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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

MIKHAIL TUKHACHEVSKY IN THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

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Abstract

Much has been written about Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky. His development of the "Deep Battle" military theory in the late 1920s and 1930s, the attendant mechanisation of the Red Army and his role in the development of the Soviet military/industrial complex have been well-researched. The "Tukhachevsky Affair", the discussion surrounding his execution in the military purge of 1937, continues to attract interest. However, a detailed analysis of his early life and Civil War command career has never been completed. This gap is filled by this thesis.

Tukhachevsky's early life is explored to provide background, but also to provide a biographical account and to illustrate who he was when he joined the Red Army and Bolshevik Party in 1918. The thesis demonstrates that he was not a communist at this stage. However, his command experiences during the Civil War, combining military tactics of continuous manoeuvre warfare with constant frontline mobilisations, political agitation and repression, allowed him to develop a theory of class warfare and saw his conversion to a belief in the efficacy of Marxist principles when applied to military methods. Tukhachevsky's success in the Civil War is compared to his failure in the Polish-Soviet War and the basis for the latter is that his continuation of class warfare methods were unsuitable for the conflict in Poland.

The success of Tukhachevsky's class warfare methods is explained by their relevance to the situation and social fabric of Russia at the time. The retention of these principles to form the basis of the operational side of "Deep Battle" is argued, as is Tukhachevsky's openness to innovation in weaponry and tactics gleaned during his Civil War command. Tukhachevsky's role in early Red Army formulation is detailed, as is his development of the concept of "unified command" involving the creation of Red Commanders.

The Communist Party leadership's use of Tukhachevsky as a "troubleshooter" to deal with prioritised areas during the Civil War, leading to his service on every major Front at crucial stages is highlighted, as are the connections he made on the Civil War battlefields, friendly and hostile. It is shown that during his Civil War commands he met with those with whom he would later work and that their collaboration and experimentation began almost immediately.

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

In memory of Professor John Erickson, whom I had the great privilege to meet and get to know a little. Without his help, I would not have gained access to the archival sources vital to my research and the originality of my work would have been considerably lessened. Professor Erickson's breadth of knowledge, insight and immense enthusiasm for history and learning was an inspiration and I left meetings with him full of ideas and bursting with energy. I hope I have reflected some of this in my thesis. A great gentleman and unsurpassable scholar who is missed by many. Thank you.

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I must thank several organisations for their financial support which enabled me to conduct archival research in Russia - The Sudborough Foundation, The Scottish International Education Trust, The Cross Trust and The ATP Foundation.

The bulk of my research has been conducted in Glasgow and I wish to note my appreciation here to the inter-library loan staff at Glasgow University Library who have obtained many sources I would otherwise have never had access to.

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Introduction

Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky was a prominent figure in the history of the Soviet Union. Appointed one of the first five Marshals of the Soviet Union in 1935, he served as Deputy Peoples' Commissar of Defence and Chief of Armaments of the Red Army from 1931-1937, playing a major role in the formation and build-up of the armed forces of the Soviet Union and the military-industrial complex which was to dominate the nation for its duration.¹

Executed in the military purge of 1937, he was written out of Soviet history for the next twenty years. Only with Tukhachevsky's rehabilitation in 1957, did literature begin to appear in the Soviet Union about his life. A selection of his written works appeared in 1964, accompanied by a collection of memoirs by former comrades, biographies and works on his military theory.² He was finally credited with the development of the operational theories by which the Soviet Union conducted operations from 1943-1945 to defeat Nazi Germany. Articles began to appear in newspapers and journals throughout the Soviet Union and over the next twenty-five years, further biographical works were published.³ These Soviet biographies reflect the changing nature of the Soviet regime. The 1960s works of Nikulin and Todorskii carried on the rehabilitation process, lauding Tukhachevsky's military achievements and portraying a loyal communist soldier. Rakovskii and Popov, published during the Brezhnev era, typically for that time reiterated the earlier works, without adding anything new. However, Gorelik, Ivanov, Shchetinov and Starkov and Daines provided a deeper insight, appearing during Gorbachev's *glasnost'* era, and able to admit, fitfully, that Tukhachevsky was perhaps not simply a pure communist soldier.

¹ The other Marshals appointed were Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov, Semen Mikhailovich Budennyi, Aleksandr Il'ich Egorov and Vasilii Konstantinovich Bliukher.

² M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tomy I-II, 1919-1937*, (Moscow, 1964); L. Nikulin, *Tukhachevsky, biograficheskii ocherk'*, (Moscow, 1964); A. I. Todorskii, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, (Moscow, 1963); N. I. Koritskii, ed., *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia друзей i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965); A seemingly unpublished biography by G. S. Isserson, a former Professor at the Red Army General Staff Academy is held in *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 6, pp. 1-145.

³ L. Rakovskii, *Mikhail Tukhachevsky - Povest'*, (Leningrad, 1967); A. S. Popov, *Trud, Talant, Doblest'*, (Moscow, 1972); Ia. M. Gorelik, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, (Saratov, 1986); V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, 2nd Edition, (Moscow, 1990); Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, *Krasnyi Marshal*, (Moscow, 1990).

