economic military, political and educational standpoints. The reader must be kept au fait with aviation developments both abroad and at home. We must tell the reader, inform him, and not merely summon him. In general, we do too little informing and too much summoning. In this particular instance it is primarily the fault of the skilled workers of the air fleet itself. If they want the country's public opinion to take interest in their work, they themselves must do incomparably more than hitherto to interest the country's public opinion. The aviation horizons of Soviet Russia, or at least of its vanguard, must be widened. Interest must be kindled in those truly fascinating possibilities which are implicit in mastery of the air.

This is the principal task of the Society of Friends of the Red Air Fleet. Its nucleus must consist of persons really interested in aviation and devoted to this work, ready to sacrifice time and energy to it. Only given correct work by such a society, in the

person, say, of its permanent bureau, will agitation be based on serious, abundant and attractive information, international in its scope. And, without that, agitation, wearying people with repetition, will inevitably prove to be a straw fire.

The question of the aircraft industry must, of course, be among those put in the forefront. Aircraft factories, like war-industry enterprises generally, are not self-sufficient. On the contrary, they are very closely dependent on the overall state of industry and the economy as a whole. But this fact must not be understood in too simplified a way. The progress of industry does not and will not take place through a mechanically uniform raising of the level of all branches at the same time. 'Shock' branches and enterprises are possible and inevitable under NEP, too, just as in the period of War Communism – but only given incomparably greater success. The state cannot give to war industry from its common stock of resources more than it is now giving. Additional aid can be rendered to the aircraft industry in two ways: first, by attracting means to it from sources other than the state budget, and, secondly, by attracting means to it from the state's resources, on condition, so to speak, that equivalent service is rendered by aviation to certain government interests. Here we must at once eliminate one misunderstanding. If the state cannot devote more means to aviation out of its budget, that does not at all signify that it can give these extra means indirectly, through economic enterprises which either are sustained by the budget or ought to contribute thereto. Here we mean, first and foremost, the trusts. It is wrong to demand that the trusts give aeroplanes to the Red Army. The trusts are organs of the state which have been invested with certain powers to manage state industrial enterprises under market conditions. The powers of the trusts certainly do not include the power to rectify the state's budget at their own discretion. But it is quite obvious that, if the trusts were to begin to donate aeroplanes out of their commercial and industrial profits (or losses?), they would be doing this at the expense of the state, since their profits constitute an item on the income side of the state's budget and their losses an item on the expenditure side. I even think that the time will soon come when, for donating aeroplanes, and for many other 'donations' which have nothing to do with the tasks of producing well and selling well, the heads of the trusts will be called to account for squandering state property.

But this does not mean at all that the trusts, syndicates, banks and other economic and departmental entities can do nothing for aviation. On the contrary: on the purely economic plane they can do a hundred times more than on that of rather dubious philanthropy. We can only welcome the initiative shown by the management of the Russian Bank of Commerce and Industry in calling a conference of trusts and syndicates to discuss questions of aid to the air fleet. It is to be hoped that the question will be properly posed at this conference.

Can aviation, already in the immediate future, perform useful and necessary functions in the service of our unified industry, of the People's Commissariats of Agriculture and of Posts and Telegraphs, and, finally, of the largest local soviets? Can we set ourselves the task of establishing regular air links between Moscow and Petrograd, between Moscow and Kharkov, the Donets Basin, Baku and so on? Would these links present such advantages, administrative and economic, that the Moscow Soviet, the Petrograd Soviet, the Supreme Economic Council, the Chief Administration of Fuel, the syndicates, the trusts, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs, and so on, would undertake the corresponding expenditure? Here we need to make, pencil in hand, a good, businesslike calculation. In such a calculation the military importance of aircraft must also, of course, be given attention. But the basis of the calculation

must be the purely economic and administrative considerations of the interested institutions and enterprises. If some of the institutions listed above, and others along with them, come to the conclusion that a certain number of aeroplanes may be no less useful and necessary for them than a certain number of motorcars and lorries, this will by itself ensure, seriously and for a long time, expansion of the basis of our aircraft industry and multiplication of our air fleet. Our aircraft industry will receive considerable numbers of firm orders over and above those from the War Department, and the customers, the trusts and departments, will discuss with the Aircraft Trust how they can help it directly by means of further orders.

What has been said is not in the least aimed, of course, against the collections of donations for which *Izvestiya* is appealing so vigorously. This campaign must be continued and developed in every way. Every additional aeroplane is very important for our young air fleet. It is only necessary that these donations shall not place a concealed burden on the state's budget: they must consist of additional, fresh, non-state means. The actual collection of such donations, and, still better, of periodical contributions, can be put on a proper footing only when this work is headed by a proper organisation, that is, the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet.

A society like this must be very closely linked with the trade unions, with the People's Commissariat for Education and with the local soviets, or at least with the strongest of these. Without active and conscious, technical, economic and military interest in aviation on the part of the worker masses, and in particular, of the young workers, we shall achieve no serious, long-term success in this sphere, and such interest can be evoked, properly nourished and supported only through the trade unions,

the People's Commissariat of Education and the biggest of the local soviets. Representatives of these institutions must, first and foremost, be drawn into the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet, and not just as a matter of official formality, as 'honorary' members, but as active workers, builders and educators. Popular-science lectures and literature on aviation must be promoted, persons being drawn into this work who have a good, profound knowledge of the subject and who are capable of imparting their interest in it to the reader in simple and clear language.

The problem of the peasantry is, of course, more difficult, and therefore this remains one of secondary urgency. Of course, when it becomes possible to use aircraft to some extent for agricultural purposes (land-surveying, combating pests, and so on), and also for the rapid and regular supply of periodical publications to the villages, the cause of aviation will at once acquire a new and gigantic basis. But, naturally, we cannot begin with that. At present we have not sufficient forces. The first steps must necessarily be more modest, but at the same time firmly co-ordinated and planned for a long period. Because we shall have to defend ourselves for a long time yet. And we shall go on flying after we have ceased to need to defend ourselves. It would be more correct to say that we shall only then really fly – or, if not we, then our children and grand-children.

March 4, 1923
Pravda, No.50

The International Situation and the Red Army

V. Building the Air Fleet

Speech

At the Ceremonial Meeting of the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet, April 26, 1923 [\[1\]](#)

* * *

Comrades, the air fleet should help us to fulfil that task which is the fundamental task, or, at least, the fundamental material task, of our Russian, and now our Soviet-Union, culture, namely the conquest of expanse of territory.

Expanse of territory is our greatest ally, and at the same time a harsh adversary. But for our expanses we should long since have been plundered, crushed and enslaved, especially during the revolutionary upheaval. Remember how brief and fleeting was the fate of Soviet Hungary. And yet, at the start, we were armed no better, perhaps worse, than Soviet Hungary; if we saved ourselves, held out, grew stronger and are alive today as an independent revolutionary country, and if we are now probably going to go on living till the end of time, then this is due to our expanses. Our second greatest resource is our population. How many, many cruel calamities we have suffered calamities such, perhaps, as have been few in the memory of mankind – yet our population, glory be to our Soviet destiny, lives and multiplies, and this is the resource for our constructive work, for our independence, for our defence. And we have a third resource, of newer and more conscious historical origin. This third resource consists in the fact that the destructive phase of the revolution is behind us. Everywhere, throughout Europe, throughout the capitalist world, the revolutionary process which precedes the conquest of power by the working class is only now growing more acute, more profound, and therefore material culture in Europe and all over the capitalist world, will, in the main, suffer injury: but we, for all our poverty, have entered a phase of progress, and, I repeat, the destructive stage of the revolutionary process is already behind us. Expanse of territory is our greatest ally, and so we are certainly not going to renounce it. On the contrary, we possess and we are building and strengthening the Red Army and the Red Navy, on land, sea and in the air, to defend the expanses of our Soviet Union. Just now we are again passing through a phase of frenzied attack upon our revolution, upon our Union state, all over Europe and the world. The press, parliament, ministries are all foci of furious hatred, malicious slander and baiting against us, against Moscow, against the Soviet Union. If it were at all possible, if they were in a position to convert these lies and slanders into asphyxiating gases, dynamite and explosives, they would have hundreds of thousands, millions of tons to direct against us. But, for all that, we have our great expanses. Even if they did convert their malice, hatred and slander into explosives, our marshes, our lakes, our expanses, our dense forests would swallow up that mass of explosives, almost without trace. Our expanses are our greatest ally. We have not the slightest grounds for renouncing this ally. And at the same time we have to overcome expanse of territory – while relying on this expanse, to overcome it, for then we shall become more cultured, more clever, and a hundred times more invincible than we are now. Aviation serves, among other things, to overcome expanse of territory, and in the future that will be its primary function.

It is possible, comrades, to look at the whole of human culture – this is a somewhat conditional proposition from the standpoint of man's victory over expanse of territory, from the time when man first taught an animal to carry him until the time when he created an apparatus heavier than air that could rise up into the sky and be subject to control. One may, of course ask what need we have to dream about aviation, with our impassable country roads, our marshes, our dense forests, or one may say it is too early for us to set ourselves extensive tasks in this sphere. I think this is not so. Our whole culture, comrades, has been both cut out of and also fastened together with contradictions. In our country, even before the revolution, there was, on the one hand, a barbarian nomad economy, and, on the other, the most up-to-date factories on the American model. We have today, on the one hand, backward tribes who follow a nomadic existence which is still close to that of cave-men, while, on the other hand, it is no secret that the Communist Parties of Europe, which are the political vanguard of world culture, come to see us in Moscow, in the Kremlin, and look upon the ruling Party of our Soviet Union as their teacher and leader. There is a contrast here, because, on the one hand, we drag behind us a heavy tail of backwardness, poverty and barbarism, while, on the other, in the struggle, both material and ideological, with more cultured countries, we have been obliged to strain all our forces and draw level with them. Our entire past history has been determined by these two factors. We began to lay down railway lines before we built surfaced roads. Even today, our surfaced roads can be counted on the fingers of one hand, but our railway network has left far behind the development of any sort of convenient, cultured roads. It is the same with aviation. Aviation has come to our rescue in the struggle against the bad qualities of our expanses. There can be no doubt that, in this sphere, we shall follow the line of least resistance, and in a comparatively short time, shall be able to, and will, achieve substantial successes.

It is quite natural that the initiative in forming the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet should have been taken by the Red Army and the War Council of the Soviet Republic. We formulated a proposal to this effect already in the autumn of last year, and tried to attract the attention of the broad masses to the question of an air fleet. Take-off was slow. I think it was at the beginning of February that the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic – if my memory does not betray me, it was on February 4 – confirmed its previous decision on the need to address all the organs of the Soviet state and the entire public opinion of the workers' and peasants' republic concerning the question of creating in our country a broad current of interest in aviation and in favour of the conquest of the air. In mid-February we formulated a proposal to set up a Society of Friends of the Air Fleet. The front of silence was broken through by the *Izvestiya V.Ts.I.K.*, in the form of the articles you know about, announcing a collection for the air fleet, and so forth. And since then the movement has grown. There is, of course, no call for self-deception here. The greatest danger lies in the possibility that this movement, which has begun so happily, may exhaust itself in a relatively short time, so to speak, on the plane of agitational self-satisfaction. That sort of thing has happened here: one week, another week, or a month, of agitation, with very good articles – and very modest practical results. We do now have some results. There is 'Dobrolet' [\[2\]](#), with a proposed basic capital of two milliard roubles and an actual capital of 900,000 gold roubles. That is a figure which, of course, will surprise nobody in the London stock-exchange, not to mention the one in New York, but which impresses us in Moscow, and produces an agreeable impression, especially when they add: gold roubles. But, after all, comrades, this is only the beginning and a modest beginning. The work of the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet has already produced undoubted

results by way of stimulating interest in this cause. But from now on this interest must be widened, consolidated, organised and given practical realisation. Not only the provinces must be interested but also the *uyezds*, for we have *uyezd* towns, remember, about which one can say, as in **The Government Inspector** [3], that you could gallop from here for three years and not reach a foreign country. And now the question of aviation, of air travel, has come up, that is, the question of wrenching our *uyezd* towns out of their isolation, backwardness, cultural loneliness, ideological poverty. The question of aviation is for us the most important tactical, material question of our culture, and here we must find a correct, organised combination of the interests of military aviation with those of civil aviation and general economic, commercial culture. From the very outset, I think, we have posed this question correctly. We may hope for great help from the economic, soviet, trade-union and Party organisations, in so far as aviation will enter into our peacetime, current economic and cultural life. In this matter, to put things on the plane of command, of dictatorship of the interests of the War Department and the Red Army, would have been unreasonable from the start, for we should then have received temporary cooperation, temporary help, which would perhaps have been substantial, but which, in the end, would have proved quite incommensurate with our needs, for our backwardness in aviation, even compared with our immediate western neighbours is measured – I say this frankly – in the most terrifying figures, and, what is most important, their sources, the sources at the disposal even of our nearest neighbours, are immeasurably large compared with the sources which we draw on and can expect to draw on in the near future. It will be possible to develop the basis of our war industry, to provide it with a wider market than the War Department, only if we introduce aviation into the general economic and cultural life of our country. And, at the same time, the link, the coupling between military aviation and civil aviation must be very exact, wellthoughtout and properly organised. We cannot oblige the economic organs or the local soviets to build aeroplanes of the type needed by the War Department, for aeroplanes of this type will not always be suitable for economic, transport and other needs. But we must, in the course of the period immediately ahead, bring into this sphere the maximum unification and regulation, that is, everything that may contribute to uniformity of type where aeroplane engines are concerned, and everything around them that can be reduced to uniformity of type must be so reduced. We need to achieve the maximum degree of uniformity, so that between the military (and merely military) units and the economic, transport units of the air fleet there may be a series of transitional stages which could be used, on which we could rely for military purposes as well. In other words, we need from the start, where blueprints and plans are concerned, and then in the realisation of these plans, to ensure that our civil, economic, cultural transport aviation shall constitute a mighty reserve, a tactical base for our military aviation. Here, in so far as we have, in the sphere of military construction, gone over, or, to speak more modestly, are going over, to work of a planned character, on a wider scale, not covering only the present day and the evil thereof but with a perspective of two, three, five and more years, we need to ensure, at all costs, the linking of our military plans, that is, our plans for building and strengthening the Red Army, on the one hand, with the economic plans, especially those affecting industry, on the other.

We must link the plan for creating military aviation with the plan for developing and strengthening the aircraft industry, and the latter must develop in close connection with civil aviation. And, I have no doubt, we, that is, the Red Army, its leading organs, will succeed in reaching an agreement with the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet on a joint programme in which we shall not impede each other and

shall not order each other about, for in this matter comrades, bureaucratisation would be very dangerous. If the War Department were to try and subordinate this work to itself, issuing orders to all its branches, that would inevitably kill the material and ideological interest of the economic organs, the local soviets, the social organisations. The only possibility here is to reach an agreement which will allow the widest emulation, the widest initiative, to be exercised by the localities, the centre, the economic, departmental and cultural organs and organisations. And agree we can and must. We shall not set ourselves any unrealisable tasks. Our programme must march in step with the process of reviving the country's economy, perhaps running just a certain distance ahead. It is not in vain that aviation is the tactical vanguard, the aerial cavalry, if you like, of human culture it is therefore permissible for it to outstrip the heavier instruments of our material culture. But loss of contact must be avoided, through strict attention to the material basis. I do not doubt that those comrades from the localities who are present here at this meeting of the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet will take back with them a certain increased stock of interest, concern and love for this cause of exceptional importance. Our press – we firmly count on this – will provide the public opinion of our country with more and more circumstantial information about the air fleet and about aviation generally. The Society of Friends of the Air Fleet will spread its network as widely as possible. This network must not be absolutely centralised. The separate national republics can and doubtless will have their own independent societies, which will come to an agreement with us. In this sphere, comrades, emulation is the great creative principle, and bureaucratic centralisation not at all. And we shall achieve – there can be no doubt of this great and substantial successes.

Comrades! Aviation is a serious weapon which threatens us. Those countries are the best equipped with aircraft which are the most hostile to us. We need to be clearly aware of that fact. But until we have developed our aviation, until we have created in our expanses a material, technical-cultural superstructure upon these, our existing expanses, until then we shall remain, owing to our backwardness, less vulnerable to foreign aircraft than any America, Britain, Belgium or France. In our disadvantages lie, for the time being, our advantages, and *vice versa*. Otherwise, comrades, how is it to be explained that a country like ours, a country which has suffered so much, a country which is, after all, a backward one, should today be standing by itself against the whole world, which is so splendidly armed, so rich, and above all, so rich in hatred of us?

There are, comrades, two countries, which at present allow themselves the luxury of an isolated position, namely, the United States of America and the United Soviet States. The United States of America have isolated themselves voluntarily, which means that they intervene when they want to and do not intervene when they don't want to. Europe owes them, apparently, about 20 milliard gold roubles. To the best of my recollection Europe owes us nothing. [*Laughter, applause*] There is nothing to rejoice about in that: I should prefer it if Europe were indebted to us. On the other hand, however, we owe nothing to Europe, and we declared firmly at the congress of our Party that we cancelled our debts, down to the last kopeck, on October 25, 1917. Comrades, it is natural that New York, which has concentrated in its hands 40 per cent of the world's gold reserve, and to which Europe owes those 20 milliard gold roubles, is able, over there across the ocean, to pursue a policy of splendid isolation. We, however, are the connecting link between Asia and Europe. We form part of the continent of Europe. We do not possess 40 per cent of the world's gold reserve – I tell you that quite frankly – and yet, nevertheless, comrades, and this is no joking matter, we are a country with which no one has formed an alliance and which receives support from no-one. Of course, this relieves us of obligations, but it

also deprives us of aid. Europe has passed and is passing through so many convulsions, there have been so many peace conferences, each of which had the task of strangling us, yet we, the Union of Soviet Republics, though very poor and exhausted, stand here in our revolutionary isolation, and today no one, or at least no sensible person, anywhere in the world hopes or can hope, that capitalist Europe, which is suffering spasm after convulsion and convulsion after spasm, will succeed in overthrowing us. No, we have already won for ourselves a very big, very lengthy respite, and we shall use this to do many things, among them being to build a Red Air Fleet. Where this Red Air Fleet will have to be used is not known to you or to me. That will be revealed to us by the future destiny of Europe and of the whole world.

Endnotes

[1.](#) This speech was printed in the pamphlet *The Ceremonial Meeting of the Society of Friends of the Air Fleet*, published by *Voyenny Vyestnik*, Moscow, 1923.

[2.](#) 'Dobrolet', the Society of the Volunteer Air Fleet, was formed to promote civil aviation in imitation of the Volunteer Fleet which had been formed in 1878 to promote the development of Russia's merchant navy through building ships by public subscription.

[\[3\]](#) In Gogol's **The Government Inspector** (1834) the Mayor of the town rejects a suggestion that their frightening visitor has come to check on treasonable activities. There couldn't be any treason in his town, he says: 'Why, you could gallop from here for three years and not reach a foreign country.'

The International Situation and the Red Army

V. Building the Air Fleet

Letter

To the Editorial Board of the Newspaper *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn* (*Economic life*)

* * *

Dear Comrade! Unfortunately, I cannot give you an article for the next section of **Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn** devoted to aviation and the aircraft industry. Please allow me to confine myself, this time, to a short letter and, above all, to the expression of very great pleasure in the fact that **Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn** has decided in such good time to take up this question.

General political agitation about the air fleet is, undoubtedly, necessary. Without such agitation, that is, without attracting the attention of the broad masses of the people to this cause, we can, in general, achieve nothing substantial. But the problems of aviation are problems of industry, organisation, training, planning and the proper execution of plans. We have, fortunately, already left behind us the period in which all problems were solved through agitation and improvisation. The working masses are ready, as before, to submit to the greatest sacrifices if a great task is set before them. But the masses have become more mature, and demand not only that great tasks be set before them but also that proper methods of undertaking the fulfilment of these tasks be worked out. Real interest in the cause of aviation can be aroused, and this interest developed, deepened and made long-term, only by directing it into the channels of proper organisation' well-thought-out and systematic execution of these plans.

Aviation is a complex matter, which demands also that the aircraft industry be organised in a serious way, with a proper network of auxiliary institutions all over the country, and with an influx of heroic youth into the schools of aviation and intense work by designers and inventors. All the elements in this great cause must achieve the necessary co-operation, ensuring dynamic equilibrium and, therefore, development as well. In other words, into this cause as into any other great and serious cause, must at once be introduced the factors of foresight and co-ordination, that is, of practical planning.

This is why it is so important that general agitation in the country – and this agitation is assuming a thoroughly encouraging character – be supplemented by a seriously thought-out treatment of problems of aviation from the industrial and organisational standpoints. The leading role in this field could rightly belong to **Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn**. In this I see the significance of the more important place which you are going to allot in your paper to problems of aviation and of the aircraft industry.

May 2, 1923
Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn,
No. 97

The International Situation and the Red Army

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The Weapon of the Future

* * *

On the eve of the great imperialist war, aviation had barely left the stage of first experiments and exhibition flights. The powerful development of aviation coincides entirely with the war years. By the end of the war aviation had already attained a truly remarkable growth. It can be said that the last war, taken as a whole, hardly utilised aviation but merely created it. If that war had begun from the outset, that is, from July 1914, with aviation technique at its present level, the entire course of military operations would have been different. In that sense, aviation is wholly the weapon of the future.

But not only in that sense. The economic and cultural service that an air fleet can render has as yet hardly made itself apparent. True, already now, it is obvious from the first hasty survey that the cultural importance of aviation is limitless, but, in practice, this is all in the future.

Types of aircraft succeed each other with extraordinary rapidity. Flying machines 'suffer moral depreciation', to use Marx's expression [\[1\]](#), incomparably faster than do ships, locomotives or even motor-cars: this shows that aviation technique has not yet emerged from the epoch of youthful frenzy. The aeroplane has not yet attained that harmony between tasks and technical means, that internal equilibrium of the mechanism, which usually ensures for any machine a certain period of mature stability: the history of technology shows that, when the 'ideal' type of a machine has been achieved, this reigns despotically over the thinking of inventors – their modifications and improvements affecting only secondary details – until some new discovery or invention; of collateral origin, upsets at a stroke the complacent equilibrium which has been established. Aviation is the weapon of the future also in the sense that the 'ideal' type of machine is still to come.

For us, a country backward economically and technically, this is not a disadvantage but an advantage. If we utilise in good time all the advantages of a centralised socialist state, and get down to work, we can overcome our backwardness in the sphere of aviation more quickly than in many other spheres. For motor-cars, both passenger and goods-carrying, one needs 'cultured', that is, surfaced, roads: we have few of those, and what we have are bad. Our airways, however, are no worse than America's – they just have to be used. We must not, however, wait for ready-ripened fruits to drop from outside, but must insert ourselves, in good time, into the chain of development. We must build aircraft, improve them, adapt them to our climatic and other conditions, re-work independently the technical, military, transport and other experience of aviation throughout the world, and implement a steady process of selecting human material to fly our aeroplanes, we must educate, train and perfect these men – in short, we must ensure continuity of creative work in all the ramifications of aviation.

However, before it rises above the clouds, aviation must establish close contact

with the earth, that is, *with the masses*. It is this aim, first and foremost, that Aviation Week will serve. The working man in town and country must get closer to the aeroplane, survey it, understand it – that is, he must see in it the great weapon of the future, *his* weapon: otherwise, the aeroplane will, sooner or later, prove to be wholly directed against him.

Aviation is a new weapon, and precisely its novelty, its unusualness, its miraculous quality, is one of the important conditions governing its use in war. We know that the British make extensive use of aircraft, even without any link with ground forces, in suppressing colonial revolts in Asia and Africa. The aeroplane, as a weapon of psychological terror, is fulfilling the instructions of the slavemasters before it has managed to demonstrate in practice its capacities as a weapon of war. But not only in the colonies, here too, in our North, which they tried to turn into a colony, the British used aircraft, not unsuccessfully, to terrorise and demoralise infantry units that were inexperienced and lacked sufficient cohesion and were unfamiliar with aircraft. Diving low and with their machine-guns rattling, the airmen of Churchill and Chaykovsky [2] often sowed mortal panic among our troops. Why? Because the Red Army men knew nothing about the aeroplane – neither its capacities nor its range of action, neither its strengths nor its weaknesses.

The passenger motor-car, any sort of 'Ford', is the most inoffensive of machines. But if you drive one, puffing and grunting, into the square where a country fair is being held, you may bring about a very big catastrophe. When they see and hear the mechanical monster, the poor country horses make incredible leaps, carts knock into each other and overturn, pots are shattered into fragments, people fall under the cart-wheels and the horses' hooves. Yet in the streets of London, and even of Moscow, the town horses pay no heed when motor-cars approach. In order that enemy aircraft may not, at the moment of encounter, seem surrounded with a halo of mysterious power, that is, so that they may not sow panic, we must make the whole of the army used to aircraft, must familiarise with aircraft all the units and branches of the service. Accustoming the Red Army man, right down to the cook in an infantry regiment, to the aeroplane must become an integral part of the army's training and education. To a still greater extent must the commanders, from the lowest to the highest, become familiar with aircraft, so that in wartime they may know exactly what can be expected of them and what demanded of them. But we have not always observed this rule. Good watches would not go if one tried to hammer nails into them. One has to know how to use a watch before putting it in one's waistcoat pocket, and it is even not at all a bad thing to know how its works are put together.

But it is not only a question of the army. The aeroplane is the type of weapon with the most universal sphere of operation. Aeroplanes travel many, many hundreds of *versts* from their bases, fly deep into the enemy's rear, destroy railway lines, hangars and power-stations, and make raids on cities, bringing destruction, death and panic. While all other types of weapon and technical means are directed exclusively or predominantly against the enemy's army, aircraft are no less directed against the peaceful population. Besides their directly destructive action, aircraft perform also the task of playing the devil with the nerves of the people in the rear, so as to frighten, fatigue and demoralise the population and thereby hack at the root of the enemy army's power of resistance. The steadiness of the rear in face of the destructive effects of enemy aircraft will, all other things being equal, be the greater the more the rear knows about aircraft and their capacities. One must not let the enemy multiply the power of aircraft, which is terrible enough anyway, by the factor of mysterious terror!

The question of flying personnel is of great and particular importance. Poets, it is said, are born that way. But this applies to a considerable degree to airmen, as well. A particular combination of psychological and physical qualities is needed in order to ensure that the aviator works with confidence in the air. However, even the very best organic and psychological pre-conditions do not yet create a fighting airman, in the absence of a good system of training in flying and general military training. It is necessary, therefore, on the one hand, to arouse and develop widespread interest in aviation among the youth and, on the other, to organise thorough, scientifically-based, individual selection: the functions of the aviator are so responsible, so complex and various, and so much depends on him in the course of military operations' that the army and the country have the right to demand, to an increasing extent' that our airmen must be not just militarily-literate but militarily-educated people.

We must remember, at the same time, that the actual process of training an airman is connected with dangers such as are unknown, to the same degree, not only in other occupations, but even in other arms of the service. We must therefore look after the workers in the air fleet as well as we possible can. While in every sphere of the soldier's trade in which man is combined with a machine it is, in the last analysis, the man that is decisive, in aviation this is more obvious than anywhere else. Attention to the apprentice airman! Attention to the airman – the skilled craftsman in charge of an airborne workshop!

Military theoreticians are not averse to arguing about the place that aviation is to occupy in the general mechanism of defence: is it to be one of the auxiliary technical means at the disposal of the army and the navy, or is it to be on an equality, as an air force, with the army on the land and the navy on the sea? This is not, however, a question to be answered in the abstract. Everything depends on the level of development of aviation and the material place it has succeeded in taking in the overall system of the armed forces. Here, too, quantity passes over into quality. Aviation begins its career as an auxiliary means for the army and the navy. Developing, becoming more complex, learning to operate with combined resources, it has a tendency to separate off from its territorial or maritime 'metropolis' and assume a place on an equality with it, in the aerial realm. It even sets itself an independent task – domination of the air. In Britain aviation has been assigned to a special ministry. [\[3\]](#) And that is not surprising: the aeroplane threatens to strike a mortal blow at Britain's insular impregnability, guarded by an all-powerful navy. The USSR is a different matter. Our expanses, our Soviet ocean of land, make us much less vulnerable to aviation than insular Britain, surrounded as it is by an ocean of water. An inseparable link between aviation and the land forces is therefore of decisive importance for us, and will long remain so. It is from this point of view that we shall build our military aviation and in this spirit that we shall educate it.

Aviation is a weapon of imperialism that is constantly grow-ing in strength. Let us build a socialist aviation. Imperialism has not renounced the idea of turning us into a colony. Let us build an aviation that will safeguard our freedom, and that, perhaps, will help the colonies, too, to recover their independence. Let us build an aviation for economic, cultural and military purposes, an aviation for the working people and the oppressed. Persistently and stubbornly let us bring aviation into the country's everyday life. Let us remember: aviation is not a pastime, nor is it one of many auxiliary technical means available to the army – aviation is the great instrument of the future. To the land and the sea it will add the air as a great new arena for human creativity.

Let us carry forward the work of building our aviation not only vigorously and rapidly but also in a planned way, leading at once all the awakened interest of the masses in the air fleet and their self-sacrificing aid into the channels of proper organisation. The War Department is already no longer in this field. Side by side with it work the Society of Friends of Aviation and the Volunteer Air Fleet. This triple alliance will grow and become stronger. The Week of the Air Fleet will bind it, through the Party, with the masses and will open, we have no doubt, a new, second and richer chapter in the development of Soviet aviation.

May 30, 1923
Pravda, No.121

Endnotes

- [1.](#) 'The continuous revolution in the means of production ... involves a change in the means of production and their constant replacement, on account of moral depreciation, long before they expire physically' (**Capital**, Vol.II, Chapter 9).
- [2.](#) Churchill was the British minister for the navy and an active promoter of intervention, on whose initiative British troops occupied North Russia and gave support to the SR government of Chaykovsky at Archangel in 1918.
- [3.](#) At the beginning of 1918 the 'air' branches of the Admiralty and the War Office were detached and merged in a new Air Ministry, and in April the Royal Air Force was formed. The Air Ministry controlled civil as well as military aviation.