The collapse of the Soviet Union did not immediately witness the appearance of further biographical works on Tukhachevsky, but towards the late 1990s, several have appeared, approaching the subject from varying angles. Smirnov attempts to turn the good communist theory on its head, whilst Sokolov takes a more balanced view.⁴ Other works have looked at Tukhachevsky in relation to wider Red Army affairs in the 1920s and 1930s, notably Minakov.⁵

In the West, several works appeared from varying sources during the Soviet period. A biography by Gul', a White émigré from the Russian Civil War, predictably presented Tukhachevsky in an entirely different light from the Soviet biographies, emphasising his semi-noble background, but it is an interesting early source, written whilst Tukhachevsky was still alive.⁶ The book by Pierre Fervacque, *Le Chef de L'Armée Rouge*, recalled time spent by the author and Tukhachevsky in the German Ingolstadt prisoner-of-war camp and another memoir source by Lidia North provides useful material.⁷

Research surrounding Tukhachevsky after his rehabilitation concentrated predictably on his execution, as details were sought to explain why Stalin killed one of his most important commanders, on the eve of his clash with Hitler. Alexandrov's work began the speculation surrounding Tukhachevsky's death and this continues today.⁸ Much study has been conducted on this part of Tukhachevsky's life.

More recently however, research has focused on Tukhachevsky's work in the late 1920s and 1930s. Simpkin and Erickson explored the development of "Deep Battle" in the 1920s, whilst Samuelson, Stoecker and Stone examined Tukhachevsky's role in the build-up of the military-industrial complex and the mechanised Red Army.⁹ These areas have been well-covered.

⁴ G. V. Smirnov, *Krovavyyi marshal, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, 1893-1937*, (St. Petersburg, 1997); B. Sokolov, *Mikhail Tukhachevsky: zhizn' i smert' Krasnogo marshala*, (Smolensk, 1999).

⁵ S. T. Minakov, *Za otvorotom marshal'skoi shineli*, (Orel, 1999) and *Sovetskaia voennaia elita 20-kh godov: (Sostav, evoliutsiia, sotsiokulturnye osobennosti i politicheskaia rol')*, (Orel, 2000).

⁶ R. Gul', *Tukhachevsky: krasnyi marshal*, (Berlin, 1932).

⁷ P. Fervacque, *Le Chef de L'Armée Rouge*, (Paris, 1928); L. North, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, (Paris, 1978).

⁸ V. Alexandrov, (trans. J. Hewish), *The Tukhachevsky Affair*, (London, 1962).

⁹ R. Simpkin & J. Erickson, *The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii*, (London; Washington, 1987); S. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation*, (Oxford, 1998); L. Samuelson, *Plans for Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military-Economic Planning, 1925-1941*, (London, 2000); D. Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926-1933*, (Kansas, 2000).

However, a glaring gap exists in the literature on Tukhachevsky, which this thesis fills. Tukhachevsky's early life and Russian Civil War command career have not been researched in depth in either Soviet, Russian or Western publications. The Soviet biographies examine these areas, but only in a way designed to illustrate Tukhachevsky's good communist pedigree, and of the post-Soviet Russian biographies, only Sokolov adds anything worthwhile. Several Western biographical works have appeared, but whilst questioning the loyal communist line, and variously describing Tukhachevsky as an "aristocratic-communist" or a "noble revolutionary", they have relied too heavily on the Soviet biographies regarding Tukhachevsky's early life and Civil War career. They have not utilised archival or sufficient documentary sources to produce new insights.¹⁰

Study of Tukhachevsky's background and early life has thus far been neglected, but is crucial to draw the complete picture of the later man. In this thesis, I examine previously unused archival sources and newly-available published documentary collections to provide information surrounding Tukhachevsky's early life and Civil War career. Existing documentary collections and memoir sources, which have either not been used or only cursorily, are also examined in detail to give as detailed an assessment as possible of Tukhachevsky's early days and frontline command career, to show the origins of his later ideas.

Tukhachevsky produced a plethora of written works on every aspect of the military. These were often written during or just after the events about which he was writing. This thesis has utilised a wide a selection of Tukhachevsky's works where relevant. In this way, the structure of Chapters III, IV and V follow basically the same pattern. Tukhachevsky's assessment of the events in which he was involved are presented and considered alongside other sources to determine his originality, accuracy and motivations.

Chapter I provides an examination of Tukhachevsky's early life, civil and military education and Great War combat and prisoner-of-war experiences, concluding with his return to Russia in October 1917 and decision to join the Red Army in early 1918. The

¹⁰ T. Butson, *The Tsar's Lieutenant. The Soviet Marshal*, (New York, 1984); A. F. Kaufmann Jr., *Aristocratic Communist: The Life of M. N. Tukhachevskii and the Continuity of Imperial Army Tradition in the Soviet Military*, (PhD diss. University of Arkansas, 1991); W. Spahr, *Stalin's Lieutenants: A Study of Command Under Duress*, (Novato, Calif., 1997).

character traits and personality necessary to succeed during the Civil War were evident in Tukhachevsky from an early age. Therefore, understanding who Tukhachevsky was and what his motivations were in late 1917, is crucial to determine why he chose the path he did in 1918. This chapter provides both a crucial early biographical account, but also essential background for studying Tukhachevsky's Civil War career, examining Tukhachevsky as a Tsarist Army officer. The source material for this chapter was initially based around biographical and memoir sources, but research in the Russian archives, particularly *RGVA* fond 37605, *Lichnyi fond Mikhaila Nikolaevicha Tukhachevskogo* (Personal fond of Tukhachevsky), has enabled the completion of a more in-depth early biographical account than has previously appeared.