The International Situation and the Red Army

V. Building the Air Fleet

Aviation and the Metal-Workers

From Report to the Moscow Provincial Conference of Metal-workers' June 5, 1923

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In the period immediately ahead, the basic technical need of the Red Army is for aircraft. We shall have, this month, Red Aviation Week, and the comrade metal-workers who are engaged in machine-building must concern themselves first and foremost with aircraft. The aeroplane is the greatest weapon of the future, as I recently wrote in **Pravda**. Both in the sphere of the economy and in the military sphere the destinies of peoples will increasingly depend on aviation. Already today we can imagine theoretically a raid from some base situated on our Western frontier against our Red Moscow, a raid which could in a few hours reduce to ruins the most solid governmental, trade-union and industrial institutions in Moscow. Aviation is now in a period of feverish growth. The development and perfection of aircraft, their carrying-capacity and the destructive power of the dynamite and bombs that aeroplanes take up with them, are all increasing not daily but hourly. If we assume the maximum speed as being 300 *versts* per hour – the best aeroplanes can do that – a squadron starting from our Western frontier could be over Moscow in a very short time, in two or three hours.

There, comrades, you have the terrible threat from aviation. There are various means of defence in the form of artillery, anti-aircraft batteries, but all these means of defence are as nothing compared with aircraft themselves. Aircraft can be fought only by aircraft. It is possible for us to develop the production of aircraft much faster than any other branch of industry, the economy or the armed forces. The aircraft industry belongs to the lighter type of industry: an aeroplane costs 12,000 gold roubles or perhaps 20-25,000, depending on the size and quality of the engines and the horse-power of these engines. The development of aviation calls neither for surfaced roads nor for railways, its realm is the air, and, despite all our poverty and backwardness, our air is in no way worse than the air over America, France or Britain. Aviation must become a truly popular, workers' and peasants' idea and programme, for our salvation in the military sense, our safeguard, lies in aviation. We need it, too, for the development of our culture. With our expenses it is hard for us to reach the peasant with literature, with newspapers: many years will pass before we can lay down railway tracks everywhere, but in an aeroplane we can reach the peasant in the remotest spots, bringing him newspapers, books – and soon. And even for transport tasks, for the carrying of heavy freight, aviation will play a colossal role. This is why I ask you to include among your concerns in your industry a concern for Red aviation, and to bring forward from among your young metal workers not only Red engineers but also Red proletarian airmen.

From the archives

The International Situation and the Red Army

V. Building the Air Fleet

Order No.2545

By the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR' November 23, 1923, No.2545, Moscow

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One year ago today the Academy of the Air Fleet was established. It had to develop its activity almost from scratch, under the exceptionally difficult conditions left behind by the period of the imperialist slaughter and the intense civil war.

These general conditions told especially heavily upon aviation, as a sphere in which comparatively little research had been done, and at the same time one in which, because of the boundless prospects opening before it, substantial forces and resources were called for.

Precisely in recent years aviation has made very great advances, strengthening its role in economic and cultural construction and at the same time steadily moving into a front-rank place as a weapon of war.

The peoples of the Soviet Union have demonstrated strikingly enough their will to overtake the most advanced countries in the sphere of aviation, and to do this in as short a time as possible. The Academy of the Air Fleet was called upon to guide this will of the whole people, arming it with the instrument of science and showing it the shortest and most reliable way to fruition.

The most immediate task of the Soviet Union and, consequently, of its Academy, in the field of aviation, must be to create a sound scientific and practical leading nucleus for the building of Red aviation by means of our own forces and resources and for working out air tactics, in constant accord with the tactics of the Red Army and the Red Navy.

We have to educate sound cadres of proletarian aircraft engineers and technicians' capable of taking part in the economic construction of our country, ready at the moment of danger selflessly to defend the air approaches to the workers' and peasants' stronghold with the new weapon which science and experiment has put into their hands.

Greeting the Academy of the Air Fleet named after Professor Zhukovsky [\[1\]](#), on its first anniversary, the Revolutionary War Council of the USSR expects that its leaders and students will continue with their energetic and sustained work for the building of the Red air forces.

Endnotes

[1.](#) N.Ye. Zhukovsky (1847-1921), one of the pioneers of aviation. In 1904 he headed the first institute of aerodynamics in Europe, at Kuchino, near Moscow

Questions of Military Theory

Opening and Closing Speeches

In the Discussion on Military Doctrine at the Military Science Society, Attached to the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, November 1, 1921 [\[1\]](#)

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I

Comrades, we are now drawing conclusions, reviewing our ranks, and getting prepared. Our work in the army is now minute, mosaic and detailed in character. But it would be unworthy of a revolutionary army to fail to see the wood for the trees. Just because all our efforts in the military field are now concerned with details and concrete matters, and we are turning our attention to partial questions, which make up the whole, we must from time to time tear ourselves away from this active work and take a look at the structure of the Red Army as a whole. Here we come up against the question of military doctrine, or the question of unified military doctrine, which are sometimes treated as identical. The concept of military doctrine does not at present appear in a clearly delineated form, nor is it filled with any exact scientific content. The concept of unified military doctrine has been most often given a mystical and metaphysical content, and seen as some sort of emanation of the national spirit.

Owing to the sharp turn in history, an attempt is now, naturally, being made, on the plane of revolutionary class struggle, to give a class content to the concept of military doctrine. This attempt is something for the future. In this connection the greatest vigilance must be exercised to see that we do not get drawn into a kind of mystical or metaphysical trap, however this may be disguised with revolutionary terminology, because one can make – mysticism and Metaphysics out of class military doctrine, too, whereas what we want is a concept that is concrete, precise and filled with historical content. For this reason we ask ourselves, first of all: does military doctrine mean the sum-total of military methods, and is this a theory, or is military doctrine an art, the sum total of certain applied methods which, taken together, teach one how to fight?

It is imperative to distinguish between science, as objective cognition of what exists, and art, which teaches how to act.

Krasnaya Armiya,
No.7-8, 1921

II

Before entering into the essence of the question, I should like to observe that Comrades Verkhovsky and Svechin, though seemingly at opposite poles, stand very close to each other. Comrade Verkhovsky says, with a kind of horror: what discord there is among us, we are not united on anything, how can one build anything in such a situation, let alone gain victory. Yet, after all, we have built something, and fought not too badly. I am less than anyone inclined to idealise the Red Army, but

when we had to defend ourselves we managed to deal blows at our enemies notwithstanding the discord among us. In my opinion, Comrade Verkhovsky approaches the matter subjectively: he overlooks that foundation of the Red Army, incontestable and contested by no-one, which was laid down in practice by the working class. The army had its old upper stratum: there were conscientious and honest elements from among the old officers, but they have been and are being dissolved. The army has proclaimed a new principle and is creating a body of commanders of new social origin – a clumsy body, perhaps, and insufficiently literate, but with great historical will-power. All of us make mistakes in theory, but how is it possible not to see the essence, the foundation, which is indestructible but which no-one has pointed out? What is there for Comrade Verkhovsky to be afraid of? With his excellent military qualities he has nothing to fear.

Comrade Svechin says: if a doctrine is invented, I, Svechin, will be made to suffer, because there will be censorship. Comrade Svechin, an old military man who greatly reveres Suvorov and the Suvorov traditions, is afraid of censorship. He fears lest military doctrine prevent the development of thought – which is, in part, the same idea that Comrade Verkhovsky expressed. If unified military doctrine is understood to mean that there is a ruling class which has taken over the army, no-one has protested against that. Recall what was written in 1927 and 1928 in our theses, in our reports to the Congresses of Soviets: their basic idea was to apply to the country's armed forces the consciousness and the will of the working class, which had established a new regime and a new state. This is an unshakable fact which is no longer challenged even by those who did dispute it, while those who tried to fight against it arms in hand suffered defeat and have stopped trying.

Take, for example, the book *Smena Vekh*. People who once supplied Kolchak with ministers have understood that the Red Army is not something invented by émigrés, not a robber band, but a national expression of the Russian people in their present phase of development. And they are absolutely right. No-one will try to deny that a new body of commanders has appeared, which is fulfilling the aspirations of the working people, even though in building the army it makes mistakes in Russian and military literacy. It is our misfortune that our country is illiterate and, of course, years and years will be needed before illiteracy disappears and the Russian working man becomes cultured.

An attempt was made here, particularly in Comrade Vatsetis's speech, which was very rich and valuable, to present a broad concept of doctrine. Military doctrine, he said, embraces everything needed for war. War requires that the soldier be healthy; to keep the soldier healthy, in addition to his rations and uniform, a certain hygiene is required, medicine is needed. Here we see the essence of the aberration in this line of thought. While Clausewitz said that war is a continuation of politics by other means, some military men turn this idea round and say that politics is an auxiliary means for war, that all branches of human knowledge are subsidiary sources of military knowledge, and they equate military knowledge with all human knowledge in general. This is absolutely wrong.

We are next told that it is necessary to have the desire to fight, that one must possess the will to victory. But have we not seen that the Russian people do possess this will to victory, did we not see it spring to life among the peasants of the Don and the Kuban, who produced their Budyonny [Budyonny came from a family of 'outlanders' (non-Cossack peasants) in the Don country.], their cavalry – something different from what existed previously, when the will of the old nobility was imposed upon the people? This will to victory sprang to life even among the Russian *muzhiks*,

oppressed for centuries, not to mention the workers. But one must have the will to victory, the desire to fight, not just for the sake of fighting – a great historical goal is needed. Tsardom had its own goal, and under the former conditions this was adopted by a section of the people which developed in itself a certain will to victory. Well, is there an historical goal inspiring war today? Is there or is there not such a goal? How can anyone doubt that there is such a goal, that the government which exists today commands advanced detachments of workers who draw the peasantry behind them? That we gained the victory was no accident. So there was the will to victory. It did not issue from military doctrine, but from a definite historical task, which constitutes the meaning of an entire epoch of history.

We are also told that it is necessary to know when and why to fight. It is necessary to find one's orientation in the international situation. Well, didn't we find it? Comrade Svechin said here that a revolutionary epoch is an epoch of empiricism. What can one say? Never before, in no other country, has there been a regime so theoretical as ours. When we were still a group of underground émigrés we said that capitalist war would inevitably culminate in revolution. Before the revolution happened we had predicted it in theory. What was this, if not theoretical prognosis? The application of science cannot, of course, in this sphere be so exact as in astronomy: we make mistakes, our calculations are out, perhaps, by five or ten years. We hoped that the revolution would continue in the West. That did not happen, but, nevertheless, we did forecast the nature of developments. What was the ill-starred peace of Brest-Litovsk? That, too, was an orientation, a theoretical calculation. Our foes calculated that their existence was an unshakable fact, whereas ours was some sort of absurdity, but we held to the standpoint of theoretical prognosis and calculated that their days were numbered, whereas our existence was an unshakable fact. I cannot be a military doctrinaire, if only for lack of the necessary military qualification, but I did take part with other comrades in working out this prognosis: it is impossible to fight the Germans, and so we must make concessions and defeat them later. What was that, if not an orientation? The knowledge of when to fight was given us by the basic tenets of Marxism, as applied to the actual situation. But the desire to fight and the knowledge of when to fight still does not provide everything needed for the ability to fight. And this is where military art, or military science, comes into its own.

But why does one have to drag absolutely everything into military science? There are a few other things in the world besides military science: there is Communism and there are the world-wide tasks that the working class sets itself, and there is war, as one of the methods used by the working class.

At this point I must say that the comrade who spoke in favour of the new military doctrine quite failed to convince me. I see in it a most dangerous thing: we'll crush them beneath a barrage of red caps – that old Russian doctrine. Actually, what did some comrades say? They said that our doctrine consists in not commanding but persuading, convincing and impressing through the exercise of moral authority. A wonderful idea, what could be better? Let us give Comrade Lyamin three thousand deserters from Tambov province and allow him to form them into a regiment by his method. I should like to see the result. But is it possible to accomplish anything at all by a mere stroke of the pen, in face of difference in cultural level, and of ignorance? Our regime is called a regime of dictatorship, we do not conceal this, but some have said here that what we need are not commanders-in-chief but persuaders-in-chief, as in Kerensky's time. Moral authority is a good thing, but it is intangible. If it is possible to impress by moral authority alone, why do we have the Cheka and the Special Section? Finally, if we can impress a Tambov *muzhik* by

moral authority alone, why can't we do the same with the *muzhik* of Germany or France?

Comrade Vatsetis mentioned that right is mightier than force. That is not so. What is correct is only this: that oppressors who were ashamed of the brute force they applied always covered it up with hypocrisy. Right is not superior to force, it cannot withstand gunfire. Against guns only guns are effective. If you are saying that we must raise the cultural level of the peasant and the *muzhik* [*sic*], that is an old truth for us, we are all trying to do that, and our state apparatus and, in particular, our military work must follow this line. But it would be naive to suppose that this task can be accomplished tomorrow.

We are told that the doctrine of the Red Army consists of guerrilla operations in the enemy's rear, and deep raids. But the first big raid was made by Mamontov, and Petlyura was a leader of guerrillas. What does this mean? How does it happen that the Red Army's doctrine coincides with the doctrines of Mamontov and Petlyura? Some comrades have also tried to include in the Red Army's doctrine the use of *tachanki* for transporting troops. If we lack surfaced roads and armoured cars, then of course we shall use *tachanki* to move around in; that's better than lugging a machinegun on one's back. But what has this to do with military doctrine? It is an absolutely incredible way of posing the question. Our backwardness and lack of technical preparation cannot furnish material for military doctrine.

As regards manoeuvring, let me say that we did not invent this. Our enemies also made considerable use of it, and it was due to the fact that relatively small numbers of troops were deployed over enormous expanses of territory, and due also to the wretched means of communication. There was talk here about the capture of towns, of points, and so on. Mamontov captured them from us, and we from him. That is what happens in a civil war. On one and the same territory we had allies behind Mamontov's back and Mamontov had allies in our midst. Mamontov executed our agents and we his. An attempt is being made to construct a doctrine out of this. That's absurd.

Comrade Tukhachevsky sins in making hasty generalisations. It emerges from what he said that positional warfare is finished. That is absolutely wrong. If we continue to live in peace for another five or ten years, which is not out of the question, a new generation will have grown up, and the soreness caused by the war will have passed. Delay in the revolution in the West would mean a respite for the bourgeoisie. Technique is recovering both there and here. We shall become able to throw in larger and better-armed masses of troops, and with an army of larger mass and better armament a more solid front will be formed. The explanation of our excessive manoeuvring, when, time and again, we advanced 200 *versts* only to retreat 250 *versts*, is to be found in the fact that the army was thin and weak in relation to the expanse of territory, it was inadequately armed, and the outcome of the battles was decided by factors of a secondary nature. Why should we try to hold on to this? What we need is to overcome this phase of manoeuvring. It is only the reverse side of guerrilla-ism. I often recall that, in the first period of the building of our army, certain comrades said that large formations were no longer needed. What would be best would be a regiment of two or three battalions, with artillery and cavalry, and this would constitute an independent unit. This embodied the idea of primitive manoeuvring. We have got beyond that now, and to idealise manoeuvring would be dangerous in the extreme.

It was pointed out here that we need to decide the question of the role to be

played by the artillery in relation to the infantry. In Kiev military district I was present during a heated dispute about the mutual relations between artillery and infantry. There are hundreds of such problems in every army. This means that, on the basis of our civil war experience we must carefully reread our regulations and adapt the most important points to comply with conditions in the field. The regulations must be subjected to review. They must be thought over in relation to our practical experience.

The question of whether there should be offensive or defensive warfare is decided: we are told that our army must take the offensive. There is a great deal of confusion on this subject, and I am afraid that Comrade Tukhachevsky supports in this connection those who are muddled and who say that our army must be an offensive army. Why? Since war is a continuation of politics by other means, must our policy be offensive? What about Brest-Litovsk? And what about our recent declaration that we are ready to recognise the prewar debts? It is a manoeuvre. Only a dashing cavalryman thinks one must always attack. Only a simpleton thinks that retreat means death. Attack and retreat can be integral parts of a manoeuvre and can equally lead to victory. At the Third Congress of the Third International there was a whole tendency which affirmed that in a revolutionary epoch one must only attack. This was a very great and criminal heresy, which cost the German proletariat needless bloodshed and which did not bring victory, and were this tactic to be followed in the future it would bring about the ruin of the revolutionary movement in Germany. In a civil war one has to manoeuvre, and since war is a continuation of politics by other means, how can we say that military doctrine always calls for attack? The newspaper **Journal des Débats** carries an article by a French general who writes the following:

'Here, in Lorraine, we French attacked. As a result of our attack, the Germans retreated. But their retreat was calculated. They drew back their forward elements, leaving behind, concealed, machine-gun and artillery positions which later destroyed an enormous amount of our manpower. It was a catastrophe. How did our victory in June 1918 begin? The German offensive might have been decisive. But we had learnt from them in 1914, and adopted an elastic defence, from which we went over to the counter-offensive when the Germans had exhausted their strength, and we smashed the German army.' [The article quoted from the **Journal des Débats** of October 5, 1921 was by General de Cugnac.]

You cite the Great French Revolution and its army. But don't forget that the French were then the most cultured people in Europe – not only the most revolutionary but also the most cultured and, in point of technique, the most powerful, if we discount Britain, which was powerless to act on land. France could allow herself the luxury of an offensive policy. She crashed none the less, and although she did, actually, over a long period, march victoriously across Europe, it all ended in Waterloo and the restoration of the Bourbons. [2] But we are the most uncultured and one of the most backward peoples in Europe. Historical fate compelled us to carry out the proletarian revolution amid an encirclement of peoples not yet gripped by this revolution. Wars lie ahead of us, and we must teach our general staff to appraise the situation. Should we attack or should we retreat? Precisely here science of the most flexible and elastic kind is needed, and it would be a colossal blunder for us to impose upon our general staff officers the doctrine: 'Attack!' This would be a strategy of adventurism and not a revolutionary strategy.

I am likewise in disagreement with the second proposition advanced by Comrade Tukhachevsky. He considers that it is wrong for us to go over to a militia-type army. There are difficulties in effecting this transition, but we are nevertheless going over

to militia forms. In our country, with a population of more than *one hundred* millions we are maintaining an army of one million: that is an approach to a militia. France has 700,000 soldiers, while we have about a million. One more step in that same direction, and we shall arrive at a pure militia. We shall proceed cautiously, because there are difficulties in the mutual relations between the workers and the peasants. But our new policy brings the peasant closer to us instead of alienating him. Go into any village, talk with a *muzhik*, and he'll tell you that his attitude to the Soviet power is better today than it was yesterday. If we grow richer in the course of the year, and we shall, of course, grow a little richer, and in two years' time we shall be richer still, this spiral will start to expand: but even then we shall not act upon the *muzhik* by means of persuasion alone, as some young general staff officers presume. In any case, there will be not only persuasions and embraces, but also compulsion, though to a lesser extent than before. At the same time, conditions will be created, between the peasants and the working class, which will be more favourable for organising a militia. For this reason, doctrine calls only for a reduction in the element of compulsion to lesser proportions than in an army of the barracked type. But if doctrine is to proceed from the principle that a militia is unnecessary and what we need is a barracked army, we shall arrive at all manner of erroneous metaphysical propositions.

And so, comrades, I will sum up briefly. He speaks truth who says, regarding the will to victory, that we do not always observe among our commanders the ability to develop partial victory and partial success into complete victory. This is due to the worker-peasant composition of our new commanding personnel, who are easily satisfied with the first success achieved. But we were arguing about the will to victory in general. I must cite the following example. As all Communists know, Turkestan was cut off from the rest of the world, surrounded by Dutovites and other White Guards, and yet nevertheless held out for one-and-a-half years [\[3\]](#) without any aid from outside. What was that, if not a manifestation of colossal will to victory?

You will not find a better example on which to found your doctrine. What doctrine but Marxism can enable you to orient yourself in a situation? Take and read Chicherin's notes, read the articles in **Pravda** and **Izvestiya** – they provide a correct orientation in the international situation. Take the British **Times** or the French **Le Temps**: their language is much more refined than ours, but we orient ourselves a hundred times better in the international situation, and that has helped us to hold out for four years under conditions of encirclement, and we shall continue to hold out. Our doctrine is called Marxism. Why invent it a second time? But in order to invent something more than the *tachanka* it is necessary to learn from the bourgeoisie, once we have the ability to orient ourselves, and the will to victory. It is necessary to instil it into the minds of our commanders, at company, battalion and regimental level, that they must not only possess the will to victory but must also know how to make reports, and understand the importance of communications, of security and of reconnaissance. And for this reason the experience of old-established practice must be utilised. The ABC has to be learnt, and if military doctrine is going to say: 'We shall crush them under a barrage of Red caps,' we shall have no use for it whatsoever. We must cast out such arrogance and revolutionary superficiality. When strategy is developed from the standpoint of the revolutionary youth, the result is chaos. Why? Because the regulations have not been mastered. We looked with disdain upon the Tsarist statutes and consequently did not study them: yet the old regulations prepare the new. Marxists have always been through the old knowledge, they went through Feuerbach and Engels [*sic*] [*'Engels' is presumably a mistake for 'Hegel'.]*, through the French encyclopaedists and

materialists, through political economy. Even in his old age Marx studied higher mathematics. Engels studied military matters and the natural sciences, and if we were to inculcate in the military youth the idea that the old doctrine is worthless and we have now entered a new epoch in which everything can be looked on 'from a bird's eye view', as Gleb Uspensky has it, that would do very great harm.

Among the young generation there is, of course, a revulsion against routine. That is inevitable. But our General Staff Academy and the Revolutionary War Council will do everything in their power to curb this, and they will be right to do so. I do not look upon this discussion of ours as final. Something has been taken down in shorthand, it will be looked over, some of it will be printed, and perhaps there will be other gatherings like this. Meanwhile, let us not tear ourselves away from vital needs, from rations and boots. I think that a good ration is better than a bad doctrine, and where boots are concerned, I maintain that our military doctrine begins with this, that we have to tell the Red Army man: learn to grease your boots and clean your rifle. If, in addition to our will to victory and our readiness for self-sacrifice we learn to grease boots, we shall have the very best of military doctrines, and so we must pay attention to these practical details.

Now a word about technique. Our technique is, of course, poor, but Europe cannot attack us today, her working class won't allow that. Hence the conclusion: Europe tolerates us. She enters into economic relations with us. Concessions are coming along – with difficulty, but they are coming. Through its concessions and trade relations, European imperialism will be compelled to develop our industry and with its own hands to arm us technically against itself. There is no escaping this. Imperialism is doomed to do it, it must do it, and if I were to say this aloud before an audience composed of Lloyd George, Briand and Millerand, they would shy in alarm, but they would be constrained to do it, all the same, for there is no other road for them to follow. The European and world crisis and the pressure of the working class impels them to have relations with us. Finally, this is done not by states but by capitalists, who think above all of their own profits: from which the conclusion to be drawn is – don't rush ahead. Comrade Svechin was right when he said here that time works in our favour. Time is a very important factor in history. Sometimes a word uttered five minutes too soon means the loss of a campaign. Five minutes too late is no good, either: the timing must be right. We now need to put on some technical and economic weight. Our economy is in a state of disruption and is recovering very slowly. We shall have further occasion to debate military doctrine, clarify our concept and render it more precise, and the debate will serve only to benefit the cause of the building of the Red Army. I propose that we join in a 'Hurrah!' in honour of the Red Army.

From the archives

Endnotes

[1.](#) The discussion on military doctrine was held at the Military Science Society on the first anniversary of the foundation of this society, November 2, 1921. After Comrade Trotsky's introductory remarks, Professor Neznamov was the first of the *rapporteurs* to speak, being followed by Comrades Petrovsky, Verkhovsky and many other active members of the Military Science Society. After all their contributions had been made, Comrade Trotsky delivered his concluding remarks.

[2.](#) The reference is to the battle of Waterloo, in 1815. Napoleon was defeated by the combined forces of the British and the Prussians, after which he was exiled to the island of St Helena, and

the Bourbon dynasty restored to the throne of France, in the person of Louis XVIII.

[3.](#) For more details on this see notes 70 and 75 to Volume Two. The article *Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism* [In neither the notes nor the article mentioned is there any reference to Turkestan. – *Brian Pearce, Translator*]

Questions of Military Theory

Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism

[1]

* * *

'Just as some plants bear fruit only if they don't shoot up too high, so in the practical arts the leaves and flowers of theory must be pruned and the plant kept close to its proper soil – experience.'

Clausewitz, **On War (The Theory of Strategy)** [This translation is taken from the English translation of Clausewitz's book by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1976), p.61.]

1. Our Method Of Orientation

A quickening of military thought and a heightening of interest in theory is unquestionably to be observed in the Red Army. For more than three years we fought and built under fire, and then we demobilised, and distributed the troops in quarters. This process still remains unfinished to this day, but the army has already approached a higher degree of organisational definiteness and a certain stability. Within it is felt a growing and increasing need to look back over the road already travelled, to assess the results and to draw the most necessary theoretical and practical conclusions, so as to be better prepared for the morrow.

And what will the morrow bring? New eruptions of civil war, fed from without? Or an open attack upon us by bourgeois states? Which ones? How should we prepare to resist? All these questions require an orientation on the planes of international policy, internal policy and military policy. The situation is constantly changing and, consequently, the orientation changes, too – not in principle but in practice. Up to now we have coped successfully with the military tasks imposed upon us by the international and internal situation of Soviet Russia. Our orientation proved to be more correct, more far-sighted and profound, than that of the mightiest of the imperialist powers, which sought, one after the other or together, to bring us down, but burnt their fingers in the attempt. Our superiority lies in our possession of an irreplaceable scientific method of orientation – Marxism. It is a powerful and at the same time very subtle instrument – using it does not come easy, one has to learn how to use it. Our Party's past has taught us through long and hard experience how to apply the methods of Marxism to the most complex combination of factors and forces during this historical epoch of sharp breaks. We use the instrument of Marxism also to define the basis for our constructive work in the military sphere,

It is quite otherwise with our enemies. While in the sphere of production technique the advanced bourgeoisie has banished stagnation, routinism and superstition, and has sought to build each enterprise on the precise foundations of scientific method, in the sphere of social orientation the bourgeoisie has proved impotent, because of its class position, to rise to the heights of scientific method. Our class enemies are empiricists, that is, they operate from one case to the next, guided not by the analysis of historical development but by practical experience, routine, *coup d'oeil* and flair.

Assuredly, the British imperialist caste has, on the basis of empiricism, provided

an example of far-flung greedy usurpation, triumphant far-sightedness and class firmness. Not for nothing has it been said of the British imperialists that they think in terms of centuries and continents. This habit of weighing and appraising practically the most important factors and forces has been acquired by the British ruling caste thanks to the superiority of its position, on its island vantage-point, and under the conditions of a comparatively slow and planned accumulation of capitalist power.

The parliamentary methods of personal combinations, bribery, rhetoric and fraud, and the colonial methods of bloody repression, hypocrisy and every form of vileness have entered equally into the rich arsenal of the ruling clique of the greatest of empires. The experience of the struggle of British reaction against the Great French Revolution refined the methods of British imperialism, made it more flexible, armed it in a variety of ways, and, consequently, rendered it more secure against historical surprises.

Nevertheless, the potent class dexterity of the world-ruling British bourgeoisie is proving inadequate – and more and more so as time goes by – to the present epoch of volcanic upheavals in the bourgeois regime. While they tack and veer with great skill, the British empiricists of the epoch of decline – whose finished expression is Lloyd George – will inescapably break their necks.

German imperialism rose up as the antipode of British imperialism. The feverish development of German capitalism provided the ruling classes of Germany with the opportunity to accumulate a great deal more in material and technical values than in habits of international and military-political orientation. German imperialism appeared in the world arena as an upstart, went too far, slipped up and was smashed to pieces. And yet, not so long ago, at Brest-Litovsk, the representatives of German imperialism looked upon us as visionaries who had been accidentally and temporarily thrust to the top.

The art of all-sided orientation has been learnt by our Party, step by step, from the first underground circles through all the subsequent development, with its interminable theoretical discussions, practical attempts and failures, advances and retreats, tactical disputes and turns. Russian émigrés' garrets in London, Paris and Geneva turned out, in the final analysis, to be observatories of immense historical importance. Revolutionary impatience became disciplined by scientific analysis of the historical process. The will to action became combined with self-control. Our Party learned to apply the Marxist method by acting and thinking. And this method serves our Party in good stead today ...

While it can be said of the more far-sighted empiricists of British imperialism that they have a keyring with a considerable choice of keys, good for many typical historical situations, we hold in our hands a universal key which enables us to orientate ourselves correctly in all situations. And while the entire supply of keys inherited by Lloyd George, Churchill and the others is obviously no good for opening a way out of the revolutionary epoch, our Marxist key is predestined above all to serve this purpose. We are not afraid to speak aloud about this, our greatest advantage over our adversaries, for it is beyond their power to acquire our Marxist key for themselves, or to counterfeit it.

We foresaw the inevitability of the imperialist war, and the prologue to the epoch of proletarian revolution. From this standpoint we then followed the course of the war, the methods used in it, the shift in the groupings of class forces, and on the

basis of these observations there took shape, much more directly, the 'doctrine' – to employ an elevated style – of the Soviet system and the Red Army. From scientific prediction of the further course of development we gained unconquerable confidence that history was working for us. This optimistic confidence has been and remains the foundation of all our activity.

Marxism does not supply ready recipes. Least of all could it provide them in the sphere of military construction. But here, too, it gave us a method. For, if it is true that war is a continuation of politics, only by other means, then it follows that an army is the continuation and culmination of the entire social and state organisation, but with the bayonet to the fore.

We approached military questions with, as our starting-point, not any 'military doctrine', as a sum-total of dogmatic postulates, but a Marxist analysis of the requirements for the self-defence of the working class, which, having taken power, had to arm itself, disarm the bourgeoisie, fight to maintain power, lead the peasants against the landlords, prevent the kulak democracy from arming the peasants against the workers' state, create for itself a reliable body of commanders, and so on.

In building the Red Army we utilised Red-Guard detachments, and the old regulations, and peasant atamans, and former Tsarist generals; and this, of course, might be described as the absence of 'unified doctrine' in the sphere of the formation of the army and its commanding personnel. But such an appraisal would be pedantically banal. We certainly did not take any dogmatic 'doctrine' as our point of departure. We actually created the army out of that historical material which was ready to hand, unifying all this work from the standpoint of a workers' state fighting to preserve, entrench and extend itself. Those who can't get along without the metaphysically tainted word 'doctrine' might say that, in creating the Red Army, an armed force on a new class basis, we thereby constructed a new military doctrine, for, despite the diversity of practical means and the changes in approach, there could not be, nor was there, any place in our military constructive work either for empiricism devoid of ideas, or for subjective arbitrariness: from beginning to end, the entire work was cemented by the unity of a revolutionary class goal, by the unity of will directed toward that goal and by the unity of the Marxist method of orientation.

2. With A Doctrine Or Without One?

Attempts have been made, and frequently repeated, to give proletarian 'military doctrine' priority over the actual work of creating the Red Army. As far back as the end of 1917 the absolute principle of manoeuvre was being counterposed to the 'imperialist' principle of positional warfare. The organisational form of the army was to be subordinated to the revolutionary strategy of manoeuvre: corps, divisions, even brigades, were declared to be formations that were too ponderous. The heralds of the proletarian 'military doctrine' proposed to reduce the entire armed force of the Republic to individual composite detachments or regiments. In essence this was the ideology of guerrilla-ism just slicked up a bit. On the extreme 'Left' wing, guerrilla-ism was openly defended. A holy war was proclaimed against the old regulations, because they were the expression of an outlived military doctrine, and against the new ones because they resembled the old ones too closely. True, even at that time the supporters of the new doctrine not only failed to provide a draft for

new regulations, they did not even present a single article submitting our regulations to any kind of serious principled or practical criticism. Our utilisation of officers of the old army, especially in positions of command, was proclaimed to be incompatible with the introduction of a revolutionary military doctrine; and so on and so forth.

As a matter of fact, the noisy innovators were themselves wholly captives of the old military doctrine. They merely tried to put a minus sign wherever previously there was a plus. All their independent thinking came down to just that. However, the actual work of creating the armed force of the workers' state proceeded along a different path. We tried, especially in the beginning, to make maximum possible use of the habits, usages, knowledge and means retained from the past, and we were quite unconcerned about the extent to which the new army would differ from the old, in the formally organisational and technical sense, or, on the contrary, would resemble it. We built the army out of the human and technical material ready to hand, seeking always and everywhere to ensure domination by the proletarian vanguard in the organisation of the army, that is, in the army's personnel, in its administration, in its consciousness and in its feelings. The institution of commissars is not some dogma of Marxism, nor is it a necessary part of a proletarian 'military doctrine': under certain conditions it was a necessary instrument of proletarian supervision, leadership and political education in the army, and for this reason it assumed enormous importance in the life of the armed forces of the Soviet republic. We combined the old commanding personnel with the new, and only in this way did we achieve the needed result: the army proved capable of fighting in the service of the working class. In its aims, in the predominant class composition of its body of commanders and commissars, in its spirit and in its entire political morale, the Red Army differs radically from all the other armies in the world and stands in hostile opposition to them. As it continues to develop, the Red Army has become and is becoming more and more similar to them in formally organisational and technical respects. Mere exertions to say something new in this field will not suffice.

The Red Army is the military expression of the proletarian dictatorship. Those who require a more solemn formula might say that the Red Army is the military embodiment of the 'doctrine' of the proletarian dictatorship – first, because the dictatorship of the proletariat is ensured within the Red Army itself, and, secondly, because the dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible without the Red Army.

The trouble is, though, that the awakening of interest in military theory engendered at the outset a revival of certain doctrinaire prejudices of the first period – prejudices which, to be sure, have been given some new formulations, but which have in no way been improved thereby. Certain perspicacious innovators have suddenly discovered that *we are living, or rather not living, but vegetating without a military doctrine*, just like the King in Andersen's story who went about without any clothes on and didn't know it. 'It is necessary, at last, to create the doctrine of the Red Army', say some. Others join in the song with: 'We are going wrong where all practical questions of military construction are concerned because we have not yet solved the basic problems of military doctrine. What is the Red Army? What are the historical tasks before it? Will it wage defensive or offensive revolutionary wars?' – and so on and so forth.

It emerges that we created the Red Army, and, moreover, a victorious Red Army, but we failed to give it a military doctrine. So this army goes on living in a state of perplexity. To the direct question: what should this Red Army doctrine be? we get

the answer: it must comprise the sumtotal of the principles of the structure, education and utilisation of our armed forces. But this answer is purely formal. The Red Army of today has its principles of 'structure, education and utilisation'. What we need to know is, what kind of doctrine do we *lack*? That is, what is the content of these *new* principles which have to enter into the programme for building the army? And it is just here that the most confused muddling begins. One individual makes the sensational discovery that the Red Army is a *class* army, the army of the proletarian dictatorship. Another adds to this that, inasmuch as the Red Army is a revolutionary and international army, it must be an offensive army. A third proposes, with a view to this offensiveness, that we pay special attention to cavalry and aircraft. Finally, a fourth proposes that we do not forget about the use of Makhno's *tachanki*. Around the world in a *tachanka* – there's a doctrine for the Red Army. It must be said, however, that, in these discoveries, some grains of sensible thought – not new, but correct – are smothered beneath the husks of verbiage.

3. What Is A Military Doctrine?

Let us not seek for general logical definitions, because these will hardly, by themselves, get us out of the difficulty. [2] Let us rather approach the question historically. According to the old view, the foundations of military science are eternal and common to all ages and peoples. But in their concrete refraction these eternal truths assume a national character. Hence we get a German military doctrine, a French one, a Russian one, and so on. If, however, we check the inventory of eternal truths of military science, we obtain not much more than a few logical axioms and Euclidean postulates. Flanks must be protected, means of communication and retreat must be secured, the blow must be struck at the enemy's least defended point, etc. All these truths, in this all-embracing formulation, go far beyond the limits of the art of war. The donkey that steals oats from a torn sack (the enemy's least defended point) and vigilantly turns its crupper away from the side from which danger may be expected to come, acts thus in accordance with the eternal principles of military science. Yet it is unquestionable that this donkey munching oats has never read Clausewitz, or even Leer.

War, the subject of our discussion, is a social and historical phenomenon which arises, develops, changes its forms and must eventually disappear. For this reason alone war cannot have any eternal laws. But the subject of war is man, who possesses certain fixed anatomical and mental traits from which are derived certain usages and habits. Man operates in a specific and comparatively stable geographical setting. Thus, in all wars, in all ages and among all peoples, there have obtained certain common features, relatively stable but by no means absolute. Based on these features, an art of war has developed historically. Its methods and usages undergo change, together with the social conditions which govern it (technology, class structure, forms of state power).

The expression 'national military doctrine' implied a comparatively stable but nevertheless temporary complex (combination) of military calculations, methods, procedures, habits, slogans, feelings, all corresponding to the structure of the given society as a whole and, first and foremost, to the character of its ruling class.

For example, what is Britain's military doctrine? Into its composition there obviously enters (or used to enter) recognition of the need for maritime hegemony, together with a negative attitude toward a standing land army and toward

conscription for military service – or, more precisely, recognition of the need for Britain to have a navy stronger than the combined navies of the next two strongest powers, and, what was made possible by that situation, the maintenance of a small army of volunteers. Connected with this was the support of such an order in Europe as would not allow any one land power to obtain decisive preponderance on the Continent.

Undoubtedly, this British 'doctrine' used to be the most stable of all military doctrines. Its stability and definiteness were determined by the prolonged, planned, uninterrupted development of Britain's power, without any events and upheavals such as would have radically altered the relation of forces in the world (or in Europe, which, formerly, came to the same thing). Now, however, this situation has been completely disrupted. Britain dealt her own 'doctrine' the biggest blow when, during the war, she was obliged to build her army on the basis of compulsory military service. The 'balance of power' on the European Continent has been upset. No-one has confidence in the stability of the new relation of forces. The power of the United States rules out the possibility of automatically maintaining any longer the dominant position of the British navy. It is at present too early to predict at the outcome of the Washington Conference will be. But it is quite obvious that, since the imperialist war, Britain's 'military doctrine' has become inadequate, bankrupt and quite worthless. It has not yet been replaced by a new one. And it is very doubtful if there will ever be a new one, for the epoch of military and revolutionary upheavals and radical regroupments of world forces leaves very narrow limits for military doctrine in the sense in which we have defined it above with respect to Britain: *a military 'doctrine' presupposes a relatively stable situation, foreign and domestic.*

If we turn to the countries on the continent of Europe, even in the past epoch, we find that military doctrine assumes there a far less definitive and stable character. What constituted, even during the interval of time between the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and the imperialist war of 1914, the content of the military doctrine of France? Recognition that Germany was the hereditary and irreconcilable enemy, the idea of *revanche*, education of the army and the young generation in the spirit of this idea, cultivation of an alliance with Russia, worship of the military might of Tsardom, and, finally, maintenance, though not very confidently, of the Bonapartist military tradition of the bold offensive. The protracted era of armed peace, from 1871 to 1914, nevertheless invested France's military-political orientation with relative stability. But the purely military elements of the French doctrine were very meagre. The war submitted the doctrine of the offensive to a rigorous test. After the first weeks, the French army dug itself into the ground, and although the true-French generals and true-French newspapers did not stop reiterating in the first period of the war, that trench warfare was a base German invention not at all in harmony with the heroic spirit of the French fighting man, the entire war developed, nevertheless, as a positional struggle of attrition. At the present time the doctrine of the pure offensive, although it has been included in the new regulations, is being, as we shall see, sharply opposed in France itself.

The military doctrine of post-Bismarck Germany was incomparably more aggressive in essence, in line with the country's policy, but was much more cautious in its strategic formulations. 'The principles of strategy in no way transcend common sense', was the instruction given to Germany's senior commanders. However, the rapid growth of capitalist wealth and of the population lifted the ruling circles, and above all the noble officer caste of Germany to ever greater heights. Germany's ruling classes lacked experience in operating on a world scale: they failed to take forces and resources into account, and gave their diplomacy and strategy an ultra-

aggressive character far removed from 'common sense'. German militarism fell victim to its own unbridled offensive spirit.

What follows from this? That the expression 'national doctrine' implied in the past a complex of stable guiding ideas in the diplomatic and military-political spheres and of strategical directives that were more or less bound up with these. Furthermore, the so-called military doctrine – the formula for the military orientation of the ruling class of a given country in international circumstances – proved to be the more definitive, the more definite, stable and planned was the domestic and international position of that country, in the course of its development.

The imperialist war and the resulting epoch of maximum instability have in all spheres absolutely cut the ground from under national military doctrines, and placed on the order of the day the need for swiftly taking into account a changing situation, with its new groupings and combinations and its 'unprincipled' tacking and veering, under the sign of today's anxieties and alarms. The Washington Conference provides an instructive picture in this connection. It is quite incontestable that today, after the test to which the old military doctrines have been subjected in the imperialist war, not a single country has retained principles and ideas stable enough to be designated a national military doctrine.

One might, it is true, venture to presume that national military doctrines will take shape once again as soon as a new relationship of forces becomes established in the world, together with the position therein of each separate state. This presupposes, however, that the revolutionary epoch of upheavals will be liquidated, and succeeded by a new epoch of organic development. But there is no ground for such a presupposition.

4. Commonplaces And Verbiage

It might seem that the struggle against Soviet Russia ought to be a rather stable element in the 'military doctrine' of all capitalist states in the present epoch. But even this is not the case. The complexity of the world situation, the monstrous criss-crossing of contradictory interests, and, primarily, the unstable social basis of bourgeois governments exclude the possibility of consistently carrying out even a single 'military doctrine', namely, struggle against Soviet Russia. Or, to put it more precisely, struggle against Soviet Russia changes its form so frequently and proceeds in such zigzags that it would be mortally dangerous for us to lull our vigilance with doctrinaire phrases and 'formulas' concerning international relations. The sole natural and correct 'doctrine' for us is: *be on the alert and keep both eyes open!* It is impossible to give an unconditional answer even when the question is posed in its crudest form, namely: will our chief field of military activity in the next few years be in the East or in the West? The world situation is too complex. The general course of historical development is clear, but events do not keep to an order fixed in advance, nor do they mature according to a set schedule. In practice one must react not to 'the course of development' but to facts, to events. It is not difficult to guess at historical variants which would compel us to commit our forces predominantly in the East, or, conversely, in the West, coming to the aid of revolutions, waging a defensive war, or, on the other hand, finding ourselves obliged to take the offensive. Only the Marxist method of international orientation, of calculating class forces in their combinations and shifts, can enable us to find the appropriate solution in each concrete case. It is not possible to invent a general

formula that would express the 'essence' of our military tasks in the coming period.

One can, however, and this is not infrequently done, give the concept of military doctrine a more concrete and restricted content, as meaning those fundamental principles of purely military affairs which regulate all aspects of military organisation, tactics and strategy. In this sense it can be said that the content of military regulations is determined directly by military doctrine. But what kind of principles are these? Some doctrinaires depict the matter like this: it is necessary to establish the essence and purpose of the army, the task before it, and from this definition one then derives its organisation, strategy and tactics, and embodies these conclusions in its regulations. Actually, such an approach to the question is scholastic and lifeless.

How banal and lacking in content are what are taken to be the basic principles of the military art can be seen from the solemnly-quoted statement by Foch that the essence of modern war is: 'to seek out the enemy's armies in order to beat and destroy them; to adopt, with this sole end in view, the direction and tactics which may lead to it in the quickest and safest way.' [Foch, **The Principles of War**, translated by Hilaire Belloc (1918), page 42.] Extraordinarily profound! How remarkably this widens our horizon! One need only add that the essence of modern methods of nutrition consists in locating the aperture of the mouth, inserting the food therein, and, after it has been masticated with the least possible expenditure of energy, swallowing it. Why not try to deduce from this principle, which is in no way inferior to that propounded by Foch, just what sort of food is wanted, and how to cook it, and just when and by whom it should be swallowed; and, above all, how this food is to be procured.

Military matters are very empirical, very practical matters. It is a very risky exercise to try and elevate them into a system, in which field service regulations, the establishment of a squadron, and the cut of a uniform are derived from fundamental principles. This was well understood by old Clausewitz: 'Perhaps it would not be impossible to write a systematic theory of war, full of intelligence and substance; but the theories we presently possess are very different. Quite apart from their unscientific spirit, they try so hard to make their systems coherent and complete that they are stuffed with common-places, truisms and nonsense of every kind.' [Howard and Paret translation, page 61.]

5. Have We Or Have We Not A 'Military Doctrine'?

So, then, do we or do we not need a 'military doctrine'? I have been accused by some of 'evading' an answer to this question. But, after all, in order to give an answer one must know what is being asked about, that is, what is meant by military doctrine. Until the question is posed clearly and intelligibly one cannot but 'evade' answering it. In order to come closer to the correct way of formulating the question, let us, following what has been said earlier, divide the question itself into its component parts. Looked at in this way, 'military doctrine' can be said to consist of the following elements:

1. The fundamental (class) orientation of our country, expressed by its government in matters of the economy, culture, and so on, that is, in domestic policy.
2. The international orientation of the workers' state. The most important lines of our world policy and, connected with this, the possible theatres of

our military operations.

3. The composition and structure of the Red Army, in accordance with the nature of the workers' and peasants' state [sic] and the tasks of its armed forces.

The teaching on the organisation of the army (point 3), together with the teaching on strategy (point 4), must, obviously, constitute military doctrine in the proper (or narrow) sense of the word.

Analysis could be carried further still. Thus, it is possible to separate out from the points enumerated problems concerning the technology of the Red Army, or the way in which propaganda is carried on in it, etc.

Must the Government, the leading Party and the War Department have definite views on all these matters? Why, of course they must. How could we build the Red Army if we had no views on what its social composition should be, on the recruitment of the officers and commissars, on how the units should be formed, trained and educated, and so on? And then, one could not answer these questions without examining the fundamental tasks, domestic and international, of the workers' state. In other words, the War Department must have guiding principles on which to build, educate and reorganise the army.

Need one (and can one) call the sum-total of these principles a military doctrine?

To that my answer has been and still is: if anyone wants to call the sum-total of the Red Army's principles and practical methods, a military doctrine, then, while not sharing this weakness for the faded galloons of old-time officialdom, I am not going to fight over it (this is my 'evasion'). But if anyone is so bold as to assert that we do not have these principles and practical methods [\[3\]](#), that our collective thinking has not worked and is not at work upon them, my answer is: you are not speaking the truth, you are befuddling yourselves and others with verbiage. Instead of shouting about military doctrine, you should present us with this doctrine, demonstrate it, show us at least a particle of this military doctrine which the Red Army lacks. But the whole trouble is that as soon as our military 'doctrinaires' pass from lamentations about how useful a doctrine would be to attempts to provide us with one, they either repeat, not very well, what has already been said long ago, what has entered into our consciousness, what has been embodied in resolutions of Party and Soviet congresses, decrees, decisions, regulations and instructions, far better and much more precisely than is done by our would-be innovators, or they get confused, stumble, and put forward absolutely inadmissible concoctions.

We will now prove this, in respect of each of the constituent elements in the so-called military doctrine.

6. What Kind Of Army Are We Preparing, And For What Tasks?

'The old army was an instrument of class oppression of the working people by the bourgeoisie. With the transition of power to the working and exploited classes there has arisen the need for a new army as the mainstay of Soviet power at present and the basis for replacing the regular army by the arming of the whole people in the near future, and as a support for the coming socialist revolution in Europe.'

So reads the decree on the formation of the Red Army, issued by the Council of People's Commissars on January 12 [sic], 1918. [4] I much regret that I cannot adduce here everything that has been said concerning the Red Army in our Party programme and in the resolutions of our congresses. I strongly recommend the reader to re-read them: those writings are useful and instructive. In them it is very clearly stated 'what kind of army we are preparing, and for what tasks.' What are the newly-arrived military doctrinaires preparing to add to this? Instead of splitting hairs over the rephrasing of precise and clear formulations they would do better to devote themselves to explaining them through propaganda work among the young Red Army men. That would be far more useful.

But, it may be said, and is said, that the resolutions and decrees do not sufficiently underscore the *international* role of the Red Army, and, in particular, the need to prepare for offensive revolutionary wars. Solomin is especially emphatic on this point ... 'We are preparing the class army of the proletariat', he writes on page 22 of his article, 'a worker-peasant army, not only for defence against the bourgeois-landlord counter-revolution but also for revolutionary wars (both defensive and offensive) against the imperialist powers, for wars of a semi-civil (?) type in which offensive strategy may play an important role.' Such is the revelation, almost the revolutionary gospel, of Solomin. But, alas, as often happens with apostles, our author is cruelly mistaken in thinking that he has discovered something new. He is only formulating poorly something old. Precisely because war is a continuation of politics, rifle in hand, there never was and never could be, in our Party, any dispute in principle about the place which revolutionary wars can and should occupy in the development of the world revolution of the working class. This question we posed and settled in the Russian Marxist press quite a while ago. I could quote dozens of leading articles from the Party press, especially in the period of the imperialist war, which treat of revolutionary war by a workers' state as something to be taken for granted. But I will go back even further and quote some lines which I had occasion to write in 1905-1906.

'This (the development of the Russian revolution) immediately gives the events now unfolding an international character, and opens up a wide horizon. The political emancipation of Russia led by the working class will raise that class to a height as yet unknown in history, will transfer to it colossal power and resources, and will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism, for which history has created all the objective conditions.

'If the Russian proletariat, having temporarily obtained power, does not on its own initiative carry the revolution on to European soil, it will be *compelled* to do so by the forces of European feudal-bourgeois reaction. Of course it would be idle at this moment to determine the methods by which the Russian revolution will throw itself against old capitalist Europe. These methods may reveal themselves quite unexpectedly. *Let us take the example of Poland as a link between the revolutionary East and the revolutionary West, although we take this as an illustration of our idea rather than as an actual prediction.*

'The triumph of the revolution in Russia will mean the inevitable victory of the revolution in Poland. It is not difficult to imagine that the existence of a revolutionary regime in the nine [sic] provinces [Russian Poland was divided into ten provinces.] of Russian Poland must lead to the revolt of Galicia and Poznan. [Let me recall that this was written in 1905. [Note by Trotsky] [Galicia was in Austrian Poland, Poznan in German Poland – B.P.] The Hohenzollern and Habsburg Governments will reply to this by sending military forces to the Polish frontier in order then to cross it for the purpose of crushing their enemy at his very centre – Warsaw. It is quite clear that the Russian revolution cannot leave its Western advance-guard in the hands of the Prusso-Austrian soldiery. War against the governments of Wilhelm II and Franz Josef under such

circumstances would become an act of self-defence on the part of the revolutionary government of Russia. What attitude would the Austrian and German proletariat take up then? It is evident that they could not remain calm observers while the armies of their countries were conducting a counter-revolutionary crusade. A war between feudal-bourgeois Germany and revolutionary Russia would lead inevitably to a proletarian revolution in Germany. We would tell those to whom this assertion seems too categorical to try and think of any other historical event which would be more likely to compel the German workers and the German reactionaries to make an open trial of strength.' (See Trotsky, **Nasha Revolyutsya (Our Revolution)**, p.280) [\[5\]](#)

Naturally, events have not unfolded in the historical order indicated here merely as an example, to illustrate an idea, in these lines written sixteen years ago. But the basic course of development has confirmed and continues to confirm the prognosis that the epoch of proletarian revolution must inevitably thrust it into the field of battle against the forces of world reaction. Thus, more than a decade and a half ago, we already clearly understood, in essence, 'what kind of army and for what tasks' we had to prepare.

7. Revolutionary Politics And Methodism

So, then, no question of *principle* is involved for us where revolutionary offensive warfare is concerned. But, regarding this 'doctrine', the proletarian state must say the same as was said by the last congress of the International regarding the revolutionary offensive of the worker masses in a bourgeois state (the doctrine of the offensive): only a traitor can renounce the offensive, but only a simpleton can reduce our entire strategy to the offensive.

Unfortunately, there are not a few simpletons of the offensive among our newly-appeared doctrinaires, who, under the flag of military doctrine, are trying to introduce into our military circulation those same one-sided 'left' tendencies which at the Third Communist Congress attained their culminating form as the theory of the offensive: *inasmuch as (!)* we are living in a revolutionary epoch, *therefore (!)* the Communist Party must carry out an offensive policy. To translate 'leftism' into the language of military doctrine means to multiply the error. While preserving the principled foundation of waging an irreconcilable class struggle, Marxist tendencies are at the same time distinguished by extraordinary flexibility and mobility, or, to speak in military language, capacity for manoeuvre. To this firmness of principle together with flexibility of method and form is counterposed a rigid methodism which transforms into an absolute method such questions as our participation or non-participation in parliamentary work, or our acceptance or rejection of agreements with non-Communist parties and organisations – an absolute method allegedly applicable to each and every set of circumstances.

The actual word 'methodism' is used most often in writings on military strategy. Characteristic of epigones, of mediocre army leaders and routinists is the striving to turn into a stable system a certain combination of actions which corresponds to specific conditions. Since men do not wage war all the time, but with long intervals between the wars, it is common for the methods and procedures of the previous war to dominate the thinking of military men during a period of peace. That is why methodism is revealed most strikingly in the military sphere. The mistaken tendencies of methodism unquestionably find expression in the efforts to construct a doctrine of 'offensive revolutionary war'.

This doctrine contains two elements: international-political and operational-strategic. For it is a question, in the first place, of developing in the language of war an offensive international policy aimed at hastening the revolutionary *denouement*, and, in the second place, of investing the strategy of the Red Army itself with an offensive character. These two questions must be separated, even though they are interconnected in certain respects.

That we do not renounce revolutionary wars is attested not only by articles and resolutions but also by major historical facts. After the Polish bourgeoisie had, in the spring of 1920, imposed a defensive war upon us, we tried to develop our defence into a revolutionary offensive. True, our attempt was not crowned with success. But precisely from this follows the not unimportant supplementary conclusion that revolutionary war, an indisputable instrument of our policy under certain conditions, can, under different conditions, lead to a result opposite to that which was intended.

In the Brest-Litovsk period we were for the first time constrained to apply on a broad scale a policy of politico-strategical retreat. It seemed to many at that time that this would prove fatal to us. But within only a few months it was shown that time had worked well for us. In February 1918 German militarism, though already undermined, was nevertheless still strong enough to crush us, with our military forces which were insignificant at that time. In November German militarism crumbled to dust. Our retreat in the field of international politics at Brest was our salvation.

After Brest we were compelled to wage uninterrupted war against the White-Guard armies and the foreign interventionist detachments. This small-scale war was both defensive and offensive, both politically and militarily. On the whole, however, our international policy, as a state in that period was predominantly a policy of defence and retreat (renouncing sovietisation of the Baltic states, our frequent offers to engage in peace negotiations, together with our readiness to make very big concessions, the 'new' economic policy, recognition of the debts, and so on). In particular, we were most conciliatory in relation to Poland, offering her conditions more favourable than those indicated for her by the Entente countries. Our efforts were not crowned with success. Pilsudski fell upon us. The war assumed a clearly defensive character on our part. This fact contributed enormously to the rallying of public opinion not only among the workers and peasants but also among many elements of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Successful defence naturally developed into a victorious offensive. But we overestimated the revolutionary potentiality of the internal situation in Poland in that period. This overestimation was expressed in the excessively offensive character of our operations, which outstripped our resources. We advanced too lightly equipped, and the result is well known: we were thrown back.

Almost at the same time, the mighty revolutionary wave in Italy was broken – not so much by the resistance of the bourgeoisie as by the perfidious passivity of the leading workers' organisations. The failure of our August march on Warsaw and the defeat of the September movement in Italy changed the relation of forces in favour of the bourgeoisie throughout Europe. From that time on, a greater stability has been observable in the political position of the bourgeoisie, and greater assurance in its behaviour. The attempt by the German Communist Party to hasten the *denouement* by means of an artificial general offensive did not and could not produce the desired result. The revolutionary movement has shown that its tempo is slower than we expected in 1918-1919. The social soil continues, however, to be sown with mines. The crisis in trade and industry is assuming monstrous

proportions. Abrupt shifts in political development in the form of revolutionary explosions are wholly possible in the very near future. But, on the whole, development has assumed a more protracted character. The Third Congress of the International called on the Communist Parties to prepare themselves thoroughly and perseveringly. In many countries the Communists have been obliged to carry out important strategic retreats, renouncing the immediate fulfilment of those fighting tasks which they had only recently set themselves. The initiative for the offensive has temporarily passed to the bourgeoisie. The work of the Communist Parties is now predominantly defensive and organisationally preparatory in character. Our revolutionary defence remains, as always, elastic and resilient, that is, capable of being transformed, given a corresponding change of conditions, into a counter-offensive which in its turn can culminate in a decisive battle.

The failure of the march on Warsaw, the victory of the bourgeoisie in Italy and the temporary ebb in Germany compelled us to execute an abrupt retreat, which began with the Treaty of Riga and ended with the conditional recognition of the Tsarist debts.

During this same period we executed a retreat of no less importance in the field of economic construction: the acceptance of concessions, the abolition of the grain monopoly, the leasing out of many industrial enterprises, and so on. The basic reason for these successive retreats is to be found in the continued capitalist encirclement, that is, the relative stability of the bourgeois regime

Just what is it that they want, these proponents of military doctrine – for the sake of brevity we shall call them the doctrinaires, a designation they have earned – when they demand that we orient the Red Army towards offensive revolutionary warfare? Do they want a simple recognition of the principle? If so, they are breaking open an already open door. Or do they consider that conditions have arisen in our international or our domestic situation which put an offensive revolutionary war on the agenda? But, in that case, our doctrinaires should aim their blows not at the War Department but at our Party and at the Communist International, for it was none other than the World Congress that, in the summer of this year, rejected the revolutionary strategy of the offensive as untimely, called on all parties to undertake careful preparatory work, and approved the defensive and manoeuvring policy of Soviet Russia as a policy corresponding to our circumstances.

Or do some of our doctrinaires consider, perhaps, that while the 'weak' Communist Parties in the bourgeois states have to carry on preparatory work, the 'all-powerful' Red Army ought to undertake offensive revolutionary war? Are there, perhaps, some impatient strategists who really intend to shift on to the shoulders of the Red Army the burden of the 'final, decisive conflict' in the world, or at least in Europe? Whoever seriously propagates such a policy would do better to hang a millstone about his neck and then act in accordance with the subsequent instructions given in the Gospel. [\[6\]](#)

8. Education 'in the Spirit of' the Offensive

Seeking to extricate himself from the contradictions involved in a doctrine of the offensive put forward during an era of defensive retreat, Comrade Solomin invests the 'doctrine' of revolutionary war with ... an educational meaning. At the present time, he concedes, we are indeed interested in peace, and will do everything to preserve it. But, despite our defensive policy, revolutionary wars are inevitable. We

must prepare for them, and, consequently, we must cultivate an offensive 'spirit' for future requirements. The offensive is to be understood, therefore, not in a fleshly sense but in spirit and in truth. [7] In other words, Comrade Solomin wants to have, ready for mobilisation, along with a supply of army biscuits, also a supply of enthusiasm for the offensive. Matters do not improve as we proceed. While we saw earlier that our most severe critic lacks understanding of revolutionary strategy, we now perceive that he also lacks understanding of the laws of revolutionary psychology.

We need peace not from doctrinal considerations but because the working people have had enough of war and privation. Our efforts are directed to safeguarding for the workers and peasants as long a period of peace as possible. We explain to the army itself that the only reason why we cannot demobilise is that new attacks threaten us. From these conditions Solomin draws the conclusion that we have to 'educate' the Red Army in an ideology of offensive revolutionary war. What an idealistic view of 'education'! 'We are not strong enough to go to war and we do not intend to go to war, but we must be prepared' – Comrade Solomin gloomily philosophises – 'and therefore we must prepare for the offensive: such is the contradictory formula we arrive at.' The formula is indeed contradictory. But if Solomin thinks that this is a 'good', a dialectical contradiction, he is mistaken: it is confusion, pure and simple.