Chapter II covers the first eight months of 1918, during which time Tukhachevsky joined the Bolshevik Party. His motives for this are examined. He played an integral part in the formation of the Red Army at this time, initially working at the hub of the administrative organisational system, before being despatched eastwards to help build the materialising Eastern Front to fight the Czechoslovak Legion. This was not war in the conventional sense and the atmosphere of treachery, amid ad hoc measures and decision-making, introduced him to aspects of civil warfare about which he would begin to theorise. His performance under pressure was pivotal in showing his worth to Moscow and set him on his way to successful Civil War command. This chapter again draws on previously unused archival sources and also extensive memoir material on Tukhachevsky and the Eastern Front in 1918. Published documentary collections which have not been utilised in the available literature are used, as are others only partially employed to date.¹¹

Chapters III and IV study Tukhachevsky as a frontline commander in the Russian Civil War. Chapter III presents Tukhachevsky's analysis of the Civil War, suggests links between this and "Deep Battle", and studies Tukhachevsky's early commands from August 1918-March 1919. Chapter IV examines Tukhachevsky's commands from April 1919-April 1920, during which time he emerged as perhaps the epitome of the "Red Commander" envisaged by Lenin and Trotsky. These chapters introduce Tukhachevsky

¹¹ *Boevoi put' pervoi revoliutsionnoi armii Vostochnogo i Turkestanogo frontov, Iiun' 1918-fevral' 1921gg.* (*Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*), (Ashkhabad, 1972); *Direktivy Glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi Armii (1917-1920)*. *Sbornik dokumentov*, (hereafter *DGkKA*), (Moscow, 1969); *Direktivy komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii (1917-1922)*, *Sbornik dokumentov v 4-kh tomakh*, (Moscow, 1971-1978).

as an army commander of conventional forces, but also illustrate his development as a military theoretician and an advocate of revolutionary class warfare. By studying his campaigns individually to identify specific tactical experiments or discoveries, but also comparatively to find patterns in his command style and decision-making, the evolution of Tukhachevsky as a class civil war commander can be charted. His relations with other military personnel and the development in his thought and character this engendered is highlighted. How representative this was of the developing dynamics of Red Army leadership is illustrated by examining Red Army intra-hierarchical relations and Tukhachevsky's place in them. In examining both the military and political aspects of Tukhachevsky's developing thought process and the campaigns which inspired it, the origins of the operational side of "Deep Battle" can be traced directly to Tukhachevsky's Civil War command, both in the nature of his campaign leadership and in the writings he produced at the time to explain his experiences. His success in this period is traced to his methods, which were initially imposed upon him by an impatient Red leadership, matching the nature of Russian Civil Warfare in a military, political, social and economic sense. The role of troubleshooter he fulfilled for Moscow, being despatched to prioritised fronts at crucial times, is analysed.

The source base for Chapters III and IV is almost entirely original. A more detailed use of *DGgKA* and *DkfKA* than has previously been attempted, combined with the use of other published documentary sources, memoir material and archival material, has allowed the compilation of a comprehensive collection of Tukhachevsky's and related commanders' battle orders throughout the Civil War.¹² Using these alongside a wide array of Tukhachevsky's written works, including *Voina klassov*, has produced an analysis of Tukhachevsky's Civil War command, its origins, evolution and nature.¹³

Chapter V examines Tukhachevsky in the role of Western Front Commander in the Polish-Soviet War. This is analysed in close comparison to Chapters III and IV to demonstrate that Tukhachevsky and the Red High Command fought this war in the same manner, but ultimately lost it because of this. Tukhachevsky's campaigns in Belorussia

¹² *V boiakh rozhdeniia, 1918-1920: boevoi put' 5 armii. Sbornik dokumentov*, (Irkutsk, 1985); M. V. Frunze na Vostochnom Fronte, (Kuibyshev, 1958).

¹³ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Voina klassov*, (Smolensk, 1921).

and Poland are analysed, as is the aftermath of the Polish counter-attack. The reasons for the Soviet defeat are discussed to demonstrate the lessons which Tukhachevsky learned in defeat and their contribution to "Deep Battle" operational formulation. This chapter is again based almost wholly on original sources. A detailed study of *DGgKA* and *DkfKA* provides a unique compilation of Tukhachevsky's command orders. Analysing these alongside Tukhachevsky's works, *Voina klassov* once more, but especially *Pokhod za Vislu*, allows an accurate portrayal of Tukhachevsky's command style in Poland and a comparison with Civil War command.¹⁴ Some concluding remarks relate back to Tukhachevsky's Civil War analysis presented in Chapter III.

In the conclusion, the various chapter themes and threads which run through the thesis are drawn together to sum up Tukhachevsky's contribution to the Red victory in the Russian Civil War, his evolution as a military theorist and person and the possible influence his Civil War career had on his later downfall.

¹⁴ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I, 1919-1927*, pp. 114-168.

Chapter I: Background - 1893-1918

"My real life began with the October Revolution".