One of the most important tasks of our domestic policy in recent times has been to draw closer to the peasant. The peasant question confronts us with particular acuteness in the army. Does Solomm seriously believe that today, when immediate danger of a return of the landlords has been eliminated, and revolution in Europe still remains only a potentiality, we can rally our army of more than a million men, nine-tenths of whom are peasants, under the banner of offensive war for the purpose of bringing about the *denouement* of the proletarian revolution? Such propaganda would be stillborn.

We do not, of course, intend for a moment to hide from the working people, including the Red Army, that we shall always be, in principle, for offensive revolutionary war in those conditions when such war can help to liberate the working people of other countries. But to suppose that one can, on the basis of this statement of principle, create or 'cultivate' an effective ideology for the Red Army under existing conditions is to fail to understand either the Red Army or these conditions. In actual fact, no sensible Red Army man doubts that, if we are not attacked this winter, or in the spring, we shall certainly not disturb the peace ourselves, but shall exert all our efforts to heal our wounds, taking advantage of the respite. In our exhausted country we are learning the soldier's trade, arming and building a big army in order to defend ourselves against attack. Here you have a 'doctrine' which is clear, simple and in accordance with reality.

It was precisely because we posed the question like that in the spring of 1920 that every Red Army man was firmly convinced that bourgeois Poland had forced upon us a war which we had not wanted and from which we had tried to protect the people by making very big concessions. It was just this conviction that engendered the very great indignation and hatred that was felt against the enemy. It was due precisely to this that the war, which began as one of defence, could subsequently be developed into an offensive war.

The contradiction between defensive propaganda and the offensive (in the last analysis) character of a war is a 'good', viable, dialectical contradiction. And we

have no grounds whatsoever for altering the character and direction of our educational work in the army. in order to please muddleheads, even if they speak in the name of military doctrine.

Those who talk about revolutionary wars usually derive their inspiration from recollections of the wars of the Great French Revolution. In France they also began with defence: they created an army for defence and then went over to the offensive. To the sound of the *Marseillaise* the armed *sansculottes* marched with their revolutionary broom all across Europe. Historical analogies are very tempting. But one has to be cautious when resorting to them. Otherwise, formal features of similarity may induce one to overlook material features of difference. France was, at the end of the 18th century, the richest and most civilised country on the Continent of Europe. In the 20th century, Russia is the poorest and most backward country in Europe. Compared with the revolutionary tasks that confront us today, the revolutionary task of the French army was much more superficial in character. At that time it was a matter of overthrowing 'tyrants', of abolishing or mitigating feudal serfdom. Today it is a matter of completely destroying exploitation and class oppression. But the role of the arms of France – that is, of an advanced country in relation to backward Europe – proved to be very limited and transient. With the downfall of Bonapartism, which had grown out of the revolutionary war, Europe returned to its Kings and feudal lords.

In the gigantic class struggle which is unfolding today, the role of armed intervention from without can have no more than concomitant, contributory, auxiliary significance. Armed intervention can hasten the *denouement* and facilitate the victory. But for this it is necessary that the revolution be mature not merely in respect of social relations – that is already the case – but also in respect of political consciousness. Armed intervention is like the forceps of the obstetrician: used at the right moment it can ease the birth-pangs, but if brought into play prematurely it can only cause a miscarriage.

9. The Strategical and Technical Content of the 'Military Doctrine' (Capacity for Manoeuvring)

What has been said so far applies not so much to the Red Army, to its structure and methods of operation, as to the political tasks set for the Red Army by the workers' state.

Let us now approach military doctrine in the narrower sense of the term. We heard from Comrade Solomin that, so long as we fail to proclaim the doctrine of offensive revolutionary war, we shall remain confused and shall commit blunders in organisational, military-educational and strategical and other matters. However, such a commonplace does not get us far. Instead of repeating that good practical conclusions must necessarily follow from a good doctrine, why not try to offer us these conclusions? Alas! As soon as our doctrinaires try to reach conclusions, they offer us either a feeble rehash of stale news or the most pernicious sort of 'independent thinking'.

Our innovators devote their greatest energy to trying to fix the anchor of military doctrine in the sphere of operational questions. According to them, as regards strategy, the Red Army differs *in principle* from all other armies, because in our epoch of positional immobility the basic features of the Red Army's operations are

capacity for manoeuvring and aggressiveness.

The operations of civil war are, unquestionably, distinguished by an exceptional element of manoeuvring. But we must ask this question, quite precisely: does the Red Army's manoeuvring result from its inner qualities, its class nature, its revolutionary spirit, its fighting zeal – or is it due to the objective conditions, to the vastness of the theatres of war and the comparatively small numbers of troops involved? This question is of no small importance if we recognise that revolutionary wars will be fought not only on the Don and the Volga but also on the Seine, the Scheldt and the Thames.

But let us, meanwhile, return to our native rivers. Was the Red Army alone distinguished by capacity for manoeuvring?

No, the strategy of the Whites was wholly a strategy of manoeuvre. Their troops were, in most cases, inferior to ours in numbers and in point of morale, but superior in military skill. Hence the need for a strategy of manoeuvre arose first among the Whites. In the initial stages we learnt manoeuvring from them. In the final stage of the civil war we invariably had a situation of manoeuvre countered by manoeuvre. Finally, the highest capacity for manoeuvring was characteristic of the operations of Ungern and Makhno, those degenerate, bandit outgrowths of the civil war. What conclusion follows from this? Manoeuvring is characteristic not of a revolutionary army but of civil war as such.

In national wars, operations are accompanied by fear of distance. By removing itself from its base, from its own people, from the area where its own language is spoken, an army, or a detachment, finds itself in a completely alien environment, where neither support, nor cover, nor aid is available to it. In a civil war each side finds sympathy and support, to a greater or lesser degree, in the opponent's rear. National wars are waged (at all events, they used to be waged) by ponderous masses, with all the national-state resources of both sides brought into play. Civil war signifies that the forces and resources of the country convulsed by revolution are divided into two; that the war is waged, especially in the initial stage, by an enterprising minority on each side, and, consequently, by more or less scanty and therefore mobile masses; and, for this reason, much more depends on improvisation and accident.

Civil war is characterised by manoeuvring on both sides. One cannot, therefore, consider capacity for manoeuvring a special manifestation of the revolutionary character of the Red Army.

We were victorious in the civil war. There are no grounds for us to doubt that superiority in strategic leadership was on our side. In the last analysis, however, victory was ensured by the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the working-class vanguard and the support given by the peasant masses. But these conditions were not created by the Red Army – they were the historical preconditions for its rise, development and success.

Comrade Varin remarks, in the journal **Voyennaya Nauka i Revolyutsiya** [8], that the mobility of our troops surpasses all historical precedents. This is a very interesting assertion. It would be desirable for it to be carefully verified. Unquestionably, the extraordinary speed of movement, requiring endurance and self-sacrifice, was conditioned by the army's revolutionary spirit, by the *élan* that was contributed to it by the Communists. Here is an interesting exercise for the

students of our Military Academy: to compare the marches of the Red Army, from the standpoint of distances covered, with other examples from history, particularly with the marches of the army of the Great French Revolution. On the other hand, a comparison should be made between these same factors as they existed among the Reds and the Whites in our civil war. When we advanced, they retreated, and *vice versa*. Did we actually show, on the average, greater endurance during marches, and to what extent was this one of the factors in our victory? It is incontestable that the Communist leaven was able to produce a superhuman exertion of strength in individual cases. But it would require a special investigation to determine whether the same result held for an entire campaign, in the course of which the limits of the organism's physiological capacity could not but make themselves felt. Such an investigation does not, of course, promise to turn all strategy topsy-turvy. But it would undoubtedly enrich with some valuable factual data our knowledge of the nature of civil war and of the revolutionary army.

The endeavour to fix as laws and erect into dogmas those features of the Red Army's strategy and tactics which were characteristic of it in the recent period could do a great deal of harm and could even prove fatal. It is possible to say in advance that operations by the Red Army on the continent of Asia – if they are destined to take place there – would of necessity be profoundly manoeuvring in character. Cavalry would have to play the most important, and in some cases even the one and only role. On the other hand, however, there can be no doubt that military operations in the Western theatre would be far more constrained. Operations conducted in territory with a different national composition and more densely populated, with a higher ratio between the number of troops and the given territory, would undoubtedly make the war more positional in character and would, in any case, confine freedom to manoeuvre within incomparably narrower limits.

Recognition that it was beyond the capacity of the Red Army to defend fortified positions (Tukhachevsky) sums up correctly, on the whole, the lessons of the past period, but it certainly cannot be taken as an absolute rule for the future. Defence of fortified positions requires fortress troops, or, more correctly, troops of a high level, welded by experience and confident in themselves. In the past period, we only began to accumulate this experience. Every individual regiment, and the army as a whole, were living improvisations. It was possible to ensure enthusiasm and *élan*, and this we achieved, but it was not possible to create artificially the necessary routine, the automatic solidarity, the confidence of neighbouring units that there would be mutual support between them. It is impossible to create tradition by decree. To some extent this does exist now, and we shall accumulate more and more as time goes by. We shall in this way establish the preconditions both for better conduct of manoeuvring operations and, if need arises, for positional operations too.

We must renounce attempts at building an absolute revolutionary strategy out of the elements of our limited experience of the three years of civil war, during which units of a particular quality fought under particular conditions. Clausewitz warned very well against this. 'What could be more natural,' he wrote [\[9\]](#), 'than the fact that war of the French Revolution had its characteristic style, and what theory could have been expected to accommodate it? The danger is that this kind of style, developed out of a single case, can easily outlive the situation that gave rise to it: for conditions change imperceptibly. That danger is the very thing a theory should prevent by lucid, rational criticism. In 1806 the Prussian generals were under the sway of this methodism', and so on. Alas! Prussian generals are not the only ones with an inclination towards methodism, that is, towards stereotypes and

conventional patterns.

10. Offensive and Defensive in the Light of the Imperialist War

It is proclaimed that the second specific feature of revolutionary strategy is its *aggressiveness*. The attempt to build a doctrine on this foundation appears all the more one-sided in view of the fact that during the epoch preceding the world war the strategy of the offensive was cultivated in the by no means revolutionary general staffs and military academies of nearly all the major countries of Europe. Contrary to what Comrade Frunze writes [Art. cit. in **Krasnaya Nov** (Note by Trotsky)] the offensive was (and formally still remains to this day) the official doctrine of the French Republic. Jaurès fought tirelessly against the doctrinaires of the pure offensive, counterposing to it the pacifist doctrinairism of pure defence. A sharp reaction against the traditional official doctrine of the French general staff came as a result of the last war. It will not be without value to quote here two striking pieces of evidence. The French military journal the **Revue militaire française** (September 1, 1921, p.336) cites the following proposition, borrowed from the Germans and incorporated by the French general staff in 1913 in the *Regulations for the conduct of operations by large units*. 'The lessons of the past,' we read, 'have borne their fruits: the French army, returning to its traditions, henceforth does not permit the conduct of operations in accordance with any law but that of the offensive.' The journal goes on: 'This law, introduced soon afterward into the regulations governing our general tactics and the tactics peculiar to each arm, was to dominate the teaching given both to our marshals-under-instruction and to our commanders, through conferences, practical exercises on maps or on the ground, and, finally, through the procedure called *les grandes manoeuvres*.'

'The result was,' the journal continues, 'a veritable infatuation with the famous law of the offensive, and anyone who ventured to propose an amendment in favour of the defensive would have met with a very poor reception. It was necessary, though not sufficient, if one was to be a good marshal-under-instruction, to keep on conjugating the verb "to attack".'

The conservative **Journal des Débats** of October 5, 1921, subjects to sharp criticism from this standpoint the regulations for infantry manoeuvres which were issued this summer. 'At the beginning of this excellent little work,' the newspaper writes, 'a number of principles are set out ... which are presented as being the official military doctrine for 1921. These principles are perfect: *but why have the editors conformed to old custom, why have they given the honour of their first page to a glorification of the offensive?* Why do they propound for us, in a prominent paragraph, this axiom: "He who attacks first makes an impression on his adversary by demonstrating that his will is superior"?''

After analysing the experience of two outstanding moments of struggle on the French front, the newspaper says:

'The offensive can impress only an adversary who has been bereft of his resources, or whose mediocrity is such as one never has the right to count on. An adversary aware of his strength does not let himself be impressed at all by an attack. He does not take the enemy's offensive as any manifestation of a will superior to his own. If the defensive has been wished for and prepared, as in August 1914 [by the Germans] or in July 1918 [by the French], then, on the contrary, it is the defender who considers that he has the superiority of will,

because *the other one is falling into a trap.*' The military critic continues: 'You commit a strange psychological mistake in fearing (the Frenchman's) passivity and preference for the defensive. The Frenchman wants nothing better than to take the offensive, whether he attacks first or second – an offensive, that is, which is properly organised. But do not tell him any more Arabian-Nights stories about the gentleman who attacks first with a superior will.'

'The offensive does not bring success by itself. It brings success when all resources of every kind have been assembled for it, and when these are superior to those possessed by the opponent, because, after all, *it is always the one who is stronger at the point of combat who beats the one who is weaker.*'

One can, of course, try to reject this conclusion on the ground that it is drawn from the experience of positional warfare. As a matter of fact, however, it follows from war of manoeuvre with even greater directness and obviousness, although in a different form. War of manoeuvre is war of great spaces. In the endeavour to destroy the enemy's manpower it sets no great store by space. Its mobility is expressed not only in offensives but also in retreats, which are merely changes of position.

11. Aggressiveness, Initiative And Energy

During the first period of the revolution the Red troops generally shunned the offensive, preferring to fraternise and discuss. In the period when the revolutionary idea was spontaneously flooding the country this method proved very effective. The Whites, on the contrary, tried at that time to force offensives in order to preserve their troops from revolutionary disintegration. Even after discussion had ceased to be the most important resource of revolutionary strategy, the Whites continued to be distinguished by greater aggressiveness than we showed. Only gradually did the Red troops develop the energy and confidence that make decisive actions feasible. The subsequent operations of the Red Army were marked to an extreme degree by capacity for manoeuvring. Cavalry raids were the most striking expression of this capacity for manoeuvring. However, these raids, too, were taught us by Mamontov. From the Whites we also learned to make rapid breakthroughs, enveloping movements, and penetrations into the enemy's rear. Let us remember this! In the initial period we tried to defend Soviet Russia by means of a cordon, holding on to each other. Only later, when we had learnt from the enemy, did we gather our forces into fists and endow these fists with mobility, only later did we put workers on horseback and learn how to make large-scale cavalry raids. This little effort of memory is already sufficient for us to realise how unfounded and one-sided, how theoretically and practically false, sounds the 'doctrine' according to which an offensive, manoeuvring strategy is characteristic of a revolutionary army as such. In certain circumstances this strategy corresponds best of all to a counter-revolutionary army which is compelled to make up for its lack of numbers by the activity of skilled cadres.

It is precisely in a war of manoeuvre that the distinction between defensive and offensive is wiped out to an extraordinary degree. War of manoeuvre is war of movement. The aim of movement is destruction of the enemy's manpower at a distance of 100 *versts* or so. Manoeuvring promises victory if it keeps the initiative in our hands. The fundamental features of the strategy of manoeuvre are *not formal aggressiveness but initiative and energy.*

The idea that, at each given moment, the Red Army resolutely took the offensive

on the most important front, while temporarily weakening itself on the other fronts, and that just this characterises most graphically the Red Army's strategy during the civil war (see Comrade Varin's article) is correct in essence but is expressed one-sidedly and therefore does not provide all the conclusions needed. *While taking the offensive* on one front, considered by us at the given moment as being the most important, for political or military, reasons, we weakened ourselves on the other fronts, considering it possible to remain on the defensive there and to *retreat*. But, you see, what this shows is, precisely, the fact – how strange that this is overlooked! – that into our overall operational plans retreat entered, side by side with attack, as an indispensable link. Those fronts on which we stayed on the defensive and retreated were only sectors of our general ring-shaped front. On those sectors fought units of that same Red Army, its fighters and its commanders, and if all strategy is to be reduced to the offensive, then it is obvious that the troops on those fronts where we confined ourselves to defensive operations, and even retreated, must have been subject to depression and demoralisation. The work of educating troops must, obviously, include the idea that retreat does not mean running away, that there are strategic retreats due to an endeavour either to preserve manpower intact, or to shorten the front, or to lure the enemy in deeper, all the more surely to crush him. And if a strategical retreat is legitimate, then it is wrong to reduce all strategy to the offensive. This is especially clear and incontestable, let us repeat, with regard, precisely, to the strategy of manoeuvre. A manoeuvre is, obviously, a complex combination of movements and blows, transfers of forces, marches and battles, with the ultimate aim of crushing the enemy. But if strategic retreat is excluded from the concept of manoeuvre, then, obviously, strategy will acquire an extremely rectilinear character – that is, will cease to be a strategy of manoeuvre.

12. The Yearning For Stable Schema

'What kind of an army are we building, and for what purpose?' asks Comrade Solomin. 'In other words: what enemies threaten us and by what strategical methods (defensive or offensive) shall we deal with them most quickly and economically?' (**Voyennaya Nauka i Revolyutsya**, No.?, p.19)

This formulation of the question testifies most vividly that the thinking of Solomin himself, the herald of a new military doctrine, is wholly captive to the methods and prejudices of old-time doctrinairism. The Austro-Hungarian general staff (like others) worked out in the course of decades a number of variant contingency plans for war: variant 'I' (against Italy), variant 'R' (against Russia), with the appropriate combinations of these variants. In these plans the numerical strength of the Italian and Russian forces, their armament, the conditions governing their mobilisation, the strategical concentrations and deployments, all constituted magnitudes which, if not constant, were at least stable. In this way the Austro-Hungarian 'military doctrine', basing itself on specific political suppositions, was firm in its knowledge of what enemies threatened the empire of the Habsburgs, and from one year to the next it pondered on how to cope with these enemies 'most economically'. The thinking of the members of the General Staff in all countries ran in the fixed channels of 'variants'. The invention of improved armour by a future enemy was countered by strengthening one's artillery, and *vice versa*. Routinists educated in this tradition would inevitably feel quite out of place under the conditions in which we carry on our military construction. 'What enemies threaten us?' – that is, where are our General-Staff variants for future wars? And by what strategical methods (defensive or offensive) are we intending to realise these variants, outlined in advance? Reading Solomin's article I was involuntarily reminded of the comic figure of that

dogmatist of military doctrine, General Borisov of the General Staff. Whatever problem was being discussed, Borisov would invariably raise his two fingers in order to have the opportunity to say: 'This question can be decided only in conjunction with other questions of military doctrine, and for this reason it is first of all necessary to institute the post of Chief of the General Staff.' From the womb of this Chief of the General Staff the tree of military doctrine would spring up, and produce all the necessary fruits, just as happened in antiquity with the daughter of the Eastern king. Solomin, like Borisov, pines essentially for this lost paradise of stable premises for 'military doctrine', when one knew ten or twenty years ahead who the enemies would be, and whence and how they threatened. Solomin, like Borisov, needs a universal Chief of General Staff who would gather up the broken pieces of crockery, set them on the shelf and paste labels on them: variant 'I', variant 'R', and so on. Perhaps Solomin can at the same time name to us the universal brain he has in view? So far as we are concerned, we – alas! – know of no such brain, and are even of the opinion that there can be no such brain, because the tasks set for it are unrealisable. Talking at every step about revolutionary wars and revolutionary strategy, Solomin has overlooked just this: *the revolutionary character of the present epoch*, which has brought about the utter disruption of stability in both international and internal relations. Germany no longer exists as a military power. Nevertheless, French militarism is obliged to follow with feverish eyes the most insignificant events and changes in Germany's internal life and on Germany's frontiers. What if Germany suddenly raises an army of several million men? What Germany? Perhaps it will be Ludendorff's Germany? But perhaps this Germany will merely provide the impulse that will prove fatal to the present rotten semi-equilibrium and clear the way for the Germany of Liebknecht and Luxemburg? How many 'variants' must the General Staff have? How many war plans must one have in order to cope 'economically' with all the dangers?

I have in my archives quite a few reports, thick, thin and medium-sized, the learned authors of which explained to us with polite pedagogical patience that a self-respecting power must institute definite, regular relations, elucidate in advance who its possible enemies are, and acquire suitable allies, or, at least, neutralise all those that can be neutralised. For, as the authors of these reports explain, it is not possible to prepare for future wars 'in the dark': it is not possible to determine either the strength of the army, or its establishments, or its disposition. I do not recall seeing Solomin's signature under these reports, but his ideas were there. All the authors, sad to say, were of the school of Borisov.

International orientation, including international military orientation, is more difficult nowadays than in the epoch of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. But there is nothing one can do about that: the epoch of the greatest upheavals in history, both military and revolutionary, has disrupted certain variants and stereotypes. There can be no stable, traditional, conservative orientation. Orientation must be vigilant, mobile and urgent – or, if you like, manoeuvring in character. Urgent does not mean aggressive, but it does mean strictly in accordance with today's combination of international relations, and concentrating maximum forces on the task of today.

Under present international conditions, orientation calls for much greater mental skill than was needed for elaborating the conservative elements of military doctrine in the epoch that lies behind us. But, at the same time, this work is carried out on a much wider scale and with the use of much more scientific methods. The basic work in evaluating the international situation and the tasks for the proletarian revolution and the Soviet Republic which result from it is being performed by the Party, by its

collective thinking, and the directive forms of this work are provided by the Party's congresses and its central committee. We have in mind not only the Russian Communist Party but also our international Party. How pedantic seem Solomin's demands that we compile a catalogue of our enemies and decide whether we shall do the attacking and just whom we shall attack, when we compare it with this work of evaluating all the forces of the revolution and the counter-revolution, as they now exist and as they are developing, which was accomplished by the last congress of the Communist International! What other 'doctrine' do you need?

Comrade Tukhachevsky submitted to the Communist International a proposal that an international general staff be set up and attached to. [\[10\]](#) This proposal was, of course, incorrect: it did not correspond to the situation and the tasks formulated by the Congress itself. If the Communist International could be created *de facto* only after strong Communist organisations had been formed in the most important countries, this applies even more to an international general staff, which could arise only on the basis of the national general staffs of *several* proletarian states. So long as this basis is lacking, an international general staff would inevitably become a caricature. Tukhachevsky thought it necessary to deepen his error by printing his letter at the end of his interesting little book **The War of Classes**. This error is of the same order as Comrade Tukhachevsky's impetuous theoretical onslaught on the militia, which he sees as being in contradiction to the Third International. Let us note, in passing, that offensives launched without adequate safeguards constitute, in general, the weak side of Comrade Tukhachevsky, who is one of the most gifted of our young military workers.

But even without an international general staff, which does not correspond to the situation and is therefore impracticable, the international congress itself, as the representative of the revolutionary workers' parties, did accomplish, and through its Executive Committee continues to accomplish, the fundamental ideological work of the 'General Staff' of the international revolution: keeping a tally of friends and enemies, neutralising the vacillators with a view to attracting them later to the side of the revolution, evaluating the changing situation, determining the urgent tasks, and concentrating efforts on a world scale upon these tasks.

The conclusions which follow from this orientation are very complex. They cannot be fitted into a few General-Staff variants. But such is the nature of our epoch. The advantage of our orientation is this, that it corresponds to the nature of the epoch and its relations. In accordance with this orientation we align our military policy as well. It is at the present time actively-temporising, defensive and preparatory. We are above all concerned to assure for our military ideology, our methods and our apparatus a flexibility so resilient as to enable us, at each turn of events, to concentrate our main forces in the principal direction.

13. The Spirit of Defence and the Spirit of the Offensive

But, after all, says Solomin (p.22), 'it is impossible to educate, at one and the same time, in the spirit of the offensive and in the spirit of defence.' Now this is sheer doctrinairism. Where and by whom has it been proved? By nobody and nowhere, because it is false to the core. The entire art of our constructive work in Soviet Russia in the military sphere (and not only in that sphere) consists in combining the international revolutionary-offensive tendencies of the proletarian vanguard with the revolutionary-defensive tendencies of the peasant masses, and even of broad

circles of the working class itself. This combination corresponds to the international situation as a whole. By explaining its significance to the advanced elements in the army we thereby teach them to combine defence and offence correctly, not only in the strategical but also in the revolutionary-historical sense. Does Solomin think, perhaps, that this quenches 'the spirit'? Both he and his co-thinkers hint at this. But that is the purest Left-SRism! Clarifying the essence of the international and domestic situation, and an active, 'manoeuvring' adaptation to this situation, cannot quench the spirit but only temper it.

Or is it, perhaps, impossible *in the purely military sense* to prepare the army both for defence and for the offensive? But that, too, is nonsense. In his book Tukhachevsky stresses the idea that in civil war it is impossible, or almost impossible, for the defence to assume positional stability. From this Tukhachevsky draws the correct conclusion that, under these conditions, the defence must, like the offensive, necessarily be active and manoeuvring. If we are too weak to attack, we try to wrench ourselves out of the enemy's grip, so as later to gather our forces into a fist, on his line of subsequent advance, and strike at his most vulnerable spot. Erroneous to the point of absurdity is Solomin's assertion that an army has to be trained exclusively for a specific form of warfare – *either defensive or offensive*. In reality, an army is trained and educated for combat and victory. Defensive and offensive operations enter as variable factors into combat, especially if this involves manoeuvring. He is victorious who defends himself well when it is necessary to attack. This is the only sound education we must give our army, and especially its commanders. A rifle with a bayonet is good for both defence and attack. The same applies to the fighter's hands. The fighter himself, and the unit to which he belongs, must be prepared for combat, for self-defence, for resisting the enemy and for routing the enemy. That regiment attacks best which is able to defend itself. Good defence can be achieved only by a regiment that has the desire and ability to attack. The regulations must teach how to fight, and not just coach for offensive operations.

Being revolutionary is a spiritual state, and not a ready-made answer to all questions. It can give enthusiasm, it can ensure *élan*. Enthusiasm and *élan* are most precious conditions for success, but they are not the only ones. One has to have orientation and one has to have training. And away with doctrinaire blinkers!

14. The Most Immediate Tasks

But are there not, in the complex intermeshing of international relations, certain clearer and more distinct factors in accordance with which we ought to align ourselves in our military activity in the course of the next few months?

There are such factors, and they speak for themselves too loudly to be considered secret. In the West there are Poland and Rumania, with, behind them, France. In the Far East there is Japan. Around and about Caucasia there is Britain. I shall here dwell only on the question of Poland, as this is the most striking and instructive.

France's Premier, Briand, declared in Washington that we are preparing to attack Poland this spring. Not only every commander and every Red Army man but also every worker and peasant in our country knows that this is utter rubbish. Briand knows it too, of course. Up to now we have paid such a big price to the big and little bandits, to get them to leave us in peace, that it is possible to talk about a 'plan' on our part to attack Poland only so as to have a cover for some fiendish plot against

us. What is our actual orientation where Poland is concerned?

We are proving to the Polish masses, firmly and persistently, not in words but in deeds – and, primarily, by most strict fulfilment of the Treaty of Riga – that we want peace, and are thereby helping to preserve it.

Should nevertheless the Polish military clique, incited by the French stock-exchange clique, fall upon us in the spring, the war will be, on our side, genuinely defensive, both in essence and in the way the people will see it. Precisely this clear and distinct awareness of our guiltlessness in a war thrust upon us will serve to weld together most closely all the elements in the army – the advanced Communist proletarian, the specialist who, though non-Party, is devoted to the Red Army, and the backward peasant soldier, and will thereby best prepare our army to show initiative and launch a self-sacrificing offensive in this defensive war. Whoever thinks this policy is indefinite and conditional, whoever remains unclear concerning 'what kind of army we are preparing, and for what tasks', whoever thinks that 'it is impossible at one and the same time to educate both in the spirit of defence and in the spirit of the offensive', understands nothing at all, and would do better to keep quiet and not hinder others!

But if such a complex combination of factors is to be observed in the world situation, how can we, nevertheless, orient ourselves in practice in the sphere of building the army? What should be the numerical strength of the army? What formations should it consist of? How should they be distributed?

None of these questions can be given an absolute answer. One can speak only of empirical approximations and timely rectifications thereto, depending on changes in the situation. Only helpless doctrinaires suppose that answers to questions of mobilisation, formation, training, education, strategy and tactics can be arrived at by deduction, in a formallogical way, from the premises of a sacrosanct 'military doctrine'. What we lack are not magical, all-saving military formulas, but more careful, attentive, precise, vigilant and conscientious work based on those foundations which we have already firmly laid down. Our regulations, our programmes, our establishments are imperfect. That is unquestionable. There are plenty of omissions, inaccuracies, things that are out-of-date or incomplete. They must be corrected, improved, made more precise. But how and from what standpoint should this be done?

We are told that we must take the doctrine of offensive warfare as our basis for the work of review and rectification. 'This formula,' Solomin writes, 'signifies a most decisive (!) turn (in the building of the Red Army); it is necessary to reconsider all (!) the views we have formed, to carry out a complete (!) reappraisal of values from the standpoint of going over from a purely defensive to an offensive strategy. The education of the commanders, the preparation of the individual fighter ... armament – all this (!) must henceforth proceed under the sign of the offensive' (p.22).

'Only with such a unified plan,' he goes on, 'will the reorganisation of the Red Army, which has begun, emerge from a state of formlessness, disorder, disharmony, vacillation and absence of a clearly known goal.' Solomin's expressions are, as we see, strictly offensive, but his assertions are absurd. The formlessness, vacillation and disorder exist only in his own head. There are, objectively, difficulties and practical mistakes in our constructive work. But there is no disorder, no vacillation, no disharmony. And the army will not allow the Solomins to impose their

organisational and strategical ramblings and thereby to introduce vacillation and disorder.