The above statement was made by Mikhail Tukhachevsky in 1935 at the pinnacle of his military career in the Soviet Red Army. Despite being a Marshal of the Soviet Union and Deputy Defence Commissar, Tukhachevsky's position was not secure and he would be executed as part of Stalin's military purge two years later. Remarks such as the above were necessary in the prevailing atmosphere of the 1930s. However, this quote has been reproduced by Soviet writers since Tukhachevsky's rehabilitation as proof of his commitment to communism and the Revolution in Russia. This is convenient as it allows Tukhachevsky's early life before 1917 to be ignored and discounted when explaining his influence on the Red Army. However, the experiences gained and opinions formed during this period shaped the man who joined the Red Army and Communist Party in 1918. Who was Tukhachevsky before he became a communist soldier and when did he make the decision to join the Bolsheviks? How did his early life, education and experiences lead him to these decisions and could he have followed another path? This first chapter will outline who Mikhail Tukhachevsky was as a young man to answer the above questions.

Early Life

Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky was born on 3rd (15th) February 1893 in the village of Slednevo,¹ on Alexandrovskii Estate in Dorogobuzhskii *uezd*, Smolensk Province.² He was born into a long line of nobles, originating from the Count Idris (Indris), an emigrant from the Holy Roman Empire who served the Grand Prince of Kiev, Mstislav Vladimirovich, in 1251. The family's 6th generation moved to Moscow to serve Great Knight Vasilii Dmitrievich in 1408 and assumed the name Tukhachevsky when Bogdan Grigorievich of the 7th generation was rewarded by Great Knight Vasilii Vasil'evich with the villages of Skorino and Tukhachevsky in

¹ *Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv (RGVA)*. fond. 37605, opis. 1, delo. 3, p. 38.

² *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), p. 231.

Serpeisk *uezd*. Later generations gained land in Smolensk, Briansk and Penza Provinces and a tradition of military service for the Tsars emerged.

On 25th August 1831, Colonel Aleksandr Nikolaevich Tikhachevsky, Tikhachevsky's great-grandfather, was killed in action at Warsaw. He had joined the Semenovskii Life-Guard Regiment in 1810, commanding the 2nd Grenadier Company, but was transferred to the Archangelodskii Infantry Regiment for participating in a regimental uprising. He fought in the Fatherland War against Napoleon and the Turkish Wars at Tarytin, Lützen and the fortress of Shumle, before his death. Tikhachevsky's great-great-uncle was a cavalry colonel and major-general and his great-uncle served as a major-general, commanding 7th Hussar Belorussian Regiment, falling in action in 1812 against Napoleon.³ Military traditions were strong in the family, giving credence to the suggestion that as a child Tikhachevsky liked to hear war stories, being especially proud of his great-grandfather fighting Napoleon with Suvorov.⁴ Tikhachevsky later wore an engraved silver ring in memory of his great-grandfather.⁵

Tikhachevsky's grandfather served as Smolensk Province Secretary,⁶ but his father lived as a landlord, not a working noble.⁷ However, he did not believe in the absolute rights of the autocracy and did not reinforce them.⁸ He did not participate in any governmental or societal activities, which perhaps contributed to his family's impoverishment, but devoted all his time to raising his family and ensuring they had the best possible education, instilling in them his beliefs in a fair, sober lifestyle with respect for the peasant population. Tikhachevsky's sisters describe him as a man cultured in art and literature and an atheist who did not covet wealth, bringing his family up this way and probably ahead of his time in the late 19th Century.⁹ This was illustrated most clearly by his marriage.

³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, pp. 56-62.

⁴ V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tikhachevsky*, (Moscow, 1990), pp. 21-22.

⁵ P. Fervacque, *Le Chef de L'Armee Rouge*, (Paris, 1928), p. 33.

⁶ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 61.

⁷ L. Nikulin, *Tikhachevsky: Biograficheskii ocherk*, (Moscow, 1964), p. 10.

⁸ A. I. Todorskii, *Marshal Tikhachevsky*, (Moscow, 1964), p. 8.

⁹ E. N. Arvatova-Tikhachevskaiia & O. N. Tikhachevskaiia, "On liubil zhizn'" *Marshal Tikhachevsky: Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 10 & 12; A. I. Todorskii, pp. 9 & 12.

Tukhachevsky's mother, Mavra Petrovna, was a simple peasant living on his grandfather's estate in the village of Kniazhino. Tukhachevsky's father married her despite her position and the shunning of high society which would have followed. Mavra Petrovna is described as an educated and intelligent woman who taught her family "respect for working people".¹⁰ She kept close ties with her large family, so from an early age Tukhachevsky knew of the rigours of peasant life. Ivanov suggests Tukhachevsky liked to think of his mother's ancestors as being in the ranks of the Smolensk Partisans in 1812, fighting the French,¹¹ which is possible given his early interest in the Napoleonic campaign.

Tukhachevsky was one of a large family, the second eldest of nine. Nikolai, Aleksandr and Nadezhda were born, like Tukhachevsky, in Smolensk Province, but the five younger siblings - Igor, Sofia, Olga, Elizabeth and Maria - were born in Penza Province, to where the family moved in 1898. His father's material difficulties forced him to sell his estate and move to the estate of Tukhachevsky's grandmother, Sofia Valentinovna, near Vrazhskoe, in Chembarsk *uezd*.¹²

Tukhachevsky's grandmother is described as a great influence during his upbringing. Tukhachevsky is quoted as saying she was French.¹³ He also had a French governess,¹⁴ possibly named Mademoiselle Zhegy,¹⁵ making it no surprise that he spoke French, from childhood.¹⁶ Tukhachevsky also spoke German and it is suggested he had to devote little time to language classes later in cadet corps.¹⁷ His grandmother also contributed in a material sense to the family's education, mortgaging her estate repeatedly to pay for it.¹⁸

¹⁰ L. Nikulin, pp. 12-13; E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaja & O. N. Tukhachevskaja, p. 10.

¹¹ V. M. Ivanov, p. 21.

¹² Ia. M. Gorelik, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, (Saratov, 1986), p. 5; V. M. Ivanov, p. 20; In 1990 a settlement remained here named Tukhachevsky.

¹³ V. Alexandrov, *The Tukhachevskii Affair*, (trans. J. Hewish), (London, 1962), p. 80. General de Goys de Mezeyrac, interned with Tukhachevsky later in Ingolstadt commented he was "...not a little surprised to hear him speak impeccable French"; Nikulin writes that Tukhachevsky later surprised Eduard Herriot, a French Government Representative, with his lingual abilities, p. 17.

¹⁴ P. Fervacque, p. 20.

¹⁵ R. Gul', *Krasnyi Marshal*, (Berlin, 1932), p. 10. However, Gul' inaccurately states that Tukhachevsky's mother died early leaving his upbringing largely in the hands of the governess.

¹⁶ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 39.

¹⁷ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 10.

¹⁸ R. Gul', pp. 14-15.

School Life

Tukhachevsky's family lived in Vrazhskoe during the summer and Penza in the winter. Penza is described as one of the most enlightened Russian towns in the early 20th Century, being named the "Mordvinian Athens". It contained male and female *gimnasii*,¹⁹ an art school with a large gallery, a good library named after Lermontov and a reading-room named after Belinskii, which Chekov had helped found. It was a very cultured town, which Nikulin suggests was probably why Tukhachevsky's father moved the family there.²⁰ Monetary difficulties were the main reason for the move, but Tukhachevsky's father, a man who "loved only music and art,"²¹ must have hoped the cultured surroundings of Penza would influence his children in their careers. They were all encouraged to play musical instruments alongside the father and grandmother, cementing Tukhachevsky's interest in music from an early age.²² In later years, although himself admitting he was only an average violinist, he became an accomplished instrument maker, building five violins and a cello for his brother Aleksandr, prompting his family to call him "golden hands".²³ He had equipment for lacquer preparation in his flat and wrote essays on techniques of preparing the best lacquer for priming violins to create the finest sound quality.²⁴ A more poignant postscript to this musical interest came in 1937, when Tukhachevsky, knowing his fate was sealed, reminisced to one of his sisters, "How I in childhood asked to have a violin bought for me, but father because of eternal poverty was not able to do this. Perhaps if I had been a professional violinist...".²⁵ This may have been his father's wish, but Tukhachevsky had other ideas.

From a young age, Tukhachevsky asked to attend cadet corps, but his father refused permission.²⁶ As the son of a noble he had this right, but his father again could not afford it, falling outwith the categories which qualified for state-funding

¹⁹ Russian secondary schools.

²⁰ L. Nikulin, pp. 16-17.

²¹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 51.

²² E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaja & O. N. Tukhachevskaja, p. 13.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 11; One of these violins is displayed in the Central Armed Forces Museum in Moscow.

²⁴ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 9. These essays are also held in Tukhachevsky's personal file.

²⁵ E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaja & O. N. Tukhachevskaja, p. 18.

(these were mainly sons of military men).²⁷ Therefore, a combination of his father's wishes and poverty led to Tukhachevsky's initial schooling. He attended 1st Penza Belinskii *Gimnasia* from 1904-1909.²⁸

Varied accounts are provided of Tukhachevsky's Penza school days. Gul' writes that he was nothing like the Communist Red Army Commander he would become, but an arrogant, unsociable loner who courted no friendship. Maintaining the distance and reserve of an aristocrat, he had no scientific interests, dismissed learning Latin as nonsense and had only his "noble circle" which discussed ancient family trees, coats-of-arms and heraldry. Also his teachers did not like this impudent character, with Tukhachevsky renowned for his tricks at school and constantly being excluded from classes by the schoolmaster Kutuzov.²⁹ This is at odds with other accounts.

V. G. Ukrainskii writes of Tukhachevsky as a decisive leader amongst those of his age. He read a great deal, finding study easy, especially history and geography, but was willing to share his knowledge with others. Tukhachevsky associated little with those of the aristocratic and landholding class, but would split up fights between schoolfriends, prevent bullying and implore others to do the same. Ukrainskii relates the boys played wargames, with himself and Tukhachevsky leading one class against the other. They always won with Tukhachevsky organising an HQ, conducting reconnaissance and using the relief of the *gimnasia* territory - alleys etc. - to carry out ambushes and manoeuvres for envelopments. Ukrainskii's account differs markedly from Gul's, but he does echo this in one area - Tukhachevsky was not popular with several teachers. However, this came not from arrogance or unsociability, but from Tukhachevsky inheriting his father's atheism and being repeatedly excluded from classes for mocking religion.³⁰

Soviet biographies have based their version of Tukhachevsky's Penza schooling on Ukrainskii and similar accounts.³¹ V. Studenskii, another classmate who later

²⁶ Ibid. p. 12.

²⁷ V. M. Ivanov, p. 21.

²⁸ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 8, p. 1 & d. 3, p. 23; L. Nikulin, p. 19; V. M. Ivanov, p. 21.

²⁹ R. Gul', p. 11. Tukhachevsky met Kutuzov 12 years later in Penza, where the latter had become Peoples' Commissar for Education of Penza Province. His four sons were killed in street-fighting with the Czechoslovaks before the 1st Red Army under Tukhachevsky drove them out.