Our regulations and programmes need revision not from the standpoint of the doctrinaire formula of the pure offensive but from that of the experience we have had in the last four years. We must read, discuss and correct the regulations at conferences of commanders. It is necessary, while the memory of the combat operations, large and small, is still vivid, to compare that experience with the formulas given in the regulations, and each commander should consciously ask himself whether these words answer to the practice or not, and, if they differ, should decide where the difference lies. To collect all this systematised experience, to sum it up, to evaluate it at the centre against the criterion of higher experience in strategy, tactics, organisation and politics, to rid the regulations and programmes of all out-of-date, superfluous material, to bring them closer to the army, and to make the army feel to what extent they are necessary to it, and to what extent they should replace improvisation – this is a great and vital task!

We possess an orientation which is international in scale and has great historical scope. One of its sections has already passed the test of experience: another is now being tested, and is standing the test. The Communist vanguard is sufficiently assured of revolutionary initiative and aggressive spirit. We do not need wordy, noisy innovation in the form of new military doctrines, nor the bombastic proclamation of these doctrines; what we need is systematising of experience, improvement in organisation, attention to details.

The defects in our organisation, our backwardness and poverty, especially in the technical field, must not be erected by us into a credo; they must be eliminated by every means in our power, in an effort to approach, in this respect, the imperialist armies, which all deserve to be destroyed, but which are in some ways superior to ours: well-developed aviation, plentiful means of communication, well-trained and carefully-selected commanders, precision in calculating resources, correct mutual relations. This is, of course, only the organisational and technical integument. Morally and politically, the bourgeois armies are disintegrating, or heading towards disintegration. The revolutionary character of our army, the class homogeneity of our commanders and of the mass of the fighting men, Communist leadership – here is where our most powerful and unconquerable strength lies. Nobody can take this away from us. All our attention must now be directed not toward a fanciful reconstruction but toward improvement and greater precision. To supply units properly with food; not to let foodstuffs go bad; to cook good cabbage soup; to teach how to exterminate lice and keep the body clean; to conduct training exercises properly, and to do this rather less indoors and rather more under the open sky; to prepare political discussions sensibly and concretely; to provide every Red Army man with a service book and see to it that the entries are correct; to teach how to clean rifles and grease boots; to teach how to shoot; to help the commanders to assimilate thoroughly the behests of the regulations concerning communications, reconnaissance, reports and security to learn and to teach how to adapt oneself to local conditions to wind one's footcloths properly, so as to save one's feet from getting rubbed raw; and, once again, to grease one's boots – such is our programme for the winter and the spring that lie ahead.

Should anyone, on a holiday occasion, call this a military doctrine, he will not be punished for that.

Endnotes

- [1.](#) Published as a separate pamphlet by the Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow, 1921.
- [2.](#) Comrade Frunze writes: 'One may offer the following definition of "unified military doctrine". It is the unified set of teachings adopted by the army of a given state, which fix the form of construction of the country's armed forces and the methods of training and leading the forces, on the basis of the views which prevail in the given state regarding the character of the military tasks which confront this state and the methods of performing these tasks which follow from the class essence of this state and the condition of its productive forces.' (**Krasnaya Nov**, No.2, p.94, article by M.Frunze, *Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army*.)

This definition can be accepted, with reservations. But, as the whole of Comrade Frunze's article testifies, the conclusions drawn from the definition quoted can in no way enrich the ideological arsenal of the Red Army. However, we shall deal with this in greater detail later. [*Note by Trotsky*]
- [3.](#) Comrade Solomin accuses us (see the military-science journal **Voyennaya Nauka i Revolyutsia**) of having, so far, failed to answer the question: 'What kind of army are we preparing, and for what tasks?' [*Note by Trotsky*]
- [4.](#) The decree was issued on 15 (28, new style) January 1918. For the text, see **First Decrees of Soviet Power**, edited by Yu. Akhapiin, Lawrence and Wishart, 1970, page 86.
- [5.](#) The passage comes from **Results and Prospects**: see **The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects**, New Park Publications, 1962, pages 240-241 or, see *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, on the Leon Trotsky Internet Archive.
- [6.](#) 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' (Matthew, 18:6)
- [7.](#) 'God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' (John, 4:24)
- [8.](#) Comrade Vain's article, *On the Lessons of the Civil War*, in the periodical **Voyennaya Nauka i Revolyutsiya**, 1921.
- [9.](#) Howard and Paret translation, pages 154-155. The last sentence is, however, a *precis* by Trotsky of the following: 'When in 1806 the Prussian generals ... plunged into the open jaws of disaster by using Frederick the Great's open order of battle, it was not just a case of a style that had outlived its usefulness but the most extreme poverty of the imagination to which routine has ever led. The result was that the Prussian army under Hohenlohe was ruined more completely than any army has ever been ruined on the battlefield.'
- [10.](#) Comrade Tukhachevsky's letter was published in his book **Voyna Klassov (The War of Classes)**. An English translation of Tukhachevsky's letter is included in John Erickson's **The Soviet High Command**, pp.784-785.

Questions of Military Theory

From a Talk with a Representative of the American Press

* * *

Before the end of 1917 I never expected to be concerned with military matters. Books on military questions I read just as I read books on, say, astronomy or other subjects: I read them in prison. But I became more interested in military matters during the imperialist war, when I lived in France. I possessed no military knowledge. In my opinion there are certain general methods which are applicable in all spheres of life and creative activity. People talk, for example, about juridical logic. Actually, this is human logic applied to juridical questions. Similarly, in the sphere of administration, a good administrator of a factory will also be a good military administrator. The methods of administration are, by and large, just the same. Human logic finds the same application in the military sphere as in others: precision, perseverance, all these qualities are necessary in every sphere in which people want to build, create and learn.

We acquired elementary technical knowledge through experience: we were under fire all the time. We made enough mistakes and had fronts enough to fight on, we made many observations, and so we were able to learn. Entire fronts were commanded by men who had never before been in the army, such as, for instance, Comrade Frunze. In order to be a good gunner, and especially to be a skilful one, it is necessary to have attended an artillery academy, but in order to play a leading part in the formation of an army one need not have had any special education as a gunner, or any other sort – one just has to possess certain administrative and political qualities.

Questions of Military Theory

Report and Concluding Remarks

At the Conference of Military Delegates to the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party, April 1, 1922 [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

* * *

What Is The Problem?

First, a few words about the history of the problem before us. A critical and impatient movement in favour of a certain new military doctrine manifested itself even before the Party's Tenth Congress. The principal centre of this movement was the Ukraine. Comrades Frunze and Gusev formulated, more than a year ago, theses devoted to a unified military doctrine, and sought to get them adopted by the Congress. In my capacity as rapporteur on the Red Army I declared that these theses were, in my opinion, incorrect from the standpoint of theory and sterile from that of practice. Comrades Frunze and Gusev then withdrew their theses – which, of course, does not mean at all that they agreed with my arguments. Among those engaged in military work a certain grouping has continued to exist under the banner of 'the military doctrine of the proletariat'. You will all remember Comrade Solomin's article, certain speeches by Comrade Gusev, and so on. I felt obliged to abandon my position of watchful waiting inasmuch as the articles by Solomin and others might, if let pass any longer, sow the greatest confusion in the minds of the army's leading elements. There has been no answer as yet to my article *Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism*. Nevertheless, differences of opinion and prejudices on this question have not been out-lived, although there is no longer any room for doubt that the public opinion of the majority of the Party has become defined.

The task of the present discussion, which has begun on the initiative of Comrades Frunze and Voroshiov, is to elucidate this same question of military doctrine. An impulse from without was provided by the programmatic theses on the training and education of the Red Army which were defended by Comrade Frunze at the recent conference of the Ukrainian commanders. I must say bluntly at the very outset that these theses seem to me to be more dangerous and harmful than the articles by Comrade Gusev and others on the same subject. Comrade Solomin's article runs too obviously counter to the logic of things, to common sense and to our experience. It was obviously written in a moment of doctrinaire derangement. I very much regret that the author is not here and cannot defend his views in person. But his article is a political fact, and I am constrained to speak about it lest it continue to exercise harmful influence. As regards the Ukrainian theses, they are far more cautious, well combed and scrubbed, so that at first everything seems as it should be: furthermore – and here I must salute the skill in manoeuvring shown by the author of the theses – certain points are accompanied by a note in brackets: Trotsky, Trotsky, Trotsky ... They might almost seem to be quotations from articles by me. The terminology has also been renovated. The word 'doctrine' has been replaced by the expression 'unified military world-outlook' – which is, in my opinion, a hundred times worse. And here we pass from the history of the problem to its substance.

A unified military doctrine obviously presupposes that we have a unified industrial doctrine, a unified commercial doctrine, etc., so that from the sum-total of these doctrines may be formed a unified doctrine of Soviet activity. This is a pompous and affected terminology, but still bearable. If, however, we write: 'unified military world-outlook', that is very much stronger meat. It turns out that there is some sort of 'military' outlook on the world as a whole. Hitherto we had supposed that what we have is the Marxist world outlook. It turns out that we need to have a unified military world-outlook as well. No, comrades, get rid of that expression as quickly as possible!

When arguing against the term 'doctrine' I said that I would not fight over a word. But, in my opinion, the totality of views and attitudes covered by this term is very dangerous.

The Trade Of War And ... Marxism

Yes, indeed. The theses tell us that the unified military world-outlook is a totality of views which have been reduced to a system by means of *the Marxist method* of analysing social phenomena. This is what is said, word for word, in Point One: 'This education and training must be carried out on the basis of unified views, permeating the entire army, on the fundamental questions relating to the tasks of the Red Army, the foundations on which it is built and the methods of conducting combat operations. It is the totality of these views, reduced to a system by means of the Marxist method of analysing social phenomena, and inculcated in the Red Army through regulations, orders and instructions, that provides the army with the necessary unity of will and thought.' Are strategy, tactics, military technique and our army regulations included here? Are they included in this 'totality of views reduced to a system by means of the Marxist method'? Yes or no? This question must be answered. In my opinion they must be included. How could they not be? After all, the regulations – not in the sense of our pamphlets containing the regulations, but in the sense of the principles underlying them – must enter into this 'unified military world-outlook', mustn't they? For, if they are thrown out, nothing military is left. There will be merely a 'world-outlook'. What determines its *military* character is, precisely, the regulations which summarise military experience and determine our military procedures. But were our regulations created by Marxist methods? This is the first time I've heard that. The regulations summarise military experience. It may be that they are unsatisfactory, and we shall continue to rectify them on the basis of our military experience. But how are they to be unified by means of the Marxist method?

What is the Marxist method? It is a method of scientific thinking. It is the method of historical, social science. True, our journal is entitled **Voyennaya Nauka (Military Science)**. But it still contains many incongruities, and what is most incongruous is its title. There is not and never has been a military 'science'. There are a whole number of sciences on which the soldier's trade is based. Essentially, these include all the sciences, from geography to psychology. A great military commander must necessarily know the basic elements of many sciences – although there are, of course, self-taught army commanders who operate by feeling their way empirically, in doing which they are helped by an innate flair that they possess. War is based on many sciences, but war itself is not a science, it is a practical art, a skill. The Prussian strategist King Frederick II said that war is a trade for the ignorant, an art for the gifted and a science for the genius. But he lied. This is not

true. For an ignoramus war is not a trade, because ignorant soldiers are the cannon-fodder of war and not at all its 'tradesmen'. As is well known, every trade requires a certain schooling, and so, for those properly schooled in military affairs, war is a 'trade'. It is a cruel and bloody trade, but a trade nevertheless, that is, a skill to be properly mastered, with certain practices which have been worked out through experience. For people who are gifted, and for geniuses, this skill becomes transformed into a high art.

War cannot be turned into a science, because of its very nature, just as one cannot turn architecture, commerce or the work of a veterinary surgeon, and so on, into sciences. What people call the theory of war, or military science, is not a totality of scientific laws which explain objective phenomena, but a totality of practical procedures, methods of adaptation and knacks which correspond to a specific task, that of crushing the enemy. Whoever masters these procedures to a high degree and on a broad scale, and is able to obtain great results by the way he combines them, raises the soldier's trade to the level of a cruel and bloody *art*. But there are no grounds for talking of science here. Our regulations are just a compilation of such practical rules, derived from experience.

In the Quagmire of Scholasticism and Utopia

Marxism, however, is a method of science, that is, of the cognition of objective phenomena in their objective connections. How can one construct the procedures of the military trade or art by means of the Marxist method? This is like trying to construct by means of Marxism a theory of architecture or a manual of veterinary medicine. A history of war, like a history of architecture, can be written from the Marxist standpoint, because history is a science. But the so-called theory of war, that is, 'practical leadership, is something else. These things must not be confused, or what one will get is not unity of world-outlook but a very big muddle.

Socio-political and international orientation is greatly facilitated by using the Marxist method. That is beyond question. Only with the aid of Marxism can one analyse the world situation, especially in the present exceptional epoch.

But one cannot construct field service regulations by means of Marxism. The mistake here lies in interpreting military doctrine or, even worse, 'unified military world-outlook', so as to include in it our general orientation as a state, in international and domestic affairs, along with practical military procedures and the rules and precepts set out in the regulations – and wanting to reconstruct all this from scratch, so to speak, by means of the Marxist method. But our state orientation was constructed long ago, and is still being constructed, by means of the Marxist method, and there is no need at all to construct it afresh within the womb of the War Department. As regards purely military methods, as they are laid down in our regulations, it is hardly expedient to apply the Marxist method here. It is, of course, necessary to introduce the maximum degree of unity into the regulations, checking them against experience, but it is merely ridiculous to talk about a unified military world-outlook in this connection.

These are the first and second points in Comrade Frunze's theses.

I now come to Point Three: 'The elaboration of this unified world-outlook of the workers' and peasants' army was begun already with the first steps of its existence.' This looks like a polemic against Comrade Gusev, who has given us to understand

that we never had and still haven't any principles of construction. 'In the course of further practical work were crystallised and defined all the basic elements of the military system of the proletarian state, which are derived from its specific class nature.' This goes too far. It appears that our military system is derived entirely from the specific class nature of the proletarian state. This nature has to be defined, then a unified military doctrine has to be deduced from it, and from the military doctrine one obtains all the necessary partial, practical conclusions. This method is scholastic and hopeless. The class nature of the proletarian state determines the social composition of the Red Army and, in particular, of its leading apparatus, and it determines the army's political world-outlook, aims and attitudes. Naturally, all this has a certain indirect influence on both strategy and tactics, yet strategy and tactics are derived not from the proletarian world-outlook but from conditions of technique, especially military technique, from the possibilities for obtaining supplies, from the geographical milieu, from the nature of the enemy, and so on.

Do we possess a unified industrial or a unified commercial world-outlook? Is it possible for us to deduce from 'the specific nature of the proletarian state' the best textbook of foreign trade or the best method of administrative or commercial organisation for our trusts? Any attempt to do this would be ludicrous and hopeless. To suppose that by arming oneself with the Marxist method it is possible to solve the problem of how best to organise production in a candle factory is to understand nothing either about Marxism or about a candle factory. And yet a regiment, looked at from the standpoint of its own specific tasks, is a factory which has to be organised properly, that is, in accordance with its purpose. I affirm that attempting to derive from the system of the proletarian state, by means of education, that is, logically, the organisation, establishment and tactical procedures of an infantry or cavalry regiment is an absolutely utopian and useless task. The authors of the theses being criticised feel this, too, for they waver between the 'unified proletarian doctrine' and the French field service regulations of 1921. But we shall see this later on.

No Abstractions – Only What Is Concrete!

The premises for the existence of an army are, of course, wholly political in character. The state must have an answer to the question: what kind of an army are we preparing, and for what purpose? But, since our army is a revolutionary and conscious one, it too must have a clear and correct answer to the question. Point Four of the Ukrainian theses aims to provide this. I regard it as one of the politically most dangerous passages. Here it is said: 'The fact that there is a profound contradiction in principle between the system of proletarian statehood, on the one hand, and the surrounding bourgeois-capitalist world, on the other, makes inevitable both clashes and conflict between these two antagonistic worlds. Accordingly the task of political education in the Red Army is to support and strengthen its constant readiness to engage in struggle against world capital. This combative mood must be consolidated by means of planned political work, carried out on the basis of proletarian class ideology in forms that are lively and comprehensible to all.'

Here the approach to the question is deliberately not political but abstract, wrong and dangerous in its essence. The conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is going on all over the world. In the course of this conflict either our country will be attacked or we shall ourselves attack. The army must be held in

readiness, educated on the basis of proletarian class ideology – ‘in forms that are lively and comprehensible to all.’ Why, yes, this is the most abstract Communist doctrinairism, to which we all objected at the last session, when we talked about military propaganda! Here is a splendid programme: in the first half-year turn one quarter of the peasant Red Army men into Communists, in the second half-year add another quarter, then another quarter after that, and in this way, that is, through propaganda in the barracks, alter the correlation of classes in our country and create an army whose political consciousness would have the international class ideology of the proletariat as its driving force. But you know this is a radically false, deliberately utopian approach.

Yesterday we all seemed to be saying: don’t forget that our army consists, in its overwhelming majority, of young peasants. It is a bloc between the working-class minority which leads and the peasant majority which is led by it. The basis of the bloc is the need to *defend* the Soviet Republic. This has to be defended because it is being attacked by the bourgeoisie and the landlords – foes both domestic and foreign.

The entire strength of the bloc of workers and peasants rests on conscious awareness of this fact. Naturally, we reserve the programmatic right to strike blows at the class enemy on our own initiative. But our revolutionary right is one thing and the reality of today’s situation and tomorrow’s prospects are something else. To some this may seem a distinction of secondary importance, but I affirm that the life and death of our army depends on it. Whoever does not understand this understands nothing about our epoch, and, in particular, does not understand what the NEP is. It is as if we were to say that, on the basis of proletarian ideology, ‘in forms that are lively and comprehensible to all,’ the entire people must be educated in the spirit of the socialist organisation of the economy. Easily said! But, in that case, what need we have for the New Economic Policy, with its decentralisation, its market, and so forth? This, it will be said, is a concession to the *muzhik*. That is just what it is. If we had not made this concession, the Soviet Republic would have been overthrown. How many years will this phase of the economy last? We don’t know – two years, three, five or ten: until the revolution comes in Europe. How do you want to get round this with your ‘military world-outlook’? You want the peasant to be ready at any moment, on the basis of the proletarian doctrine, to go to war on the international fronts for the cause of the working class. It is our plain duty to educate the Communists and the advanced workers in this spirit. But to suppose that one can build an army on this basis, as the armed bloc of the workers and the peasants, is to be a doctrinaire and a political metaphysician, because the peasants are imbued with the idea of the need for the Red Army to exist only in so far as they have grasped that, despite or profound striving for peace and the very big concessions we have made, enemies continue to threaten our existence.

Naturally, the situation may change: great events in Europe may create quite different conditions for a military initiative on our part. This is in complete harmony with our programme. But, after all, you are not writing a programme. We have to devise methods of educational work for the present day, not for eternity. And here the basic, decisive slogan, which corresponds to the entire situation and to our entire policy is *defence*. *In the epoch when the army is being very extensively demobilised, when it is being constantly reduced, in the epoch of the NEP, in the epoch of preparatory, organisational and educational work in the proletarian movement in Europe, after the retreat that has been executed, in the epoch of the united front of the working class, that is, at the time when joint practical actions with the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals are being attempted, it is*

ludicrous and absurd to say to the army: 'It may be that the bourgeoisie will attack us tomorrow, but it may be that tomorrow we shall attack the bourgeoisie.' To do this means misrepresenting the prospects, obscuring in the minds of the Red Army men the educational significance of our international conciliatoriness, and paralysing the enormous educational, revolutionary power of this conciliatoriness, which will manifest itself if, in spite of everything, we are attacked.

The 'Concession' to the Peasant Red Army Man

It might have seemed that all these considerations had been clarified by us, both in our Party and on the international scale: the Third International Congress and the recent conference were to a very large extent devoted to these questions. But no sooner do we set ourselves the aim of creating some sort of unified military world-outlook than, at once, all the established political premises for our domestic and international activity fly into fragments, and we take naked abstractions as our starting point: 'the international class struggle, we are being attacked, we shall attack, and so on, we must be prepared to take the offensive!' One cannot with impunity carry out an experiment of this sort on the consciousness of the Red Army masses. They want to know, and have the right to know, along with all the working people of our country: what kind of army are we preparing, and for what purpose? Not for the year 1930, but for today. Why are we keeping the 1899 age-group with the colours, and for how long? Our answers to these questions will be clear and convincing only if we ourselves refrain from starting to get in a muddle.

But Point Five deepens the doctrinaire error. Here it is stated flatly that 'the army will henceforth perform its combat assignment under conditions of revolutionary war, either defending itself against attack by imperialism or advancing together with the working people of other countries in joint struggle.' These two eventualities are presented as though equally valid for the present moment: either this will happen, or that. Well, how would you tell a Saratov peasant: 'Either we shall lead you to Belgium to overthrow the bourgeoisie there, or you will defend Saratov province against an Anglo-French expeditionary force landed at Odessa or Archangel?' Could you bring yourself to pose the question like that? Never! Any one of you, addressing a regiment, or a meeting of workers and peasants, would invariably stick close to reality and say: we agree, on certain conditions, to pay the Tsarist debts, because we want to avoid war; but our enemies' machinations are very powerful, and we are still obliged to keep the 1899 age-group in the army for the time being ... The more factually, the more concretely we put before our audience the difficulties of our international position, the magnitude of the concessions we have made, the more clearly will they be able to grasp the need to preserve the Red Army and, at the same time, the more will what we say correspond to the truth of today. But if we put forward the 'doctrine' – either they will attack us or we shall attack them – then we shall only confuse our commissars, political workers and commanders, for we shall be giving them a false picture of reality, and imparting a false tone to our whole agitation. With such abstract talk we shall never reach the *muzhik's* heart. This is the surest way to confound our military propaganda and political agitation.

An Attempt On The Life Of Philosophy

Point Six of the theses. Here we pass from politics to strategy, that is, into the sphere of purely military questions. As you know, these theses were formulated by

Comrade Frunze. To avoid any misunderstanding, I must say that I regard Comrade Frunze as one of the most talented of our military workers and I would never undertake myself the practical strategical work with which I would entrust him. But the question before us today is not Comrade Frunze's work as an outstanding military leader, but his attempt to create a military philosophy. The late Plekhanov, who, towards the end of his life, committed many sins in politics, was, as is well-known, particularly exacting where questions of philosophy were concerned. He used to say that a Marxist has the right not to concern himself with philosophy; but, if you, so-and-so, do take it up, and even do this out loud, then don't muddle things. This was his favourite precept. If he caught someone committing deviations in philosophy he would attack like a wolfhound. Sometimes people said to him: 'Georgi Valentinovich, why are you attacking the man so savagely? Perhaps he hasn't had the time to study philosophy.' And Plekhanov would reply: 'Then let him hold his peace and not spout his own concoctions, because the most harmful political consequences can result from that.' Plekhanov caught Peter Struve out in philosophical muddling long before Struve began to stray from Marxism politically.

What we have before us here is not philosophy in the true sense of the word, but an attempt at military philosophy. We are under no compulsion whatsoever to engage in such studies at present. We possess a general orientation. In military matters it is possible to be an empiricist, correcting and improving on the basis of experience. In the sphere of military organisation I have allowed myself to be an empiricist, and would have had nothing to say if Comrade Frunze has remained an empiricist in the sphere of strategy. But he has made generalisations, has gone over into the sphere of the philosophy of strategy, and, in my opinion, he has made a mess of it. He himself has strong roots in strategy, but he may cause others to go astray.

Here is how Point Six reads: 'Up to now our revolution has had to conduct its struggle by employing the same basic methods of military tactics and strategy as are practised in the armies of the bourgeois countries.' Please take note of that. Now let us hear how he goes on: 'But the change in the character and manpower of the Red Army caused by the revolution, which has assigned the leading role in the army to the proletarian elements, has found reflection in the way that the general procedures of tactics and strategy are applied.' This is expressed very ponderously and vaguely. But let us read further.

In Point Seven it is said: 'Our civil war was predominantly a war of manoeuvre. This resulted not only from purely objective conditions (the vastness of the theatre of operations, the comparative size of the forces engaged, and so on) but also from *the internal qualities of the Red Army, its revolutionary spirit, its militant élan, as the manifestation of the class nature of the proletarian elements which play the leading role in it.*' We had just been told that, up to now, we based ourselves on 'bourgeois' strategy, yet here it is said that our civil war bore the character of a war of manoeuvre owing to the class nature of the proletariat. This discrepancy is not accidental. To say that the manoeuvring character of the war was determined not only by material conditions (vastness of territory and low density of forces) but also by the 'internal' qualities of the Red Army as such is to make an assertion that is false from beginning to end. Nothing supports it, no basis can be found for it, and it reeks of *braggadocio*.

The Characteristic Features of Our Capacity for Manoeuvring

We must begin by analysing our capacity for manoeuvring. It developed first among our enemies, not among us. That, after all, is an historical fact: our enemies taught us how to manoeuvre. I have already shown this in my article on military doctrine. Enthusiasm for manoeuvring began especially with raids, and, again, it was the Whites who initiated these, and they carried them out, at first, better than we did. They taught us how to manoeuvre. That, first of all: nobody can deny it. It resulted from the fact that their troops were more highly skilled than ours, and had a larger cadre of officers than we had. At the start they had more cavalry (the Cossacks!). Consequently, they were better adapted to manoeuvring. At the same time they had fewer of the peasant masses with them, and what they did have were, for political reasons, much less reliable than what we had. This made manoeuvring necessary for them. They tried to make up in speed (mobility) what they lacked in mass. We learned from them. This is an indubitable fact. So that, if you say that capacity for manoeuvre is derived from the revolutionary nature of the proletariat, how do you account for the strategy of the Whites? The falsity of your contention is flagrant!

There is one thing that can be said: manoeuvring, in the true sense, is beyond the capacity of the peasantry, in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements alike, because, when the peasantry are left to their own devices, the truly peasant form of warfare is guerrilla warfare (just as in religion, the peasantry cannot get beyond the sect: they cannot create a church). The peasantry are incapable of creating a state with their own forces: we saw a particularly striking example of that in the Makhno movement in the Ukraine. In order that the peasantry may be raised to the level of a state and an army, they need to have somebody else's hand over them. In the case of the Whites it was the nobles, the landlords and the bourgeois officers, who had learnt something from the landlord officers. They took the peasants by the throat, placed over them a centralised apparatus of coercion, saturated with officers, and – set about manoeuvring. In our case the directing role was played by the workers, who recruited the peasants, organised them and led them forward. In so far as capacity for manoeuvring (not guerrilla warfare!) presupposed a centralised military organisation in the civil war, this was a property of both camps. Do not tell us that capacity for manoeuvring results from the revolutionary qualities of the proletariat. That is false. It results from the size of the country, the numbers of the forces engaged, the objective tasks confronting an army as such, but not in the least from the revolutionary nature of the proletariat.

And what were the characteristic features of our manoeuvring, in the past? Its basic feature, alas, was formlessness.

We have good grounds, comrades, for being proud of our past, but we have no right to idealise it uncritically. We have to learn and to progress. And for that it is necessary to assess critically, and not to sing hymns of praise.

Not 'Doctrine', Cadres!

We have made hardly any critical analysis or evaluation of manoeuvring in the civil war, and yet without this we shall not progress. There were excellent individual plans, there were operations that were brilliant as regards manoeuvring and which won us many victories, but, on the whole, our strategical line was characterised by formlessness. We attacked impetuously and resolutely, we manoeuvred audaciously, but often our manoeuvre resulted in our having to recoil for a distance

of hundreds of versts. To explain this by the revolutionary character of the proletariat, its militant spirit, and so on, means to run one's thinking up a gumtree. The revolutionary character of the advanced workers and conscious peasants finds expression in their abnegation and their heroism – during all kinds of operations, under any kind of strategy. The instability and formlessness of our manoeuvring strategy, however, were due to the fact that our militant *élan* was, more often than not, insufficiently organised: we lacked real, serious cadres. This is where the key to the question lies: our junior commanders were too weak, and those at the intermediate level were inadequately trained. That is why plans that were sometimes excellent broke down and crumbled away in the process of execution, resulting in gigantic leaps backward. On almost all fronts we had to fight the war twice, and in some cases three times over. Why? Because of the inadequacy, both quantitative and qualitative, of our cadres.

War is always an equation with many unknowns. It cannot be otherwise. If all the factors in a war were known in advance, there would be no war: foreseeing what the result would be, one side would simply surrender to the other without a fight. But the task of the military art consists in reducing to a minimum the quantity of unknowns in the equation of war, and this can be accomplished only by ensuring the maximum conformity between a plan and its execution. What does this mean? It means having such units, and such commanders for these units, as will attain the goal by overcoming the obstacles of space and time through combination of methods. In other words, it is necessary to have a command apparatus which is stable and at the same time flexible, centralised and at the same time elastic, which has mastered all the necessary practices and is capable of passing them on to those below. Good cadres are needed. This problem cannot be solved by singing paeans to the revolutionary capacity for manoeuvring. There has been no lack of that, and still less have we experienced, or are we experiencing, any lack of idealisation of manoeuvring. It can be said that if our commanders ailed from anything towards the end of the civil war, it was precisely from an excess of manoeuvring. There was a sort of *addiction to manoeuvring*. All the talk was of manoeuvring. They were just crazy about raids. But what do we actually lack? Stability in the manoeuvre itself, stability that can be secured only by a good body of commanders in a manoeuvring army. It is to this that all our attention must be shifted in the training period that lies ahead. Schematic idealisation of the capacity to manoeuvre, which allegedly results from the class nature of the proletariat, will not lead us forward but will hold us up and even drag us back.

The Danger of the Abstraction of 'Civil War in General'

The idea of Point Eight, as it is expressed here, contains a danger not only, and not even so much, for us as for the revolutionary parties of other countries. We must not forget that others are now learning from us: and when we engage in revolutionary, including revolutionary-military generalisations, we need to bear in mind not only Moscow and Kharkov – we must also look to the West, so as not to sow misunderstandings there. Point Eight of the theses says: 'The conditions of future revolutionary wars will present a number of peculiarities which will bring these wars closer to the civil-war type. In connection with this fact, these wars will undoubtedly be wars of manoeuvre. Therefore, our commanders must be educated predominantly in the ideas of manoeuvring and mobility, and the entire Red Army must be prepared and trained in the art of carrying out march-manoevres rapidly and in a planned way.'

By revolutionary wars are here to be understood the wars of a workers' state against a bourgeois state, in contrast to purely civil wars, that is, wars between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of one and the same state. Point Eight expresses the idea that future revolutionary wars will approximate in type to civil wars and for this reason will be wars of manoeuvre. But what civil war is being referred to here? Ours, evidently, which took place under the specific conditions of our boundless expanses, low density of population and poor means of communication. But the trouble is that these theses posit some abstract type of civil war, taking as their starting-point the idea that manoeuvring results from the class nature of the proletariat, and not from the relation between the theatre of war and the density of the troops involved. And yet, after all, we do know of one other, fairly large-scale example of civil war besides our own – in France, the Paris Commune! In that case the immediate task consisted in defending a fortified *place d'armes*, Paris, from which alone a subsequent offensive could have been launched. What was the Commune, from the military standpoint? It was the defence of the fortified area of Paris. This defence could and should have been active and resilient; but at all costs Paris had to be defended. To sacrifice Paris for the sake of a manoeuvre would have meant cutting down the revolution at its root. The Communards were unable to defend Paris: the counter-revolution conquered it and slaughtered tens of thousands of workers. How then can I, proceeding from experience on the steppes of the Don, the Kuban and Siberia, tell the Parisian worker: manoeuvring results from your class nature. You know, a hastily-made generalisation of this sort is no joking matter!

In highly-developed industrial countries, densely inhabited, with huge centres of population, and with White-Guard cadres prepared in advance, civil war may assume – and in many cases will undoubtedly assume – a far less mobile and far more compact character; that is, it may approximate to positional warfare. There can, generally speaking, be no question of any absolute positionalism, especially in civil war. What we are concerned with here is the correlation of the element of war of manoeuvre and the element of positional warfare. And it is possible to say with certainty that, even in our ultra-manoevring strategy in the civil war, an element of positional warfare was present, and in certain instances played an important role. There is no room for any doubt that, *in civil war in the West, the element of positional warfare will occupy an incomparably bigger place than it did in our civil war*. Let anyone try to deny that. In civil war in the West the proletariat, owing to its numbers, will play a bigger and more decisive role than it played in our country. From this alone it is clear how wrong it is to link manoeuvring with the class nature of the proletariat. Hungary, in its Soviet period, lacked sufficient territory to be able to create an army while retreating and manoeuvring: for this reason the revolution had to yield to its enemies. [Voroshilov: 'They can manoeuvre in a different way.'] It is, of course, a splendid notion that one can manoeuvre 'in a different way', that is, by including manoeuvre within the framework of the defence of a particular *place d'armes*. But, in such a case, positional warfare will already govern whatever manoeuvring is done. From time to time manoeuvring will play an auxiliary role in the defence of a particular area which is the proletarian focus of the civil war itself. When, however, we speak of a strategy of manoeuvre in civil war, what we have in mind is the Russian example, in which we gave up huge expanses of territory and towns in order to preserve our manpower and prepare to strike a blow at the enemy's manpower. During the commune the situation in France was such that the loss of Paris meant the doom of the revolution. In Soviet Hungary the arena of conflict, though larger, was still very restricted. But even our area for manoeuvring is now unlimited. We deceive ourselves when frequently we forget that the counter-

revolution moved up on us from the borderlands, where there were no really viable foci of revolution. Hence the wild sweep of operations, and the monstrous retreats which could take place without mortal danger or mortal consequences for the Soviet Republic. As the Whites drew nearer to Petrograd, on the one hand, and to Tula, on the other, our *place d'armes* acquired absolutely vital importance for us. We could not surrender Petrograd, or Tula, or Moscow, so as later to 'manoeuvre' on the Volga or in Northern Caucasia. Of course, even defence of the Moscow *place d'armes* (had our enemies in 1919 developed their success further) would not necessarily have brought us to the immobility of trench warfare. But the need to hang on to territory and defend every square *verst* would have confronted us far more imperiously. And this means that the element of positional warfare would have grown enormously at the expense of the element of manoeuvre.

Point Ten of the theses recognises positional warfare – but then adds at once, in holy alarm, that it would be extremely dangerous for us to develop 'enthusiasm for positional methods as the basic form of struggle'. Why is that said? Where have our comrades discovered a danger that we may become carried away by enthusiasm for positional warfare? There is addiction among us, but it is addiction to manoeuvring, and not at all to positional warfare ... Do they perhaps have in mind our military engineering department, which has recently been building too many fortresses? If not, I cannot see the point of this proviso.

The Proletarian Strategy Of Marshal Foch?

Point Eleven reads: 'The tactics of the Red Army have been and will continue to be permeated with activism, in the spirit of bold and vigorously executed offensive operations. This results from the class nature of the workers' and peasants' army (again!) and at the same time coincides with the requirements of the military art.' It 'coincides'! How well that is put! Manoeuvring, which results from the class nature of the proletariat, happens to coincide exactly with the requirements of the military art, which was created by other classes! '*All other conditions being equal*, attack is always more advantageous than defence.' If all other conditions are equal, this is correct: there is no gainsaying it. But that's not all. Further on we read: 'Because the one who attacks first makes an impression on his adversary by showing that his is the superior will' (**French Field Service Regulations of 1921**). There, you see: strategy must be offensive because, first, this results from the class nature of the proletariat, and because, secondly, it coincides with the French field service regulations of 1921. [*Laughter. Voroshilov: 'There's nothing funny in that.'*] But there is. It reminds me a little, esteemed Comrade Voroshilov, of those Würtemmberg democrats of 1848 who said: we want a republic, but with our good Duke at its head ... So, too, here: we want a truly proletarian strategy, but one that has been approved by Marshal Foch. It will be more reliable that way. A republic, but one headed by a duke: that is certainly the best sort! [*Laughter*] There is nothing funny here, of course, according to Comrade Voroshilov – but the sooner you delete it, the better it will be for the theoretical dignity of our army.

And, besides, it is essentially false. In the first place, this thesis – by Foch or somebody else, I don't know who edited the new French field regulations – is now being subjected to very severe bombardment precisely in French military literature. The offensive is, of course, superior to the defensive. No offensive, no victory. But to say that he who attacks first makes an impression on his adversary means falling into a formalism of the offensive. No offensive, no victory. The offensive is, in the

last analysis, superior to the defensive. But one does not invariably have to be the first to attack: an offensive should be launched when the situation calls for it.

A small book has recently appeared, by a French writer who signs it with the initials 'X.Y.', under the title: **On the Principles of the Military Art.** [3] German military writers declare this book to be the most notable military work produced in France since the war. The author comes out resolutely against the thesis quoted by Comrade Frunze from the new French field service regulations. He adduces as an example the attempt made by the French to be the 'first' to attack in 1914, in the Lorraine theatre where the Germans in their fortified positions, calmly awaited the enemy onset. In this case the moral advantage was wholly on the side of a calculated and well-prepared defence, which was an outright trap for the attacker. During the final period of the war the Germans assumed the initiative, in their summer offensive of 1918. The Anglo-French army, after resisting the offensive and exhausting the enemy, went over in their turn from elastic defence to counter-offensive, and this proved fatal to Hohenzollern's army. No offensive, no victory. But victory is gained by the one who attacks when it is necessary to attack, and not by the one who attacks first.

If We Think Concretely ...

But isn't it time to stop talking about 'the offensive in general'? Many people mentally detach from the operations of the civil war some one segment, in which we attacked successfully and victoriously, and, proceeding from this experience, draw for themselves, from this model, a picture of our future offensives. It is necessary to learn to think more concretely. The states which may drag us into war are known to us. Consequently, the potential theatre of war is open to scrutiny. War begins with mobilisation, concentration, deployment of forces. In our strategical forecasts we must therefore start with the preparatory operations – in the first place, with mobilisation. Who, then, will begin to attack first? Obviously, the opponent who has assembled forces sufficient to do this. Does mobilisation give us the necessary advantage? Unfortunately, no. Enjoying the technical assistance of the imperialist countries, our potential adversaries may possess a certain advantage, technically – not only as regards military technique but also in transport. This will give them, consequently, the advantage in mobilisation. What conclusion follows from this? That our strategical plan – not an abstract one, but a plan worked out for a concrete situation and concrete conditions – must have in view, for the initial period of the war, not attack but defence. Its aim must be to gain time for mobilisation to get under way. We shall, therefore, deliberately leave it to our enemy to attack first, without considering at all that he will thereby gain some 'moral' preponderance over us. On the contrary, having space and numbers on our side, we shall calmly and confidently mark the line at which mobilisation, protected by our elastic defence, will gather striking-power sufficient for us to go over to the counter-offensive.

The formulation of the French field service regulations is obviously incorrect. It speaks of the need to be the first to attack, evidently from the standpoint of the need to gain tempo. Tempo is undoubtedly important in the bloody game of war.

Chess-players know how important tempo is, on a field of 64 squares. But only a venturesome young player believes that tempo is gained by the one who is the first to give check. On the contrary, this is often a sure way to lose tempo. If I am the

first to take the offensive, but my attack is not sufficiently sustained by mobilisation, and I am compelled to retreat, thereby disrupting my own mobilisation, then, of course, I shall have lost tempo, perhaps irretrievably. If, on the contrary, my plan envisages a preliminary retreat, and if this plan is clearly understood by senior commanders, who are confident in what the morrow will bring, and if this confidence is conveyed downward without foundering on the prejudice that one ought invariably to be the first to attack – then I have every chance of regaining tempo, and winning.

Point Fourteen, which says it is urgent that we review our regulations, propositions and instructions, in the light of the experience of the civil war, is absolutely correct. But we said this three years ago, and sealed it by a decision of the congress: the corresponding orders were issued, and institutions set up to review the regulations. Unfortunately, the work is proceeding rather slowly. It must be speeded up. But to inform us, under the guise of a new 'military doctrine', that we must review our regulations, when the corresponding institutions for this purpose have long since been established is needlessly to smash one's way through doors that have long been open.

The practical conclusions at the end of the theses are, by and large, correct. But they do not follow at all from the premises, and, in addition, they are inadequate: nor do they specify the central task, which is to ensure the army's stability and skill through educating the junior commanders. We need section commanders! No matter what strategy may be imposed upon us by the development of events – a strategy of manoeuvre, a strategy of position, or a strategy combining both elements – the basic factor in operations remains the military unit, and its basic cell is the section, headed by the section commander. This is the brick from which, if it be well fired, an edifice can be built.

Antiquity in 'Novelty'

After reading through Comrade Frunze's theses, I reread Suvorov's **Science of Victory**. The word 'science' in the title is, of course, incorrect: but Suvorov understood it simplistically, that is, in the sense of something that has to be learnt. It was precisely in that sense that, when a soldier was made to run the gauntlet he was admonished: 'here's science for you'. Under Suvorov's dictation Lieutenant-General Prévost de Lumian wrote down seven laws of war. Here they are.

1. Act no other way than offensively.
2. On the march – speed: in the attack – impetuosity, cold steel.
3. Not methodism but a true soldierly outlook is needed.
4. All power to the commander-in-chief.
5. The enemy must be attacked and beaten in the field: so don't stay sitting in fortified areas, but get in among the enemy.
6. Don't waste time on sieges. A direct assault is best of all.
7. Never scatter your forces to occupy points. The enemy has outflanked you – so much the better: he is himself heading towards defeat.

What is this if not the proletarian doctrine? Exactly the strategy 'resulting from the class nature of the proletariat' and from civil war – only put a bit shorter and better! ... Suvorov was, of course, for the offensive. But he also said: not methodism but a true soldierly outlook ... Still, Suvorov, after all, led into battle an army of serfs commanded by officers from the nobility. It thus turns out that the principles of the

'proletarian doctrine of the offensive' coincide not only with the field service regulations of bourgeois-imperialist France but also with the military 'science' of Suvorov's Russia of nobles and serfs!

From this it does not at all follow that 'the laws of war are eternal' as some pedants say. What we have here are not laws, in the scientific sense, but practical procedures. Certain very simple generalisations (such as, for example, the advice: 'When you attack, attack impetuously') apply to all forms of struggle between living creatures. *Coup d'oeil*, speed and aggressiveness are needed not only during clashes between two organised and armed forces but also in a fist-fight between two small boys, and even when a hound chases a hare. But if Suvorov's seven commandments are not eternal laws of war, still less can they be passed off as the most up-to-date principles of proletarian strategy.

Is there a difference between the Red Army and Suvorov's army? There is. An enormous one. Incalculable. There you had an army of serfs, an ignorant army. Here you have a revolutionary army, whose consciousness is growing. The aims are diametrically opposite. We are subverting everything that Suvorov defended. But this difference is not one of military doctrine but of class political world-outlook. In this little book of his, in his aphorisms, Suvorov also expounds a social world outlook. Without it, Suvorov would not have been a commander of armies. His entire psychological skill consisted in getting the most out of the instrument constituted by the serf soldier. In his social doctrine Suvorov based himself on two poles: running the gauntlet and 'God with us'. In their place we have the Communist programme and the Soviet constitution.

Here we have made a certain step forward. And not a small one. On this score the Kharkov theses can hardly offer us anything new. And, indeed, we feel no need to renovate our social world-outlook. Where questions of strategy are concerned 'there, as we have seen, it all comes down to this, that those who began by promising a new proletarian doctrine ended by copying out Suvorov's rules, and even then made mistakes.

Doctrine, Outlook, Monistic View

First of all we must occupy the positions which have been abandoned by the opponent in his 'manoeuvrings' retreat. That is the first task ...

Comrade Frunze admits that there are some inexactitudes, unclarities, discrepancies in his formulations. If it were a question of a draft for an article, such defects would, of course, be quite natural. But when it is being said: 'You have no doctrine, but I have one', as Comrade Frunze puts (or put) it, this is something of a quite different order. After all, at the Tenth Party Congress Comrades Frunze and Gusev took me very severely to task for lacking interest in the question of military doctrine wherein, according to them, lay the whole heart of the matter. At that time they thumped my head lightly with a volume of Engels (without sufficient grounds – but I leave that for another occasion). What was to be done? Engels wrote as a theoretician of military affairs, whereas we still fight empirically. Well, show us your 'doctrine', comrade critics. But do so with care. One can fight with an oven-fork, if no other weapon is available, but one can't write theory with an oven-fork – different instruments are needed. But, after all, is anybody forcing us to rush ahead with this matter? There's no hurry. True, Comrade Frunze hints very delicately that after the Russo-Japanese War, by order of the Tsar, all discussion of military

doctrine had to cease and the regulations had to be studied. One seems to see here a not very agreeable analogy: Comrade Frunze proposes to take up the question of doctrine, but I 'order' that perverse discussions cease and study of the regulations be undertaken.

But in reality this comparison is very arbitrary, and its barb turns against Comrade Frunze. For what was the task and purpose of those Russian officers who, after the Russo-Japanese War, began talking about military doctrine? They were the critical element in the army. They were dissatisfied with its structure and wanted changes made. This was the progressive section of the officers, the ones who later united around Guchkov and Milyukov, and whom the Black Hundreds called the 'Young Turks'. Thus, for them, the banner of military doctrine was the banner of criticism of the past and a programme of army reform. They wanted to Europeanise our army, so far as possible, and even sought support for that in the State Duma. They were ordered to shut up, not to criticise, not to undermine autocratic Asiaticism. But how do matters stand with us? What does Comrade Frunze's doctrine consist of? It consists of an uncritical idealisation of the past. Our heralds of doctrine seek to deduce from the class nature of the proletariat, and to perpetuate, that which was characteristic of a certain period of the war. What did Comrade Frunze accuse me of in his speech? Of not being under the spell of the past. He regards idealisation of the past as a necessary element in the army's moral education. But this was precisely the standpoint of those who inspired Nicholas to issue his imperial command – to cease discussing doctrine, so as not to undermine the spell of the past. But we say to you: please don't threaten to smother the enemy with your caps, even though they are revolutionary ones, but let us begin to learn from the enemy the ABC of military affairs. This is where the basic disagreement lies, and this is what Comrade Frunze does not want to grasp.

Comrade Minin, on the other hand, has enriched us with a new term. If we reject the unified military doctrine, and if comrade Frunze is ready to reject also the military world-outlook, then Comrade Minin will offer us a 'monistic view' of military affairs. That has a proud ring: a monistic view – that's no worse than your military doctrine. But what is meant by this? That unity of views, procedures and methods is needed, in the framework of the army? Well, of course. There is no need to waste words in order to prove that an army is incompatible with an order, or disorder, in which one pulls this way and the other pulls that way. Are we agreed, then? Unity of methods is necessary, let's call this unity 'doctrine' – and that's it! comrade Kashirin made such a proposal, more or less: the state must define its views on war in the form of single doctrine. So, then, the entire dispute is just about words? No, indeed. The essence of the dispute lies deeper, in confusion between concepts. What do you mean, in the last analysis, by military doctrine? Do you mean the answer to the question of *what* we fight for, or to the question of *how* we fight, or, finally, to both of these questions together? [*Kashirin: 'To both questions'*]. That's just it: you need a military doctrine in the sense of some sort of answer concerning 'the meaning and aims of war'. Here you are wholly captives of the bourgeois state. Because the bourgeois state waged and wages wars for plunder and oppression, it has been compelled to motivate the real aims of war by a special, ceremonial 'national military doctrine'. The purpose of this doctrine is to deceive the masses, to hypnotise and blind them.

Captives of Bourgeois Ideology

The British doctrine is: the civilising role of the Anglo-Saxons throughout the world, and especially in the colonies. The highest interests of culture require that Britain should rule the waves, and so the British navy must be stronger than the two next strongest navies taken together. Behind this military doctrine lurk the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Is there any need for us to create a special doctrine to explain what we have to fight for, and why? Not the slightest. We have the Communist programme, we have the Soviet constitution we have the agrarian law – there's your answer. What more do you need? Is there any other country whose answer is anywhere near as powerful as the answer given by our revolution? Our revolution destroyed the ruling, possessing classes, handed over power to the working people, and said: defend this power, defend yourselves – those are your war aims.

You demand that the army set itself a goal in the form of some sort of doctrine, yet the revolution has created an army out of us for its own needs, and has ordered us: study military affairs as they should be studied, and fight as it is necessary to fight. And we did fight for more than three years. Then, when things got a bit easier, we asked ourselves a serious question: where are we to find a doctrine which would explain to us *for what* we are to fight? Yes, indeed, what absurd pedantry this is! There is a second question: *how* are we to fight. We are told here that we need unity of method. Well, of course: and why else did we combat guerrilla-ism, localism and homemade notions? Why else did we set up a centralised apparatus, headed by the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic? Why did we compose regulations and instructions and establish tribunals? How many times it was necessary for us (including me personally) to explain and to prove that a unity of poor methods was better than a diversity even of the very best! I had to prove this in the struggle against guerrilla-ism in Tsaritsyn, too, in the home town of Comrade Minin, *who now objects to one person pulling one way while another pulls a different way*. In those days, some of those who now support military doctrine used to declare that they would, at the front, carry out good orders, but would refuse to carry out those orders that they considered incorrect. In those days it was necessary to deal sternly with separatist-minded commanders of divisions and brigades, who had emerged from a guerrilla milieu and did not want to understand the importance of unity of organisation and importance of unity of method. All our efforts throughout the whole period of the Red Army's existence amounted to ensuring the maximum degree of planning, the highest unity, the closest co-ordination. This, after all, was the purpose which was served, and continues to be served, by all our regulations, establishments, decisions, orders, circulars, instructions, commissions of inspection and tribunals. And today a considerable part of the interchange that goes on between the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic, on the one hand, and the military districts and fronts on the other, is concerned with *struggle against their deviations from the establishments and norms laid down by the centre*. Naturally, our regulations and establishments are not absolute. We shall review them in the light of our experience. By reviewing and improving our methods we maintain their unity. By shifting the question on to the plane of elementary discussions about the usefulness of unity of method you are actually throwing us back three years, to the period of our struggle against guerrilla-ism and separatism; and you present this as some sort of new military doctrine.

Offensive and Defensive

Comrade Kuzmin dealt with the question of offensive and defensive warfare. And it

turned out that there are no difficulties here at all. Comrade Kuzmin at once dispelled all that trouble with a wave of his hand. Trotsky, you see, argues against offensive revolutionary war and is in favour of the defensive; But now I, Kuzmin, say to the Red Army men, workers and peasants: 'Russia is today a beleaguered fortress and you are her garrison; but tomorrow, perhaps, you will have to sally forth from the fortress into the field, in order to break a blockade!' And that's all there is to it: it's as simple as that. But, after all, comrades, that is not a serious political approach to the question, it is merely the approach of a writer of newspaper articles. It is enough, do you see, to find a suitable comparison, a military image, in order to dispel all difficulties with a wave of the hand ... No, that is not the crux of the matter at all. What has to be done is just this – clearly to distinguish the political problem from the strategical one. Politically, we stand firm in a position of defence. We do not want war, and the entire population of our country must know and understand that. We are taking all possible measures to avoid war. We are announcing our willingness, given certain conditions, to pay the Tsarist debts. I recall how one comrade said to me: 'Why do you say openly that we are willing to recognise the Tsarist debts?' This comrade seemed embarrassed that we had had to make such a concession, and he tried to present the fact to the workers and peasants in a disguised form. That is a gross error. We have to speak clearly, simply and frankly. And, in the last analysis, this will only be to our advantage. We say this to the workers and peasants. 'They are demanding that we pay the Tsarist debts. The Tsar took money from the stock-exchange in order to strangle you, the workers and peasants, and now they demand that you, the workers and peasants, shall pay for being strangled by the Tsar. And we, the Soviet power, are prepared, given certain conditions, to agree even to pay these base, dishonourable, bloody debts. Why? Because we wish to spare our country the ordeal of another war.' In this way we explain to the peasants the peaceful and defensive character of our policy. Bandit gangs have been hurled at us. We have exterminated these gangs, but have not gone over to the offensive. We have truly shown, and are still showing, incredible forbearance. Why? Because we want to ensure peace for our people. This is what is now the basis of our political-education work in the army and in the country. But what if peace is denied us? What if we are forced to fight? In that case the most backward peasant will understand that the blame for it rests wholly with our foes, that there is no other way out: he will then take up his boar-spear and go forth into battle. Then, too, it will be possible for us to develop an offensive war, in the strategical sense of the expression. The Red Army man, the worker and the peasant will then say: 'Our entire policy was directed towards defence and peaceful relations. But if these neighbours of ours, these governments refuse us peace, despite all our efforts, then, in order to defend ourselves, nothing remains for us to do but overthrow them.' ... That will be the ultimate conclusion drawn by the whole country in the event that our defensive and peace-loving policy is disrupted by our enemies. This is the essence of the question. He who understands this will find the rightline for political work in the army. But parables about a beleaguered fortress will avail little here. That's only a metaphor, an image for us to use in a leading article or a feuilleton. A Samara *muzhik* who reads it, or hears somebody else read it to him, will scratch his head and say: 'Comrade Kuzmin writes well, he's a clever writer.' But, I assure you, he will not go forth to fight for that metaphor.

Comrade Voroshilov quoted here my words to the effect that, under certain conditions, the road from Petrograd to Helsingfors may prove to be shorter than the road from Helsingfors to Petrograd. Yes, it is true that I said this. And, under certain conditions, I am ready to say it again. But, you see, this is precisely what I

have just been explaining. It does not mean at all that we actually intend to attack any of the neighbouring countries. You appreciate very well that that is so. True, in the frontier zone where our fighting men have observed particularly closely the banditry which originates in Poland, Rumania and Finland, the feeling among our troops in favour of striking a blow across the frontier is sometimes very strong. 'Let's have war!' Those words are often to be heard there, especially among the cavalrymen ... Our cadets are also not averse to testing out in practice what they are studying in theory. And, indeed, throughout our army there prevails, fortunately, a mood of readiness for battle.

But, after all, this does not exhaust the question. A war is a big, serious and protracted affair. It presupposes fresh mobilisations of several age groups, the requisitioning of horses, the intensification of compulsory cartage duty, and so on and so forth. It is quite obvious that we could not start a war with propaganda about the idea – correct as it is, in the abstract – that the interests of the working people are the same all over the world, etc. This idea is correct, and must be given a most prominent place in our propaganda, above all within our own Party. But there is an immense difference between propaganda about the idea of the international revolution and political preparation of the working masses of the whole country for military events which may occur in the immediate future. It is the difference between propaganda and agitation, between a theoretical forecast and current policy. The more clearly, persistently and concretely, the more irrefutably we are able to show and to explain to the entire population of the country the genuinely peace-loving and defensive character of our international policy, the readier will the entire population be to provide the forces and resources for an offensive strategy on a broad scale, in the event that war is forced upon us. Comrade Frunze does not argue against this. On the contrary, he has even declared that it would be a most stupid prank to talk of an offensive war to be launched by us at this time. That is correct. But read some of the recent articles by Comrade Frunze's closest co-thinkers on this question: there it is said that, hitherto, we have been 'sitting' on the defensive, but now we are getting ready for an offensive. It is very good that Comrade Frunze has decisively and even sharply dissociated himself from this false political point of view, which cannot bring us anything except difficulties, confusion and harm.

But surely we can't renounce the idea of the political offensive in general? Of course not! We are not in the least intending to renounce the world proletarian revolution and victory over the bourgeoisie on the international scale. We should be traitors like the gentlemen of the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals if we were to renounce the revolutionary offensive. But, after all, the relation between preparatory defensive work and the offensive was elaborated with sufficient completeness and clarity, on the scale of international politics, at the Third Congress of the Communist International. There were adherents of the doctrine of the offensive at that congress, too. They also said: 'The offensive corresponds to the revolutionary nature of the working class, or to the character of the present revolutionary epoch.' And when they were checked and called to order, these 'Lefts' cried out: 'So you are renouncing the offensive?' We are renouncing nothing, dear comrades; but all in good time. Without an offensive, victory is impossible: but only a simpleton supposes that the whole of political tactics is reducible to the slogan – 'Forward!'

In a Situation of 'Sad Necessity'

The idea of a revolutionary offensive war can be linked with the idea of an international proletarian offensive. But is this the current slogan of the Comintern? No: we have put forward and are upholding the idea of the workers' united front, of joint actions even with the parties of the Second International, who do not want revolution – on the basis of defending the current vital interests of the proletariat, because these are being threatened from all sides by the aggressive bourgeoisie. Our task is to win the masses. How is it, comrades, that you have overlooked this tactic, failed to master its significance, not grasped its connection with the new economic policy within our country? It is quite obvious that what is needed at present is major preparatory work, which is at the given moment defensive in character, embracing the broadest masses. Out of this activity will inevitably develop, at a certain stage, a mass offensive led by the Communists: but this is not the task today. Bring our military propaganda into harmony with the general course of the policy of the world working class. It is stupid to talk to the Red Army about revolutionary offensive war when we are calling on the Communist Parties of Europe to engage in careful preparation on an ever wider mass basis. When the world situation changes, the slogan of our educational work will change with it.

That is how matters stand today as regards the offensive in the political sense. But there still remains the strategical and tactical aspect of the question. And here, after all Comrade Frunze's explanations, I remain entirely of the opinion that the formula of the French field staff is wrong, that it suffers from formalism of the offensive. Our own field service regulations express the idea of the offensive considerably better. 'The best way to attain the goal which has been set is to act aggressively.' Nothing is said here about the one who attacks first 'showing that his is the stronger will'. The task of war is the complete defeat of the enemy. This defeat cannot be achieved without an offensive. The stronger will is shown by the one who creates the most favourable conditions for the offensive, and exploits them to the very end. But this does not mean, in the least, that in order to manifest will-power one has to be the first to attack. That is nonsense. If the material conditions of mobilisation did not permit it, I should be a hopeless formalist and a dolt if I were to base my plan on the proposition that I must be the first to attack. No, I should show the superiority of my will by creating favourable conditions for my offensive, as the second to attack; by wresting the initiative when a certain limit, decided in advance, is reached, and gaining the victory, even though I was the second to attack. [*Frunze: 'That is less advantageous!'*] This may be less advantageous in relation to an abstract country, which has different railways and an apparatus for mobilisation different from ours: but, after all, we are engaged not in solving a geometrical problem but in outlining a concrete plan of action which is dependent on the material and spiritual conditions of our country in its inter-relations with other countries. On the one hand, Comrade Frunze emphasises in every way that we shall fight with a lower level of technique at our disposal than our enemies enjoy, and he even seems to introduce this lower level of technique into our military 'doctrine'. We must of course, do everything to bring our technique up to the level of our enemies. But it is fully appreciated that they will have the advantage in aircraft, for example. Comrade Frunze takes this into account, emphasises it in every way, and as one of the means of counteracting it recommends, for example, that our troops be trained to operate at night. Why, then, does he forget about the transport situation, which is, in present conditions, one of the most important departments of military technique? It is impermissible to forget about mobilisation, concentration and deployment. Serious strategy has to take precisely this as its starting point. That it is necessary to attack is beyond dispute. It is stated not only in our regulations but also, and in almost the same

words, in the old Tsarist regulations. We heard it from the lips of Suvorov. How, indeed, can one vanquish the enemy except by hitting him over the head? And to do that you have to attack him, to leap upon him. That was known to military leaders in Old-Testament times. But you want to tell us something new, you talk to us about a proletarian strategy which results from the revolutionary nature of the proletariat. You are apparently not satisfied with the formulations of our field service regulations. You devise a formulation of your own which – oh, what a surprise! – turns out to be taken from the French field service regulations. But this allegedly new formulation is incorrect and obviously not in accordance with our conditions. If we knock it into the heads of our commanders that a revolutionary nature and a 'strong will' demand that you be the first to attack, the initial period of our operations in the West may throw our commanders into confusion, because conditions may, and in all probability will, impose upon us an initial period of elastic defence and manoeuvring retreat. [*Frunze: 'Sad necessity.'*] ... Yes, Comrade Frunze, all war is a matter of sad necessity. It is within the framework of this sad necessity that we have to construct our plan, taking into account other 'sad necessities', if these are of major importance. And the condition of transport, in the broadest sense of the word, is one of the most important conditions governing war. Consequently, the nature of our country, its distances, the way its population is distributed, its railways, its roads both surfaced and unsurfaced, make it highly probable that the line at which our offensive will begin will run at a considerable distance from our state frontier. If our commanders grasp the inner logic of such a strategical plan, which begins with screens, defence and even retreat, in order to concentrate troops on a line decided in advance, and then go over to the decisive offensive without which, of course, there can be no victory; if our commanders are imbued with this real conception of manoeuvre, and not with a formalistic view of the offensive, they will not be disorientated, will not become confused, will not lose their heads, and will transmit their calm confidence to the entire army.