³⁰ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 8, pp. 1-3.

³¹ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 7; L. Nikulin, pp. 19-20.

served with Tukhachevsky in the 1st Army Staff during the Civil War, remembered great musical evenings Tukhachevsky and his friends had at the Tukhachevsky's house and Studenskii's room at the *gimnasia*. He describes Tukhachevsky as honest and popular with many friends. Despite being the strongest and best at gymnastics, gaining the nickname *begemot* - "hippopotamus" or more likely "behemoth" - possibly inheriting this strength from his peasant mother, "...the weak had a friend in Tukhachevsky". However, he did not study hard, especially in 4th year when he wanted to enroll in cadet corps.³²

Similar recollections are cited by Nikulin from Sergei Stepanovich Ostrovskii, another classmate who later joined 1st Army in Penza, under Tukhachevsky.³³ However, Nikolai Dimitrievich Volkov, a teacher at the 2nd Penza *Gimnasia* who knew and befriended Tukhachevsky, spoke of him as a champion gymnast, but not to the detriment of his studies.³⁴

One of Tukhachevsky's reports is held in the Penza *Gimnasia* records, noting "Despite his abilities, he studied badly", "Application - 3", "Attention - 2", "During the year he missed 127 classes", "He had 3 tellings-off for talking in classes". There is also a note by a priest recording, "Tukhachevsky is not devoted to God's laws."³⁵

The Soviet biographies, despite variations, appear generally more accurate about Tukhachevsky at Penza *Gimnasia*, backed as they are by memoir sources, although these probably painted a purer picture than actually existed. During his 5th Year, Tukhachevsky left Penza *Gimnasia* with a certificate for completing 4th Year. Conflicting reasons are provided for this.

The family moved to Moscow in 1909. It is suggested this was because the children were growing older and Tukhachevsky's father wished them to start attending specialist schools. Penza, although the Province town, held narrower opportunities than Moscow. Also, monetary worries surfaced again, with maintaining two houses in Penza and Vrazhskoe proving difficult. Therefore, Tukhachevsky was

³² Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 6-8.

³³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 52.

³⁴ L. Nikulin, pp. 17 & 19-20.

³⁵ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 73; L. Nikulin, p. 19.

withdrawn from Penza *Gimnasia*, as indeed his siblings must have been, and he enrolled at the 10th Moscow *Gimnasia*, completing his 6th Year in 1911, aged 18.³⁶

Nikulin however, suggests Tikhachevsky was excluded from Penza *Gimnasia* for not once attending communion or confession in his 5th Year and this was the reason for the move to Moscow.³⁷ Given the remark on Tikhachevsky's report card, it is possible he was excluded from *gimnasia* for anti-religious behaviour. Tikhachevsky later described himself as an atheist from a young age, relating how as children he and his brothers had three cats whom they called God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Ghost and when looking for these, shouted "...in terrible voices "Where the devil is God the Father"". ³⁸ However, it seems unlikely this would prompt his father to move the entire family to Moscow. Monetary reasons and concern over education are more plausible.

Tikhachevsky appears to have been quite popular at school and, in common with pupils of this age, applied himself at subjects he enjoyed, but not others. Elizabeth recalled he studied badly at Penza *Gimnasia* and it is suggested he neither liked the strict conditions of male schools after the 1905 Revolution with tight discipline and constant observation, nor enjoyed the classical education of the former noble boarding-school, which perhaps explains his behaviour.³⁹ The simple fact that Tikhachevsky's upbringing would have been different to that of his classmates should not be overlooked. This may have isolated him from other pupils in his early school years or indeed elicited prejudiced responses from teachers who did not approve of his background or upbringing. Moving from the provincial surroundings of Penza, despite its apparent enlightenment, to the capital Moscow, where opinion would be less unforgiving, was possibly a factor in his educational transformation which occurred later.

However, whilst still in Penza, he expanded his interest in military history. The first cousin of Tikhachevsky's father, M. N. Balkashin, a former infantry regimental commander, who became a White émigré, wrote of visiting the Tikhachevsky household as a junker and an officer. As a child, Tikhachevsky adored him in his

³⁶ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, *Krasnyi Marshal: Istoricheskii Portret Mikhaila Tikhachevskogo*, (Moscow, 1990), p. 10; V. M. Ivanov, p. 22.

³⁷ L. Nikulin, p. 20.

³⁸ P. Fervacque, pp. 18 & 20.

military uniform, stealing his sabre, spurs and service-cap to play with. As a 10-year-old, Tukhachevsky read about the subjugation of the Caucasus under Ermolov and Paskevich, and as a youth, about the marches and battles of the great commanders. He read Russian history and knew it well, reading about Peter the Great, Suvorov and Skobelev.⁴⁰ Still in Penza, he read a Suvorov biography, explaining his system of training and educating troops, and many other books such as *History of the Generalissimo Prince Suvorov* by Fuchs and *Generalissimo Prince Suvorov* by Petrushevskii.⁴¹ This ties in with his sister Olga's recollections that he developed his French and German, but also picked up Latin, reading Julius Ceasar's *Essays on the Gallic War* in the original Latin. He loved literature, but especially Tolstoi, reading *War and Peace*, and persuaded his father to take him and his brothers from Penza to Tula to meet Tolstoi himself, who took Tukhachevsky for a ride in his trap.⁴² This suggests an early penchant for self-education, studying the subjects he liked outwith the school environment.