Our Agitation as 'a Type of Weapon'

In support of the contention that we have our own 'military doctrine' speakers have referred to our revolutionary agitation as a new type of weapon, introduced by us. But this, too, is wrong. We are deceiving ourselves here as well. As a matter of fact, propaganda is organised in bourgeois armies on a far larger scale, in a much richer and more diversified way than here. During the first two years of the war I lived in France, and observed there the mechanics of imperialist agitation. How could we possibly compete with it, given our poverty of forces and resources? Our newspapers were tiny, with poor paper and extremely illegible print, and, what mattered most, their circulation was insignificant, whereas, in France, such an obscenely mendacious, insolent bourgeois paper as the **Petit Parisien** used to be published, during the war, in nearly three million copies. The circulation of some other imperialist newspapers exceeded one million. Each soldier received one newspaper, if not two. They contained poetry and prose, *feuilletons* and cartoons. And the newspapers were of all colours of the rainbow: monarchist, republican, socialist – but they all kept hammering away at a single point: fight the war to the end. Here you had a Catholic priest walking through the trenches and operating as a very skilful agitator. He would slap the soldier on the back and say to him: 'Only two good things are left in this world – wine and the Lord God!' And a Socialist deputy, arriving at the front, would talk about the fight for freedom, equality and so on. There was theatre, too, and ballet, and music-hall singers. And all of it first-class. And all hammering away at one single point. A prodigious machine for

deception, hypnosis, sending to sleep, and corruption! Wherein, then, does our strength lie? In the *Communist* programme. In the *revolutionary* idea. When our enemies talk about the prodigious power of our propaganda, this has to relate not to the organisation and technique of our propaganda in the army but to the *inner* power of our revolutionary programme, which expresses the real interests of the working masses and therefore goes to their hearts. It was not we who invented politics. It was not we who invented agitation and propaganda. In this respect, too, our enemies are stronger, materially and organisationally, than we are, just as Tsardom was incomparably stronger than our Party, when it was under-ground and functioned through leaflets and proclamations. But the heart of the matter is this, that with all its apparatus and all its technique, the bourgeoisie cannot keep its hold on the masses. We are winning them and shall go on winning them, all over the world. There is therefore no need to discover a new type of weapon, which is to enter into the military doctrine of the proletariat. Because the Communist programme was invented before the Red Army appeared, and the Red Army is itself only a weapon for making possible the realisation of the Communist programme.

Fewer Sweeping Generalisations

The connection between two strategical and tactical methods and the class nature of the proletariat is not at all so close, absolute and immediate as many comrades have told us. On the basis of my admittedly meagre knowledge of the history of military affairs I would undertake to prove that the Red Army has passed, from the beginning of its existence, through the same stages that marked the evolution of modern European armies, since, say the 17th century. The transition from stage to stage was, of course, effected very rapidly, as though in an abridged synopsis. A child in its mother's womb, as it develops from the embryo, repeats the stages in the evolution of the human species, in their fundamental features. Something similar, I repeat, is to be observed in the case of the development of the Red Army. It certainly did not begin with manoeuvring. Its first attempts at combat present a picture of crude, rectilinear positionalism of the cordon type. Its organisation and its methods of strategy changed in the process of the struggle, under the blows of the enemy. In this way developed the manoeuvring which was characteristic of the last period of the civil war. But this is not the last word in the Red Army's strategy. Into this diffuse, chaotic manoeuvring we must introduce factors of stability: sound, resilient cadres. Will this more highly skilled army turn to methods of positional warfare? That depends on the conditions of future wars, on where they will begin, on the size of the masses that will be involved in operations at one and the same time, and on the sort of territory on which these operations will take place.

Comrade Budyonny explained the positional character of the imperialist war as being due to the absence of great initiative, the irresolution of the leaders. 'There was no commander of genius!' ... In my opinion this explanation is wrong. The crux of the matter is this, that the imperialist war was a war not of armies but of nations, and of the richest nations, huge in numbers and with huge material resources. It was a war to the death. To every blow the opposing side found an answer: every hole was blocked. The front was steadily consolidated on both sides: artillery, shells, men were piled up both on this side and on that. The task thus transcended the bounds of strategy. The war was transformed into a most profound process of measuring strength, one side against the other, in every direction. Neither aircraft, nor submarines, nor tanks, nor cavalry could by themselves

produce a decisive result: they served only as means for gradually exhausting the enemy's forces and constantly checking on his condition – was he still standing firm, or was he ready to collapse? This was in the fullest sense of the word a war of attrition, in which strategy is not of decisive but only of auxiliary importance. It is quite indisputable that any repetition of such a war in the near future is impossible. But just as impossible is any repetition on the territory of Europe of the methods and procedures of our civil war: the conditions and the situation over there are much too different. Instead of making sweeping generalisations we ought to start thinking more specifically about concrete conditions.

The 'Unified Doctrine' in a Future Civil War

For the sake of illustration let us take Britain, and let us try to imagine what will, or, more correctly, may be the character of a civil war in the British Isles. Naturally, we cannot prophesy. Naturally, events may develop in a quite different way, but it will nevertheless be useful to try and imagine the course of revolutionary events in the distinctive conditions of a highly-developed capitalist country in an insular situation.

The proletariat constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population in Britain. It has many conservative tendencies. It is hard to budge. On the other hand, however, when it does at last get moving, and overcomes the initial organised resistance of its internal enemies, its domination of the island will prove overwhelming, by virtue of its overwhelming numbers. Does this mean that the bourgeoisie of Britain will not attempt, with the help of Australia, Canada, the United States, and so on, to crush the British proletariat? Of course it will. To this end it will try to keep control of the navy. It will need the navy not only in order to impose a hunger blockade on proletarian Britain but also in order to land troops. The French bourgeoisie will not refuse black regiments. The same navy which serves today to defend the British Isles and ensure their uninterrupted supply of foodstuffs will become an instrument of attack upon these islands. Proletarian Britain will thus become a naval fortress under siege. There will be no way of retreat from it, unless into the sea. And we have assumed that the sea will remain under enemy control. The civil war will, consequently, take the form of the defence of an island against warships and landing forces. I repeat, this is not a prophecy: events may turn out in a different way. But who will venture to say that the outline of civil war I have indicated is impossible? It is quite possible, and even probable. It would be a good thing if our strategists would ponder over this. They would then become finally convinced how baseless it is to deduce capacity for manoeuvring from the revolutionary nature of the proletariat. Who knows, the British proletariat may have to cover the shores of its islands with trenches, wide ribbons of barbed wire entanglements, and positional artillery?

We need to look for models of civil war approximating to our recent past not in the future of Europe but in the past of the United States. Undoubtedly the civil war in the United States in the sixties of last century presents many features in common with our civil war. Why? Because there, too, you had enormous expanses, a sparse population and inadequate means of communication. Cavalry raids played a very big role there, too. It is a remarkable fact that there, too, the initiative came from the 'Whites', that is, from the Southern slaveowners, who were fighting against the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democrats of the North. The Southerners had prairies (steppes), plantations, steppe pastures and good horses, and they were used to horse-riding. The first raids, thousand of *versts* in depth, were carried out

by them. Following their example, the Northerners created their own cavalry. It was a diffuse, manoeuvring type of war and ended in the victory of the Northerners, who defended the progressive tendencies of economic development against the Southern planter-slaveowners.

On the Road to a Proletarian Strategy

Comrade Tukhachevsky basically agreed with my view, but made some reservations the meaning of which is not clear to me. 'That Comrade Trotsky keeps pulling us back by the coat-tails,' says Tukhachevsky, 'is a useful thing' – but useful, it would appear, only up to a certain point, so far as I am able to gather, because the actual urge to create something new, in the sense of proletarian strategy and tactics, seems to Tukhachevsky one that is fruitful and progressive. Comrade Frunze, marching along the same line, but going further, quotes Engels, who wrote in the 1850s that the conquest of power by the proletariat and the development of a socialist economy would create the premises for a new strategy. [\[4\]](#) I also do not doubt that if a country with a developed socialist economy were to find itself obliged to go to war with a bourgeois country (as Engels visualised) the pattern of the strategy pursued by the socialist country would be wholly different. But this provides no grounds for trying today to suck out of one's thumb a 'proletarian strategy' for the RSFSR. A new contribution to strategy will grow out of an endeavour to improve and fructify the practice of war, and not at all out of the mere urge to say 'something new'. This is like someone who, because he appreciates original people, sets himself the task of becoming an original person: nothing would come of that, of course, except the most pathetic monkey-tricks. By developing a socialist economy, by raising the cultural level and increasing the solidarity of the masses, by raising the Red Army's skill and improving its technique and its cadres we shall, undoubtedly, enrich military affairs with new procedures, new methods – precisely because our entire country will grow and develop on new foundations. But to set oneself the task of inferring by speculation a new strategy from the revolutionary nature of the proletariat means just rephrasing the dubious propositions of the French field service regulations, and, inescapably, making a fool of oneself.

Towards the Accumulation of Culture!

In conclusion, I want to speak about the question of the section commander. Everyone recognises, of course, the importance and significance of the section commander, but not everyone is willing to see in him the central point of our military programme for the period immediately ahead. Some comrades even express themselves with a certain condescension on this matter: 'Of course, who would deny ... Yes, of course ... Yes, obviously ... But there's more to be thought about than the section commander' ... and so on and so forth. Our very dear comrade Muralov spoke somewhat in that spirit: 'Of course,' he said, 'it is necessary to clean boots, sew on buttons and educate good section commanders, but this is far from everything.' For some reason the section commander is here lumped in with buttons and boots. Wrongly! Buttons, boots and so on belong among those 'trifles' which, in their totality, possess immense importance. But the section commander is in no case a trifle. No, he is the most important lever in our military mechanism.

In passing, though, just a few words about buttons, boots, the fight against lice,

and so on. Comrade Minin accused me of slipping into 'culturalism' (*Kulturnishestvo*). What a pity he did not level his charge at the same time against Comrade Lenin, for his report to the Congress, because Comrade Lenin's main idea was that what we lack for our constructive work is culture, that this culture we must persistently, stubbornly and systematically accumulate and increase, through education and self-education. The term 'culturalism' is out of place here, because we used that word to designate, and even to brand, those narrow-minded pedants who, under the rule of Tsardom and the bourgeoisie hoped to regenerate the country by means of petty and trifling measures in the spheres of education, consumers' co-operation, public health and so on. We counterposed to that the programme of revolution and the conquest of power by the working class. But this has now been achieved, power has been conquered by the working class: this means that the political conditions have been created for cultural work to be carried out on a scale unprecedented in history. This cultural work consists wholly of details and trifles. The victorious revolution enables us to draw the deepest layers of the people into cultural work. This is now the main task. We must teach how to read and write, we must teach precision and thriftiness – and must do all this on the basis of the experience of our state and economic constructive work, day by day and hour by hour. And exactly the same applies in the army.

The Military Slogan for Today

But the *section commander* is, all the same, a special item. He is by no means a trifle. He is the commander, the leader, the head of the basic group of fighters – the section. One cannot build an edifice out of loose sand. One must have good building material, one must have a good section, and that means – a good, reliable, conscious, confident section commander.

'But', some object, 'aren't you forgetting the senior commanders?' No, I am not forgetting them, and it is precisely to the senior commanders that I set this task of educating the section commander. There can be no better school for a regimental, brigade or divisional commander than the work of educating section commanders. Our refresher courses, our academies and our academy courses are very important and useful, but the best training of all is obtained by a teacher when he trains his pupils; that regimental, brigade or divisional commander will be the best trained who focuses his attention in the immediate future on the training and education of section commanders, because this cannot be done without getting clearer and clearer in one's mind on all the Red Army's problems of organisation and tactics, without exception. All the problems have to be thought out clearly and thoroughly, without any self-deception, so as to be able clearly and distinctly to tell the section commander what he must be and what is demanded of him. The section commander – this is now our central task. General phrases about the education of commanders in the spirit of manoeuvring offer essentially very little, and distract attention from the most important tasks of the present period. There was a time when it was necessary to break through our primitive immobility and cordonism, there was a time when the slogan of manoeuvring was salutary: at that time the cry: 'Proletarian, to horse!' expressed a fundamental necessity. At that time, of course, not only the cavalry but also the infantry, the artillery and the rest were important. However, if we had not at that time created the Red cavalry, we should probably have perished.

Therefore, the call: 'Proletarian, to horse!' summed up the central, basic need of

that period in the army's development. The new epoch brings to the fore a new task: setting to rights the basic cell of the army – the section: summing up our military experience for the benefit of the section commander, increasing his knowledge and self-awareness. Everything now rests upon that point. It is necessary to understand this and to get down firmly to work at it.

Endnotes

[1.](#) Printed in the pamphlet **Fundamental Military Tasks of the Moment**, Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow 1922.

[2.](#) For the background and context of this discussion at the Eleventh Party Congress, see, besides Erickson's **The Soviet High Command** and Fedotoff-White's **The Growth of the Red Army**, also W.D. Jacobs, **Frunze** (1969).

[3.](#) The book was entitled **Reflexions sur l'art de la guerre**, and its pseudonymous author was probably the same General de Cugnac who wrote the newspaper article already quoted.

[4.](#) Engels's 1851 article was first published in **Die Neue Zeit**, December 1914. (See Marx and Engels, **Collected Works**, English edition, Vol.10, 1978, pp.542-566: the relevant passage is on p.553.)

Questions of Military Theory

Military Knowledge and Marxism

Speech at the meeting of the Military Science Society attached to the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, May 8, 1922^[1]

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Introductory Remarks

Allow me to declare open this meeting of the Military Science Society – the 51st such meeting, as I have just been told.

The subject of our discussion today is to be the place occupied by military knowledge and military skill in the system of human knowledge as a whole. Let me confess at the outset that the responsibility for initiating this discussion falls largely upon me. Not that I consider this complex, abstract, theoretical-epistemological and philosophical question – in the best and worst meaning of these words – to be the most topical and urgent in our military studies. But it does seem to me that these questions have been forced upon us by the entire course of ideological development and by a certain theoretical-ideological controversy among the leading circles of our army.

In one of our publications, closely associated with your Society, I read two articles ^[2], one of which argued that military science cannot be built by, and cannot apply to its specific tasks, the methods of Marxism, because military science belongs to the order of natural sciences. This article was accompanied by a polemical and critical article which, presumably, reflected more closely the views of the editors. In this article an attempt was made to show that, on the contrary, the methods of Marxism are *universal* scientific methods, so that their validity extends also to military science. Let me confess, once more, that to me both of these viewpoints seemed incorrect. Military science does not belong among the natural sciences because it is neither 'natural' nor a 'science'. Our discussion today may perhaps bring us closer to an understanding of this question.

But even if one grants that 'military science' is a science, it is nevertheless impossible to grant that this science could be built by the method of Marxism, because historical materialism is not at all a universal method for all sciences. This is a very great delusion which, it seems to me, is fraught with very harmful consequences. It is possible to devote one's whole life to military activity, and very successfully, without ever thinking about theoretical-epistemological methods in military matters – just as I can look at my watch every day without knowing anything about its internal mechanism, that concatenation of wheels and levers. Provided I know about the figures and the hands, I won't go wrong. But if, not being satisfied with the way the hands move over the dial, I want to discuss the structure of the watch, then I must be properly informed about that: there can be no room for 'independent thinking' here.

In the course of another discussion (about the unified military doctrine) I referred to a feature from the life of Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov, the first crusader for

Marxism on Russian soil, a man of vast intellect and great talent. Whenever Plekhanov noted that questions of philosophical materialism and historical materialism were being counterposed to each other, or, on the contrary, were being merged together, he would always protest hotly. Philosophical materialism is a theory based on the *natural sciences*: historical materialism explains the history of *human society*. Historical materialism is a method that explains not the entire universe but only a strictly *delimited* group of phenomena, a method for investigating the development of historical man. Philosophical materialism explains the movement of the universe as the changing and transformation of matter, and extends its explanation to the 'highest' manifestations of the spirit. It is difficult, not to say impossible, to be a Marxist in politics if one is ignorant of historical materialism. It is possible to be a Marxist in politics while being ignorant of philosophical materialism – and there are plenty of examples to prove that

And whenever any Marxist (in the old terminology, any 'Social-Democrat') strayed into the field of philosophy and started to muddle things up, the late Plekhanov would bash him mercilessly. How many times did people say to him: 'Come, Georgi Valentinovich, after all, this is a young fellow who hasn't had time to study philosophical questions, he has been busy in the underground struggle.' But Plekhanov would, with reason, reply: 'If he doesn't know, let him keep quiet. Nobody is forcing him to talk ... Nothing is said in our programme about a Social-Democrat having to be well-grounded in philosophical materialism. You have to be an active member of the Party, you have to be a courageous fighter for the workers' cause; but if you do invade the sphere of philosophy, don't muddle things up.' ... And he would rise to his full height, wielding his splendid polemical whip. If you review the history of our Party you will find many who still to this day bear on their ribs the marks of that whip.

I consider that in the sphere of the philosophy of military affairs we should follow the good tradition of the late Plekhanov. We are not all obliged to occupy ourselves with questions that are called 'gnosiological' 'theoretical-epistemological' – with philosophical questions. But if we do happen to take them up, it is not permissible to muddle things and to wander, equipped with an inappropriate instrument, into a different field, trying to apply the method of Marxism directly to military affairs in the true sense of the word (not military policy). To try and construct a special domain of military affairs by means of Marxist method is a very great delusion, no less a one than that expressed in trying to include military affairs among the natural sciences. If I am not mistaken, proponents of both these tendencies are ready to take the floor today: they will probably expound their views better than I can – and, after they have done so, we shall argue with them.

I do not think, comrades, that we shall arrive today at any generally binding decisions on this question. But if we do succeed in bringing some clarity into the matter, and if we conclude that it is necessary to be more cautious in directly applying Marxism to special spheres of creative activity, that alone will be a big achievement. With our 'military doctrine', which has some connection with the problem before us today, we kept, as you know, circling round and round and muddling things up to our hearts' content, and I don't think we were greatly enriched thereby, except, perhaps, in the negative sense alone: everyone was convinced that nothing in particular had come out of all that. We undertook to build a 'unified military doctrine' on a 'proletarian Marxist' basis, but, after debating the matter, we came back to the point that what was needed was to re-examine our regulations on the basis of our experience. And we are re-examining them – slowly, hobbling along the road and through the potholes, for ours are rough country roads

and there is no lack of ravines. But I firmly hope that real benefit will accrue from our review of the regulations: we shall not invent a new military doctrine by means of a commission but, on the other hand, we shall rid ourselves of a lot of rubbish, and we shall formulate some things more precisely than before. So far as our meeting today is concerned, the benefit of discussing the broad question of the interrelation between military matters and Marxism will be more in the nature of mental hygiene, so to speak: the degree of confusion that prevails will be somewhat diminished. Our practical task is this: learn to speak more simply about the cavalry, do not encumber our discussion of problems of aviation with pompous Marxist terminology, high-flown expressions, wideranging problems which more often than not turn out to be hollow shells without kernel or content.

These, comrades, are the introductory remarks which I have taken the liberty of making. In the interests of the audience, in which there are comrades who are at varying levels of familiarity with philosophical questions, I strongly request all the rapporteurs and participants in the discussion to express themselves as concretely, precisely, simply and comprehensibly as possible. I believe that I come quite close to the truth when I say that not everyone here present has studied philosophy from beginning to end, so to speak, and some of us, certainly, have not even read the most elementary books on philosophy. I believe that such a presentation, that is, one designed for an audience not expert in philosophy, will also have the advantage of helping us to scrutinise the contents of each rapporteur's kitbag: for philosophical terminology is a device akin to makeup ... The makeup may be terribly impressive, and yet have nothing beneath it. And yet, as I have noted from many articles in our military publications, this occultism for the augurs, for the initiated, these mediaeval traditions and procedures are still maintained among us. And so I ask you to expound your ideas in as simple a way as you can.

With your permission, comrades, we shall now pass to the discussion. Observing the order in which the reports are listed, I call on Comrade Lukirsky to make his contribution.

Concluding Remarks

The list of speakers is exhausted. Allow me to say in conclusion a few words in defence of an art which, in my opinion has been slighted here – slighted for the benefit of military science, which certain comrades, in their turn, defended against slurs, in my opinion imaginary, that had been cast by us.

Comrade Ogorodnikov, the last speaker, like some others before him, directed his attack particularly against Comrade Svechin, against whom, I too, have had the occasion in my time to polemise: how could a man who is a member of the guild of military science suddenly renounce himself and uncrown military knowledge, by declaring that there is no question of science here?

In a roundabout way, Comrade Polonsky also touched on this question. Let us get things clear, he says: 'Knowledge can be either scientific or unscientific. If military matters are scientific, then we are dealing with a science. If they are unscientific, then ... they are not worth a brass farthing.' Comrade Polonsky compared a military commander to a surgeon. Not a bad comparison! A surgeon performs an operation. This is an action which demands certain practices, a certain skill; but for a student watching the operation, says Comrade Polonsky, it is a science. But that, of course, is not so. For the student, too, the operation is not science: it is apprenticeship. If an artist makes a drawing, that is art. Others are sitting around him and copying

what he does: what, would you say, does that mean for them? Is it science? No. It is apprenticeship, which is still not science. This is the sense in which 'science' was understood in Suvorov's time: when soldiers were made to run the gauntlet, that too, was 'the science of victory'.

One of the speakers said that one cannot put military matters on the same footing with art. Art, he said, has an aesthetic criterion. But what about the practical arts? The art of building bridges, the art of building houses, the art of laying down sewerage systems? A practical art, let us not forget, also has a scientific basis. In the last analysis, of course, all the sciences grew out of practice, out of the crafts, out of activities; but, later, they freed themselves from this direct, 'crude' connection, while nevertheless preserving their historically utilitarian significance. When he makes chemical experiments, or investigates in a laboratory the crossing of different species, a scientist may be pursuing an immediate practical aim, or he may not. On the other hand, even a purely theoretical deduction serves, in the last analysis, to enrich practice. An art may be based on a multiplicity of sciences. One man develops science for science's sake, 'disinterestedly', as they say, while another operates with the conclusions of science for purely practical ends; and a third picks up intuitively, through creative flair, what he needs for practical work. Comrade Snesev got to the heart of the matter better than anyone else when he proposed, for military affairs, the term *obnauchennoye iskusstvo*. [3] A dozen other terms could, of course, be invented, and I am not proposing to make Snesev's term compulsory, but, in my opinion, the author of the term showed himself freest from guild prejudices when he said: 'I am not afraid to call it a craft, and still less am I afraid to call it an art.'

Many comrades approached the question under discussion from an 'aristocratic' standpoint, from the standpoint of commanders, of military leaders of today or tomorrow. But if we take military matters as a whole, then the fact remains that every soldier must know his manoeuvre. That manoeuvre which a *rank-and-file* infantryman knows and has to know – is this a science or isn't it? You say of a *commander* that he must know geography and history – it would be no bad thing, let me add, for him to learn political economy, too. He must know the military history of at least the last hundred years. But are military matters exhausted when we have discussed the army commander? No. There is also, let us not forget, the soldier, there is the section commander, there is the platoon commander: at their level the military trade remains a matter of craft skill.

If a soldier does not know his manoeuvre, he is merely cannon fodder: if he does know it, then he is a 'craftsman'. Above that level lies an art that is based on the methods and conclusions of many sciences, which are utilised in the soldier's trade. The methods, for example, of geography, can and must be made use of in military activities. A knowledge of statistics, is also obligatory. Ethnography is needed. So is history. All these are sciences. But the business of war itself is not a science. One must distinguish between, on the one hand, science, which establishes *the law-governed character of phenomena*, their causality, and, on the other, art, which is concerned with *the expediency of procedures*. [Snesev's '*obnauchennoye*' is a made-up word based on *nauka*, and his suggested term could mean something like 'a science-impregnated art'.] These two – the expediency of procedures, practices and methods, and the law-governed character of objective phenomena – are not one and the same thing. I am the better able to work out an expedient method, the more I know about the law-governed character of phenomena, but, all the same, one cannot confuse the one with the other.

Our method in military affairs in the Soviet Republic is determined, in the last analysis, by technique, the relation between classes, and so forth. But one can't deduce from these correct Marxist propositions the proper establishment for a cavalry regiment! Gleb Uspensky showed magnificently, in **The Power of the Land**, how a peasant's entire life and all his thinking are dominated by the land, wholly determined by the peasant's means of production. Marxism can answer the question: why will the *muzhik* continue to believe in the house-demon so long as he goes about in bast shoes? Bast shoes are determined by the peasant's mode of production, and the latter also gives rise to a number of other phenomena which are inseparable from the bast shoes – a narrow horizon, slavish dependence on rain, sunshine and other elementary phenomena of nature: and all this, together, creates the peasant's superstitions. Marxism can try and explain all this. But can Marxism teach how to plait bast shoes? No, it can't. It can *explain* why the *muzhik* goes about in bast shoes – because around him is the forest, the bark of trees, and he is poor – but one can't plait bast shoes with the aid of Marxism. Nothing will come of that.

One of the speakers protested against calling military matters an art on the grounds that military matters are not subject, do you see, to the criterion of beauty. But this is the sheerest misunderstanding. Trading, especially as carried on in the Sukharevka [*The Sukharevka was the 'thieves' market' in Moscow, tolerated most of the time, but subject to occasional police raids.*], is surely not subject to the aesthetic criterion: yet, all the same, there is an art of trading. Trade has its own complex methods, connected with certain theories that are akin to science: Italian double-entry book-keeping, commercial correspondence, commercial geography, and so on. What, then, is trade – a science or not? Marx made a science of trade, in the sense that he established the laws of capitalist society, that he made trade an object of scientific investigation. But can one trade 'according to Marx' in the Sukharevka? ... No, one can't. One of the most persistent, if not eternal, principles of trade is the rule: 'if you don't cheat, you don't sell'. Marxism explains whence arose this 'principle', how it was later replaced by Italian double-entry book-keeping, which comes to the same thing, but in a more delicate form. But can Marxism create a new sort of book-keeping? Or is a Marxist spared the need to study book-keeping if he wants seriously to engage in trade? Attempts to proclaim Marxism the method of all sciences and arts often serve as cover for a stubborn aversion from entering new fields: it is, after all, much, much easier to possess a *passe-partout*, that is a key which opens all doors and locks, than to study book-keeping, military affairs, and so on ... This is the greatest danger when people try to endow the Marxist method with such an absolute character. Marx attacked such quasi-Marxists, and in one of his letters he literally said: 'I'm no Marxist!' [\[4\]](#) when they palmed off on him, instead of an explanation of the historical process, instead of an attentive and conscientious investigation of what happens, a sort of itinerary through history. Even less did Marx intend that his socio-historical theory should replace all other spheres of human cognition. Does this mean that a military leader has no need for Marxist method? Not at all. It would be absurd to deny the great importance of materialism for disciplining thought in all fields. Marxism, like Darwinism, is the highest school of human thought. Methods of warfare cannot be deduced from Darwin's theory, from the law of natural selection, but a military leader who had studied Darwin, would, given the presence of other qualities, be better equipped thereby: he would have a wider horizon and be more resourceful, he would take note of aspects of nature and of man which previously he had not noticed. This applies to an even greater extent to Marxism.

One comment on Comrade Akhov's remarks about the role of historical analysis in

clarifying a particular concept or hypothesis. It is absolutely correct that the historical point of view is extremely fruitful, and the history of science better than any Kantian gnosiology. Man must keep his concepts and terms clean, just as a dentist cleans his instruments. But what we need for this is not a Kantian gnosiology which takes concepts as being fixed forever: terms must be approached historically. But the history of terms, hypotheses and theories does not take the place of science itself. Physics is physics. Military matters are military matters.

Marxism can be applied with very great success even to the history of chess. But it is not possible to learn to play chess in a Marxist way. With the aid of Marxism we can establish that there was once an Oblomov-like nobility who were too lazy even to play chess, and that later, with the growth of towns, intellectuals and merchants appeared, who felt a need to exercise their brains by playing draughts and chess. And now, in our country, workers go to chess clubs. The workers play chess because they have thrown off those who used to ride on their backs. All this can be excellently explained by Marxism. One can show the entire course of the class struggle from the one angle of the history of the development of chess. I assert that one could, using Marx's method, write an excellent book on the history of the development of chess. But to learn to play chess 'according to Marx' is not possible. The game of chess has its own 'laws', its own 'principles'. To be sure, I read recently that, in Napoleon's time, chess was played in a manoeuvring way, and this continued until the middle of the 19th century: during the period of armed peace, between the Franco-Prussian War and the recent imperialist war, chess remained wholly 'positional', but it is now again being played in a mobile, 'manoeuvring' way. At any rate, we are assured that this is so by one American chess-player. It may be that social conditions do, in some unknown ways, penetrate into the brain of a chess-player, and, without being conscious of what he is doing, he reflects these conditions in his style of play. A materialist psychologist might find this of great interest. However, to learn to play chess 'according to Marx' is altogether impossible, just as it is impossible to learn to wage war 'according to Marx'. Marxism does not teach how to use surprise, when this becomes necessary in dealing with the elusive Makhno.

What constitutes the essence of the soldier's trade is the aggregate of rules for gaining victory. These rules are summed up, well or badly, in our regulations. Are they a science? I think that our regulations cannot be called a science. They are a set of prescriptions, a body of rules and procedures for a craft or an art.