Other recollections of his early childhood relate how Tukhachevsky, with his older brother Nikolai, loved astronomy, plotting their own star charts, and chess. He was apparently a good *gorodki* (skittles) player because of his strength, a lively inventive child full of pranks and liked horseriding, weightlifting and wrestling, in which he was rarely beaten. He showed his independent streak from an early age, but loved especially to go horseriding with his favourite sister Nadezhda (Nadia).⁴³

By 1911, when Tukhachevsky completed his 6th Year at 10th Moscow *Gimnasia*, he had already developed a keen interest in military history and stated an interest in following a military career, but had also developed wider interests incorporating the arts, literature and sports. He had displayed a lack of tolerance for religion, perhaps leading to exclusion from Penza *Gimnasia* and while displaying independent leadership qualities, appeared to be a well-rounded popular figure. In this year however, he made the decision which shaped the path his life would follow for the next six years.

³⁹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 16; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 8; Gul', p. 10.

⁴⁰ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 14-18.

⁴¹ L. Nikulin, p. 17.

⁴² *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 39.

⁴³ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 9; E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaia & O. N. Tukhachevskaia, pp. 10-11.

Ekaterinskii Cadet Corps

On 16th August 1911, Tukhachevsky enrolled in the 7th (final) Year of the 1st Muscovite Empress Ekaterina II Cadet Corps, in Lefortovo.⁴⁴ It had existed as a military training institution since 17th February 1732 and until 1762 was the only one.⁴⁵ Again various reasons for this step are forthcoming.

In 1911, it would have been another two years until Tukhachevsky received his school-leaving certificate and could go to university, which would have meant six years in all for his family to support him. Todorskii suggests that, to relieve the family burden, Tukhachevsky finally convinced his father to allow him to attend cadet corps and enter the military profession for practical, financial reasons, not because of romantic notions of becoming a soldier.⁴⁶ Gaining an income at military academy after cadet corps would remove the financial responsibility from his family, which would have remained, had he attended university.

Shchetinov and Starkov note other biographers of Tukhachevsky emphasise him joining the Communist Party as the main driving-force behind his wish to join the military, but the Tukhachevsky family traditions of military service cannot be ignored, with the possibility that he joined the military to become famous and glorious, dreaming of becoming a general, the latter opinion being shared by Gul'.⁴⁷

Popov notes this, but also mentions Tukhachevsky's father agreed to him going to cadet corps, despite the material difficulties, implying that this was still a bind for the family.⁴⁸

However, the most likely reason why he enrolled at cadet corps was that of fiscal reality allowing him to fulfill his wish to follow a military career. As a landowner's son, he was entitled to attend the closed military institutions, but he had to pass a rigorous entrance exam first. His father only accepted his career choice because he

⁴⁴ A. I. Todorskii, p. 11; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 10.

⁴⁶ A. I. Todorskii, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷ Iu. A. Shchetinov and B. A. Starkov, p. 19; R. Gul', pp. 12-13.

⁴⁸ A. S. Popov, *Trud, Talant, Doblest'*. (Moscow, 1972), p. 3.

had studied so badly at *gimnasia*, but passed the entrance exam and promised to study well at cadet corps.⁴⁹

The Director of Ekaterinskii Cadet Corps was General V. V. Rimskii-Korsakov, a relative of the composer. He was an enlightened, forward-thinking man and, because of him, the cadet corps provided a higher standard of education than *gymnasii* or normal colleges. Situated in Moscow, the teaching staff contained many officer-tutors who were veterans of the Russo-Japanese War, eager to teach and restore pride to the Russian Army.⁵⁰

Alongside military education, a wide range of other subjects were taught to develop self-initiative, including the works of progressive authors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jan Amos Komenskii.⁵¹ Similar subjects were taught as in *gimnasia*, including swimming, gymnastics, music, singing and dancing, but not Latin.⁵²

Smartness and plainness in way of life were demanded and internal organisation was along paramilitary lines, with cadets organized into companies, divided into sections. These were led by officer-teachers. Military training consisted of drill instruction, shooting, hikes/excursions (called junior reconnaissance) and manoeuvres/wargames. Gymnastics competitions were held and fencing taught.⁵³ Cadets sat end of year exams and an inspection was conducted by the Director. During the summer, an excursion was held to Borodino, the site of the major battle between Russia and France in 1812, learning reconnaissance, signalling, food preparation and other skills necessary for mobile military existence.⁵⁴

With 1912 marking the 100th Anniversary of the 1812 War, cadets studied, "The Great Fatherland War and its Heroes", for which *War and Peace* was read, along with the *Textbook on Russian History* by S. Soloviev and *The History of the 19th Century* by P. G. Vinogradov.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ RGVA, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 16; E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaia & O. N. Tukhachevskaia, p. 12.

⁵⁰ L. Nikulin, p. 24.

⁵¹ A. I. Todorskii, p. 11.

⁵² L. Nikulin, p. 24.

⁵³ A. I. Todorskii, p. 11; V. M. Ivanov, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 11; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 9.