To those comrades who want to construct the soldier's trade according to Marxist method I recommend that they review the field service regulations from this standpoint, and indicate just what changes – from the standpoint of Marxism – should be introduced into the rules for reconnaissance, security, artillery preparation or attack. I should be very glad to hear at least one new thing arrived at in this sphere by using the Marxist method – not just 'an opinion or so', but something really new and practical.

Such are the mistakes of youthful and immature Marxist thinking in the sphere of military theory. In contrast to them are the mistakes of the military academician-metaphysicians. *They* tell us that military science discovers and formulates eternal principles in military matters. What do these principles signify? Are they scientific generalisations or are they practical precepts? In what sense can they be called eternal?

War is a certain form of relation between men. Consequently, methods and

procedures in war are dependent upon the anatomical and mental properties of individual man, upon the form of organisation of collective man, upon his technology, his environment both physical and cultural-historical, and so on. The procedures and methods of war are thus determined by changing circumstances, and therefore can themselves in no wise be eternal.

But it is quite obvious that these procedures and methods do contain elements of greater or less stability. Thus, for example, in cavalry methods we find elements that are common to us and to the epoch of Hannibal, and even earlier. The methods of aviation are, obviously, only of recent origin. In infantry methods we find features in common with the operations of the most backward and primitive hordes and tribes, which waged war against each other before the horse was domesticated. Finally, it is possible to find in military operations generally some elementary procedures which are common to man and to animals that fight. Clearly, in these cases, too, it is not a question of 'eternal truths', in the sense of scientific generalisations derived from the properties of matter, but of the more or less stable procedures of a craft or an art.

An aggregate of 'military principles' does not constitute a military science, for there is no more a science of war than there is a science of locksmithing. There are a whole series of sciences which an army leader needs to know in order to feel fully equipped in his art. But military science does not exist: what exists is a military craft, which can be raised to the level of a military art.

A scientific history of warfare is not military science but social science, or a branch of social science. A scientific history of warfare explains why, in a given epoch, with a given organisation of society, men waged war in a certain way and not in a different way, and why such and such procedures led, in that epoch, to victory, whereas others brought defeat. Beginning with the general state of the productive forces, a scientific history of war must take into account all the other, superstructural factors, including the plans and the mistakes of the commanders. But it is quite obvious that a scientific history of war is, by its very nature, aimed at explaining that which changes, and the reasons for these changes, and not at establishing eternal truths.

What truths can history give us? The role and significance of the growth of towns in the Middle Ages for the development of military affairs. The invention of firearms. The overthrow of the feudal order and the significance of this revolution for the army, and so on.

Marxist political economy is incontestably a science, but it is not the science of how to manage a business, or how to compete on the market, or how to form trusts. It is the science of how, in a certain epoch, certain economic relations (capitalist relations) took shape, and in what consisted the internal conditioning, the law-governed character, of these relations. The economic laws established by Marx are not eternal truths but are characteristic only of a particular epoch of man's economic development: and, in any case, they are not eternal principles such as the bourgeois Manchester school sets forth, according to which private ownership of the means of production, buying and selling, competition and so on are eternal principles of economy derived from human nature (which, however, is itself not at all eternal).

Wherein lies the basic theoretical error of the liberal Manchester school of political economy? In this, that the generalisations (laws) which define the economic practice

of mankind in the epoch of commodity economy are transformed by the Manchester school into eternal principles which are supposed to govern economic activity for ever and ever.

Naturally, it is no secret even to the Manchester economists that the principles of commerce and competition did not always exist, but arose at a certain stage of development. However, the doctrinaires of Manchesterism get out of that difficulty by making the chronology of economic science begin with the origin of capitalist relations. Previously, mankind was sunk in the darkness of ignorance or in feudal barbarism, but later the truth of free trade was discovered, and this truth remains the eternal principle of human progress. For the Manchesterites their economic laws possess the same significance as the laws of chemistry. In the Middle Ages mankind was sunk in serfdom, particularism and superstition: neither the laws of chemistry nor the laws of the free market were known: later, both the former and the latter were discovered. Their objective value, their 'eternal' character is not compromised by the fact that people did not know about them earlier.

Doctrinaires in military matters show exactly the same attitude towards military truths. The military generalisations or, more correctly, the procedures of a particular epoch, are transformed by them into eternal truths. If people were previously ignorant of these eternal truths, so much the worse for those people, sunken in barbarism. But, as soon as discovered, they become eternal principles of the soldier's trade. The erroneousness of such an approach becomes quite obvious if we adopt the appropriate scale. The mediaeval economy was not at all a product of ignorance: it had its own internal laws, derived from the then-existing stage of man's technology and the class structure of society which was connected with this.

The very simple laws which determined the economic interrelations of a feudal lord, or *seigneur*, with his peasants, or of a craft-guildsman with his customer, are just as 'legitimate' from the standpoint of economic science as are the most complex laws of capitalist economy: both the former and the latter are transient in character.

The army made up of *landsknechts*, the standing armies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the national army called to life by the Great French Revolution, all corresponded to definite epochs of economic and political developments, based upon a certain level of technology, on which depended their structure and their methods of operation. Military history can and must establish this social conditioning of the army and of its methods. But what does military philosophy do? As a rule, it looks upon the methods and procedures of a preceding epoch as eternal truths, which have at last been discovered by mankind and which are destined to retain their significance for all times and all peoples. The discovery of these eternal truths is located, for the most part, in the Napoleonic epoch. Later, these same truths or principles are found to have been present, though in less developed form, in the operations of Hannibal and Caesar.

The mediaeval period is turned into a hiatus during which the eternal principles of war sank into oblivion, along with the science and philosophy of antiquity.

There is, however, a difference between the errors of the Manchesterites and those of the doctrinaires of the eternal principles of military science. This difference lies in the difference between the two kinds of activity. Economic relations in capitalist society take shape, as Marx put it, behind people's backs, as a result of their ant-like economic activity, and people then find themselves confronted with

already crystallised property relations which determine the relations between man and man.

In military affairs the element of planned construction, of conscious direction by man's will finds incomparably wider application. Under capitalist relations, plan, will, calculation, supervision, initiative are applied within the limits of an individual business. The laws of the capitalist economy grow out of the mutual relations between these individual businesses: that is why they take shape 'behind the backs' of people. But the army is by its very nature an enterprise common to the state as a whole, and, consequently, plans and projects are here applied within a state-wide framework. This does not, of course, eliminate the decisive dependence of military matters upon the economy, but the subjective factor, in the form of the military leaders, acquires a scope which is not available in the economic sphere.

The distinction, however, is by no means absolute and unalterable. The operation of the 'eternal' principle of free competition led, as we know, to monopoly, to the creation of powerful national and even international trusts. The individuals at the head of these trusts obtain a scope for strategical manoeuvres which is fully comparable to the theatre of military operations in the recent great war. Naturally, Rockefeller's scope for manifesting his 'free will' in the sphere of economic construction is immeasurably greater than that available to some ordinary industrialist or merchant of fifty or a hundred years ago. Rockefeller is not, however, an arbitrary violation of the Manchesterite truths, but their historical product and, at the same time, their living negation.

Every merchant-industrialist, from Gogol's Goat-beard to cleanshaven Rockefeller, has his own petty eternal truths of commercial operations: from 'if you don't cheat, you don't sell,' and so on, up to the complicated calculations of an oil trust. Italian book-keeping is, of course, not a science but an aggregate of craft practices. It can be raised to the level of an art when it is applied on the scale of a giant trust. The procedures and practices involved in managing an industrial enterprise, the methods of supplying it with raw material, the Taylor methods of organising work, the methods of calculating prices, and so on, constitute a highly complex practical system which might even be called a 'doctrine', in the sense of an aggregate of those practices, procedures, methods and devices which best ensure the plundering of the market. But this, of course, is not science. To put it more simply, political economy, that is, a genuine science, studies the internal relations of capitalist society, but does not in the least indicate the ways in which one may most certainly become rich. Military history, scientifically grounded, studies the typical features of the organisation of the army and of war in each given epoch, in correlation with the social structure of society, but it does not in the least teach, nor can it teach, how to create artillery or how most certainly to gain victory.

The military art of our time is summed up in regulations. These are concentrated experience of the past coined into currency intended for use in the future. What we have here is an aggregate of the procedures of a craft, or of an art. Just as a collection of textbooks on the best ways to organise industrial enterprises, on calculation, on book-keeping, on commercial correspondence, and the rest, does not constitute the science of capitalist society, so a collection of military manuals, instructions and regulations does not constitute military science.

To convince ourselves of the great unclarity and contradictoriness that prevails in the matter of the so-called eternal principles of military affairs (also known as the laws of military science), let us take the book *The Principles of War*, written by the

most victorious military leader of our time, Foch.

In his preface of 1905, Foch writes, on the basis of the initial data concerning the Russo-Japanese War: 'The manoeuvring offensive eventually gets the better of every form of resistance.' [This phrase does not appear in the English translation of Foch's book, made in 1918. It comes in the introduction to the 1905 edition.] Foch puts this idea forward as one of the eternal truths of the military art – in contrast, by the way, to our native innovators, who perceive in the strategy of the manoeuvring offensive qualities that are specific to revolutionary warfare. We shall presently see that both parties are mistaken: Foch, who sees the manoeuvring offensive as an eternal principle, and those comrades who see in the manoeuvring offensive the specific principle of the Red Army. In the preface to the first edition of this book, Foch quotes approvingly the words of Von der Goltz: 'Though it is true that the principles of military art are everlasting, the factors that this art deals with and has to take into account suffer a ceaseless evolution.' [5] It is the totality of these everlasting principles of military art that constitutes the theory of war. The existence of the theory is just what, according to Foch, makes war an art. One can thus say that the theory of war is the totality of those principles which were applied in all the correct operations, violation of which led to failure, and which must be applied in all wars in epochs to come. Consequently, principles ('everlasting' ones) do exist which formed the basis for military operations when Troy was taken, when the cunning Greeks hid in the belly of the wooden horse, and also for the operations of our own time, when a squadron of aeroplanes unload upon a city hundreds of pounds of explosives of extraordinary destructive power, or masses of poison gas. What sort of principles are these?

It is not a question here of laws of anatomy or psychology. Unquestionably there have been no very radical changes in that connection. A Greek or a Trojan whose heart was pierced died in just the same way as one of our fighting men dies. A coward took fright and fled from the battle. An army leader encouraged his men – and so on. Man's basic psycho-physiological and anatomical structure has not altered to any considerable extent. Needless to say, the laws of nature have remained the same. But the relations between man and nature have changed a very great deal. That artificial milieu which man interposes between himself and nature – tools, instruments, machines – has grown to such a degree as to transform completely methods of work, the organisation of work, social relations. There has undoubtedly been preserved since the days of Troy the urge among human groups (nations, classes) to exterminate, conquer and subjugate one another. The artificial milieu, or human technology, in the broad sense of the word, has transfigured war just as it has transfigured all other human relations. Undoubtedly, even in the period of the siege of Troy, this goal was being attained not by means of nails and teeth alone, but with the aid of artificial weapons which man interposed between himself and his enemy. This most general basis remains unchanged. In other words, war is a hostile encounter between human groups equipped with instruments for killing and destroying, with the direct aim of winning physical dominance over the enemy.

This definition sets the concept of war within the limits of social and historical frameworks. Pointing out the general features of war – first, the clash between groups of men; second, the use of weapons; and, third, the goal of gaining preponderance over the enemy – still does not, of course, furnish us with any principle of the military art. At the same time, this definition sets limits to the 'eternity' of war itself. During that period when man had not yet learnt to fight with sticks or stones, when he was not yet organised in regularly-functioning herds (clans

and tribes), there could obviously be no question of war, for a clash between two of our distant ancestors in a forest, biting through each other's throats on account of a female, cannot be treated as belonging to the sphere of military art, illuminated by the light of 'eternal principles'. Consequently, the eternity of the art of war must straightaway be limited, and a current account be opened for it only from the moment when man stood firmly erect on his hind legs, armed himself with a club, and learned to act in battle, as in economic life, collectively, in troops – even though these were as yet without firmly-decided establishments.

Von der Goltz, and Foch following him, acknowledge that the factors studied by military art undergo change (the stick, the musket, the automatic rifle, the machine-gun, the cannon, and so on), but the principles of the art remain, if not eternal, then unaltered since war first began.

What, then are these principles? In his preface to the second edition of his book, Foch seems to put forward the manoeuvring offensive as the main principle. But in the first lecture he gives this answer: 'There is, then, such a thing as the theory of war. That theory starts from a number of principles:

- The principle of economy of forces.
- The principle of freedom of action.
- The principle of free disposal of forces.
- The principle of security, etc.' [Foch, Eng. trans., p.8]

And, further on, in order to fortify himself ('help thou mine unbelief') [Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief (Mark, 924).] Foch adduces a few quotations, including the words of Marshal Bugeaud: 'There are few absolute principles, but, still, there are some.' [Foch, Eng. trans., p.9]

What is comprised by the first of these absolute principles, namely, the principle of economy of forces? The task of war is to destroy the enemy's manpower. This can be achieved only by means of a blow. For this blow a concentration of one's own forces is needed. But, before this blow can be struck, one has to find out where the enemy is, to cover oneself against an unexpected blow struck by him, to safeguard one's lines of communication, and so on. This requires detachment of the appropriate forces to carry out reconnaissance, guard duties, and so forth. The principle of economy of forces consists in detaching from one's main forces, in order to carry out such auxiliary and preparatory tasks, only such forces, no more and no less, as are required by the nature of these tasks; and, at the same time, ensuring that it will be possible to bring into play at the decisive moment these auxiliary detachments as well, so as to strike a concentrated blow. Foch explains that this result can be obtained only through a manoeuvring offensive carried out by the main nucleus together with the auxiliary detachments. The eternal principle of economy of forces is thus, according to Foch, characteristic only of the strategy of manoeuvre. And it is not surprising to find that he admits into the sanctuary of the art of war only manoeuvring offensive operations, holding that 'the theories current before this time were false.' [6] Proceeding from the manoeuvring offensive as the sole form of strategy, Foch predicts that 'the first actions of the next war will also be the most decisive ones' (p.10). [7] In harmony with this view, Foch draws the conclusion that 'such a war cannot last long, it must be conducted with violence and reach its goal quickly: otherwise it will remain without result.' (p.38)m[8]

Essentially, quoting these conclusions suffices to cause Foch's eternal principles to look quite pathetic in the light of subsequent events. During the last war the French

army – after initial and costly attempts at an offensive – went over to positional defence. The initial reverses did not at all pre-empt the war's outcome, as Foch had predicted. The war lasted for years. In essence, the war remained positional throughout, and was settled in the trenches. The initial period of field manoeuvres served merely to show the need to dig in. The final period of field operations merely revealed what had already been achieved in the trenches: the exhaustion of Germany's power of resistance.

This experience is worth something. While, according to Foch, the theories that dominated the French school of war until 1883 were false, and the light of the true principles began to shine towards the end of the last century, it was revealed only a decade after his book was written that war had developed in complete opposition to those predictions which Foch had deduced from eternal principles.

One may say, of course, that the error here is wholly an error on Foch's part, in that he simply failed to draw the necessary conclusions from correct principles. But, in fact, if the 'eternal' principle of economy of forces is cleansed of Foch's incorrect conclusions, not much is left of the principle itself. According to Foch's line of thought, which is here nourished mainly by the Napoleonic experience, one has first of all to track down the enemy, to protect oneself by bringing to the front, the flanks and the rear the troops needed for reconnaissance and guard purposes, and then, having defined the main direction of the blow to be struck, to subordinate all forces to the single task of a crushing offensive. Essentially, the bare principle of 'economy' of forces has little to do with all this. It all comes down to the pattern of Napoleon's offensive manoeuvre, in which every other consideration is subordinated to the moment of the concentrated blow.

The principle of economy of forces thus consists in expediently distributing one's forces between the main nucleus and the auxiliary troops, while preserving the possibility of using all of them to destroy the enemy's manpower. However, this same Foch gives another, more concrete and particular interpretation of the principle of economy of forces, based on a well-known conversation between Bonaparte and Moreau.

On his return from Egypt, Bonaparte explained to Moreau how he had secured for himself a preponderance of forces, despite his inferior numbers, by first falling with all his forces upon one wing of the enemy, routing it, and then availing himself of the disorder thus produced in order to attack the other wing with all his forces. [Bonaparte's conversation with Moreau is reported in Foch, Eng. trans., p.96] Does this mean that from the 'theorem' (as Foch expresses it) [Foch, Eng. trans, p.97] of economy of forces is to be derived the principle of successive routing of the two wings of the enemy army? Obviously not. We have here a specific case of a successful operation which is characterised by many very important elements: the number of troops involved, their armament, their morale, their disposition, the command, and so on. In the concrete circumstances, the problem was solved by Napoleon by one of the methods open to him. Its successful outcome proved that Napoleon was able, in the given instance, to make use of his forces; or, if you prefer, he used them economically; or he applied the principle of 'economy of forces.' And that's all. But to interpret the principle of economy of forces in this way is merely to give a different name to the principle of expediency. This principle counsels us to act sensibly, not spending our strength in vain. That is a little bit like the 'principles' of Kozma Prutkov. [\[9\]](#) If I know nothing of military matters as such, this principle will not help me in any way. When a mathematical law states that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides, I can deal

with every relevant phenomenon by applying this theorem in practice. But if all I know is the 'principle of economy of forces', to what can I apply it? It is just a mnemonic sign which can be made use of only if one possesses all the corresponding practical knowledge and know-how. Surprise, economy of forces, freedom of action, initiative, and so on and so forth – these are essentially just mnemonic signs for use by someone who knows the soldier's trade. The 'free masons' turned the signs of the mason's craft into the symbols of Freemasonry. Similarly, in military matters, a certain accumulated experience is given a symbolic, conventional name, and that is all there is to it – nothing more.

Foch proves the absolute, or eternal, character of the principle of 'freedom of action' by tracing it back to Xenophon: 'The art of war is the art of keeping one's own freedom of action.' But what is the content of this freedom? Above all, you must maintain freedom of initiative in relation to the enemy, that is, he must not be given the opportunity to constrain your will. In this general form the principle is quite incontestable. But it applies also to fencing, to chess, and in general to every form of two-sided sport – and, finally, to parliamentary and juridical debates. Foch later gives another interpretation to this principle, according to which freedom of action is retained only by the commander-in-chief. All the other commanders are subject to constraint, because they have to act within the framework of his tasks. Consequently, their will is constrained not only by the material situation but also by formal orders they have received. But economy of forces, or common sense, or expediency whichever you prefer – demands that the framework imposed by the supreme command on subordinate commanders shall not be too narrow. In other words, it is necessary, after setting a clearly defined goal, to leave to the subordinate commander the maximum freedom in choosing and combining means for reaching that goal. In such a general form as this the principle is again indisputable. The difficulty consists, however, in finding, when one issues an order, the limit beyond which definition of the goal becomes excessive tutelage over the choice of means. The 'theorem' does not in itself provide any ready-made solution here. At best it only serves to remind the commander that he has to find some solution to this problem. But even apart from this, it is quite clear that Foch gives an equivocal interpretation to the principle of freedom of action. On the one hand, it is that degree of initiative in battle which ensures the necessary independence in relation to the enemy's will, but, on the other hand, it is a sufficiently wide freedom granted to the lower commanders, within the limits of the aims and tasks laid down by the supreme command.

Neither, the former nor the latter interpretation can, however, be called a theorem, even in the broadest meaning of that word. In mathematics we understand by a theorem a correlation of variable magnitudes which holds good under all quantitative changes in these magnitudes. In other words, the equivalence is not disturbed, whatever arithmetical figures may be substituted for the algebraic terms designating the magnitudes. But what does the principle of economy of forces signify? Or the principle of freedom of action? Is this really a theorem which would enable one, by substituting concrete magnitudes, to draw correct practical conclusions? Not at all. If we try to invest this principle with truly 'absolute' meaning, that is, to raise it to the level of a theorem, what we get is an indisputable commonplace such as: it is necessary to use all forces expediently; it is necessary to retain one's initiative for action; it is necessary to issue orders that are expedient, or realisable, and therefore to avoid including in them any superfluous conditions, and so forth. In this form these are not at all military principles, but *axioms of all purposive human activity in general*.

In point of fact, however, these and similar principles are given by military theoreticians a more concrete interpretation, that is, these principles are made to include (either frankly or surreptitiously) regiments, corps and armies with a specific structure and armament, which operate on the basis of numerous regulations and instructions that sum up the experience of the past. In this form there is nothing eternal about these eternal principles, and they in no way resemble theorems, but are the conventional denominations of certain procedures, empirical practices, positive and negative experiences, and so on. Essentially, no military theoreticians escape from the framework of this contradiction: in order to demonstrate the eternal character of the principles of the military art, they throw out the entire 'ballast' of living historical experience and reduce them to pleonasms, to commonplaces, Euclidean postulates, axioms of logic, and so on. On the other hand, in order to demonstrate the importance of these principles for military affairs, they stuff these principles with the content of a particular epoch, a specific stage in the development of an army or in the development of military affairs, and, thereby, these principles are invested with the character of useful practical 'cribs' to help the memory. These are not scientific generalisations but practical directives, not theorems but regulations. They are not eternal but temporary. Their significance is all the greater the less absolute they are, that is, the more they are filled with the concrete content of a particular period of military affairs, its vital peculiarities in organisation, technique and so on. They are not absolute, but conditional. They constitute not a branch of science but a practical guide to an art. Frederick's statement that 'war is a science for the outstanding, an art for the mediocre, and a craft for the ignorant' is wrong. There is not and cannot be a science of war, in the precise meaning of that word. There is an art of war. However, a craft, a trade, also presupposes an apprenticeship, and he who has been apprenticed to a trade is no ignoramus. It would be more correct to say that war is a craft, a trade, for an average man, and an art for an outstanding man. As for the ignorant man, he is only the raw material for war, its cannon-fodder, and not at all a craftsman.

The attempt to eternalise the principles of Napoleon proved, as we have seen, unfounded. This was shown by the imperialist war. It could not have been otherwise, if only because the wars of the Revolution, like Napoleonic wars which grew out of them, were marked by the immense moral and political preponderance of the revolutionary people of France and their army over all the rest of Europe. The French took the offensive on behalf of a new idea which was bound up with the powerful interests of the masses. The armies opposed to them put up only a diffident defence of the old order. But during the recent imperialist war neither side was the bearer of a new principle, incarnated in a new revolutionary class. The war was imperialistic on both sides. But, at the same time, the existence of both sides, and especially of Germany and of France, was equally threatened. No swift blow was struck, such as might have immediately caused demoralisation and dejection in the opposing camp, nor could it have been struck, given the great human and material strength of both camps, which gradually moved up all their forces and resources. For this reason the initial battles, contrary to Foch's forecasts, did not at all pre-determine the outcome of the war. For this reason, too, offensives broke against offensives, and the armies, each relying more and more on its rear, dug themselves into the ground. For this very same reason, the war lasted a long time – until the material and moral resources of one side were exhausted. The imperialist war thus ran its course, from beginning to end, in violation of the 'eternal' principle of the manoeuvring offensive, as proclaimed by Foch. This circumstance is only further emphasised by the fact that Foch proved to be the victor against his own principle. To explain this we must remember that, while Foch's principles were

against him, the British and American soldiers and, especially, the Anglo-American shells, tanks and aeroplanes, were for him.

One may, of course, say that the principle of economy of forces remains valid for positional warfare as well, for in *this* case, too, there must be an expedient distribution of forces between the units in the front line and the various categories held in reserve. That is quite indisputable. But, *with* such a general interpretation, not even a trace remains of the schema whereby forces are distributed with a view to striking a concentrated offensive blow. The 'eternal' principle dissolves into a commonplace. In positional, defensive and offensive wars, as well as in wars of manoeuvre, it is necessary to have an expedient and economic distribution of forces, determined by the task in hand. It is quite obvious that *this* 'eternal principle' applies in war just as in industry and in commerce. One must always use one's forces economically, that is, obtain the maximum results from the minimum expenditure of energy. All mankind's development is based on this 'eternal' principle, and technology first and foremost: it was for this reason that man took to using a stone axe, a club, and so forth – because he thus obtained the greatest results from the least expenditure of effort. Precisely for this reason was it that man progressed from the club to the pike and the sword, from them to the musket and the bayonet, and later to the cannon, etc. For this same reason he is now going over to the electric plough. The eternal principle of war thus amounts to the 'principle' which is the driving force of all human development. As for the *concrete* interpretation given by Foch to the principle of economy of forces, this proved to be an unfounded attempt to invest with an absolute character the Napoleonic offensive manoeuvre resulting in a concentrated blow.

And so, in so far as the principle of economy of forces is 'eternal', there is nothing military about it. And, in so far as it is given a military interpretation, there is nothing eternal about it, either.

But why does this talk of 'eternal' principles so stubbornly persist? Because, as has already been said, at the basis there is man. Human qualities undergo little change. Anatomical, physiological, psychological qualities change very slowly, as compared with changes in social forms. The correlation of man's hands and feet and the structure of his head remains in our epoch, more or less the same as in the epoch of Aristotle. We know that Marx read Aristotle with enjoyment. And if it were possible, having transferred Aristotle to our epoch, to offer him Marx's books to read, he would in all likelihood understand them excellently.

Man's anatomical and psycho-physical make-up is far more stable than social forms are. Corresponding to this fact, there are two aspects to military affairs. There is the individual aspect, which finds expression in certain practices and procedures, determined, to a large extent, by man's biological nature, which, though not eternal, is stable: and there is the collective-historical aspect, which depends on the way that man engaged in war is organised socially. But it is precisely this latter factor which is decisive, because war begins when a socially-organised armed man enters into combat with another socially-organised armed man. Otherwise it would be just a squabble between animals.

Comrade Lukirsky approached the problem in this way. On the one hand, there is experience, empirical investigation – an imperfect method. On the other hand there is 'pure reason', which arrives deductively, by means of logical procedures, at 'absolute' conclusions, and thereby enriches military matters. As a materialist I am used to regarding reason as an organ developed by historical man in the process of

his adaptation to nature. I cannot counterpose reason to matter. I cannot agree to think that reason can give birth to anything that material experience has not already provided. Our reason merely co-ordinates and combines conclusions drawn from our practice: from 'pure' reason man can extract nothing new, nothing he has not absorbed from experience. Experience does not, of course, 'take shape' mechanically – an order is introduced into it which corresponds to the order of the phenomena themselves, and leads to cognition of the laws that govern these phenomena. But to suppose that reason can engender by itself, arbitrarily, a conclusion which has not been prepared and grounded in experience – that is absolutely wrong. And, since this is so, there cannot be, either, two sorts of principles, the practical and the eternal.

Let me conclude with this. We have already had one discussion about 'military doctrine', and today we reached the ultimate heights of philosophy. The time has come to begin the downward climb and to apply ourselves to practical study. We once planned to bring out a **Compendium for the Section Commander**, but nothing has come of that so far. Which is it harder to write – abstract theses, or a compendium for the section commander? The latter task is a hundred times harder; but, as against that, it is a thousand times more fruitful. I will make use of this large gathering, the presence of many competent workers, to put forward once again my proposal that we produce some general directives for the section commander – a little standard work, a **Science of Victory**. It would be an excellent school for all of us if we were to set down our experience of war in the form of such clear and distinct rules that a section commander could not only read them but also learn them by heart.

Out of the very same bricks one can build a factory, a dwelling-house or a temple. The only requirement is that the bricks be made of good material and properly baked. The very same regiments, with identical training, and under uniform circumstances, can be deployed and utilised for the most diverse strategical and tactical tasks. All that is required is that the basic cell, the *section*, be viable and resilient. And for that we need a conscious section-commander who knows his job and knows his own worth. Our task of tasks now consists in educating such section commanders. Educating a proletarian section-commander does not at all mean implanting in his mind the idea that, hitherto, there have been bourgeois tactics, but now the time has come for proletarian tactics. No, such training would lead him astray. Creating a proletarian section commander means helping the section commander of today to acquire at least that sum of knowledge and practices which his equivalent in the bourgeois armies possesses, so that he may consciously use this knowledge and these practices in the interests of the working class.

Endnotes

1. The stenogram of this speech was preserved in highly incomplete form. Correcting it presented great difficulty. However, found among my old papers some fairly extensive notes for an article, which I never finished on the same subject: military science, military art, eternal laws, Marxism, and so on. This article, which remained unfinished and unpublished, was written soon after this meeting of the Military Science Society at which I made the speech printed here. I have used my old notes to replace certain obscure passages in the stenogram. This has given the work somewhat more polish, and I consider it publishable in this form. [*Note by Trotsky*]

2. The reference is to the articles in the periodical **Krasnaya Armiya**, No.12, March 1922: *On a Certain Theoretical Passion* and *Concerning Kvarin's Article*.

3. The controversy had been about whether military matters constituted a science (*nauka*) or an art (*iskusstvo*).

4. Engels mentions Marx's 'All I know is that I'm no Marxist!' in a letter to Paul Lafargue, August 27, 1890 (**Correspondence of F. Engels with P. and L. Lafargue**, Vol.II, 1960, p.386).

5. English translation of Foch's book. p.vi. The Von der Goltz quoted is Field-Marshal Colmar von der Goltz, 1843-1916, who wrote several books (of which **The Nation in Arms** and **The Conduct of War** were translated into English), reorganised the Turkish Army, and died while commanding Turkish troops against the British in Mesopotamia.

6. This phrase referring to the period ended in 1883, is omitted in the English translation. It appears on page 2 of the 3rd edition of the original (**Des principes de la guerre**).

7. Foch, Eng. trans., p.%. (The English translation, published in 1918, has a footnote: 'Words written before the Great War of 1914.'

8. Foch, Eng. trans., p.39. In his 1918 preface to the English translation of his book, Foch noted that the machine-gun and barbed wire gave new advantages to the defence, but that the attacker overcame these by means of the tank.

9. 'Kozma Prutkov', a fictional character invented in the 1860s by A.K. Tolstoy and the brothers A.M. and B.M. Zhemchuzhnikov, was a self-satisfied civil servant who fancied himself as a philosopher and uttered 'aphorisms' of the utmost banality as though they were pearls of wisdom.