For Tukhachevsky, already well-read in the history of Napoleon, Suvorov and the 1812 War, these subjects finally provided him with topics of interest to study within the educational environment. He apparently began to compile his own dictionary of events of Russian military history, recording quotes, slogans and proverbs of famous Russian Commanders and learning Suvorov's military teachings by heart, considering it necessary to follow these in his later career.⁵⁶ Also, despite finding the literature classes hard, Tukhachevsky was stimulated by studies connected with being out in the field, resolving practical matters of field service.⁵⁷

This certainly seemed to be the case as Tukhachevsky was appointed vice-sergeant-major as top pupil for the year. Ivanov suggests this rapid rise of a new pupil was resented by some, especially the landed nobility, with émigrés later considering Tukhachevsky a traitor to his noble class, fabricating tales of an unconventionally vain, power-loving "Red General" from the landed classes. This was published in the Western press but reached Russia, where Tukhachevsky spent his later life refuting them. Ivanov dismisses these as bitter White émigré lies.⁵⁸ I shall return to this later.

Nikulin describes Tukhachevsky as initially being looked down upon by the monied landowners offspring, but winning unforced respect with his extraordinary physical strength. However, Tukhachevsky did not take part in "peeling" or *Tsuk* whereby senior junkers mocked and bullied the juniors.⁵⁹ This was designed to instill discipline and demonstrate the role of rank with juniors continuing the practice upon becoming seniors, but probably added to the cowed nature and lack of self-initiative of the Russian officer corps. Tukhachevsky did not receive this due to his size, but did not partake in it either, preferring the freer conditions he had known previously at *gimnasia*, to carrying out practices "imported from German military institutions". For this he was nicknamed the "Newly-enlightened Prince Andrei Bolkonskii" after the character in "War and Peace".⁶⁰

However, Nikulin suggests Tukhachevsky preferred Moscow to Penza because he could attend concerts and the cinema. Many cultured people lived there with liberal

⁵⁶ A. I. Todorskii, p. 12; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 10; V. M. Ivanov, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 10.

⁵⁸ V. M. Ivanov, p. 23.

⁵⁹ L. Nikulin, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 24-25.

views, even amongst the nobility, who talked of the Tsar and courtiers sarcastically.⁶¹ This latter assertion matches the scorn and disdain Tikhachevsky held towards the Tsar and autocracy from this period onwards.⁶²

The growing revolutionary movement in Russia was apparently also felt inside the cadet corps. Cadets produced a bi-weekly handwritten journal entitled *Ekaterinets*, which was closed down for printing caricatures of disliked tutors, calling for reforms of the Moscow Cadet Corps and making "revolutionary pronouncements".⁶³ However, there is no indication that Tikhachevsky was involved in this.

On 1st June 1912, Tikhachevsky received his graduation certificate, finishing first in the year with his name engraved on a plaque.⁶⁴ As a reward, he had the choice of which military academy to attend. However, when he chose to join Aleksandrovskii Academy, an infantry academy, instead of the elite Academies - Mikhailovskii for artillery, Nikolaevskii for engineering, or Pavlovskii for infantry - which did approach him, there was great surprise amongst his year. Tikhachevsky chose Aleksandrovskii because he knew it gave the best military training, rather than the quick rise up the career ladder which the other academies provided,⁶⁵ suggesting Tikhachevsky was not a careerist at this point, but genuinely wished to gain the best training possible. Would these ambitions change as he progressed?

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 25.

⁶² *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 1; I. N. Arvatova-Tikhachevskaya & O. N. Tikhachevskaya, pp. 13-14. Tikhachevsky's sisters recall an episode when their governess wanted to take them to see the arrival of the Tsar in Moscow. When Tikhachevsky learned about this he explained to his sisters that the Tsar was just a normal man, like any other and it would be foolish to go to see him. He also told his brothers the Tsar was stupid.

⁶³ L. Nikulin, p. 25.

⁶⁴ A. I. Todorskii, p. 12.

⁶⁵ L. Nikulin, p. 26.

Aleksandrovskii Military Academy

Tukhachevsky studied Military Science at Aleksandrovskii Military Academy in the Arbat, Moscow, from 1912-1914.⁶⁶ He later commented that the Aleksandrovskii, "prepared officers entirely well".⁶⁷ The Director of Aleksandrovskii was Lieutenant-General N. I. Genisht, who later became Senior Inspector of the Chief Administration of Military-Training Institutions of the Red Army, under Tukhachevsky.⁶⁸ The future Red Army Supreme Commander Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, with whom Tukhachevsky would work closely, had earlier studied at Aleksandrovskii.⁶⁹

The merits of Aleksandrovskii Military Academy at this time are debated, with Gorelik suggesting the library did not contain a wide enough selection of military literature. The works of V. Cheremisov were still popularly used, which upheld the old Suvorovian principle of "Bayonet wise, bullet foolish" and attacked and underestimated the advance of technology. Therefore, Tukhachevsky read other books not officially listed such as A. G. Elchaninov's, *Conduct of Modern War and Battles*, in which questions on the development of forms and methods of military operations and the roles different types of weapon would play, were posed.⁷⁰ Nikulin similarly describes Aleksandrovskii as out-of-date with the works of Leer, Boban and Totleban used and the emphasis on drill steps not preparing Russian officers for war. He mentions a book published in 1928-1932 by Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin entitled *Junker*, which describes life in the Aleksandrovskii Academy, from which Kuprin graduated at the start of the 20th Century. Nikulin states it was much the same in Tukhachevsky's time,⁷¹ noting it turned out junkers imbued with discipline, bravery and endurance and was rated as the best for a sound course of military training. Todorskii comments the Aleksandrovskii had an excellent library with over 3,000 books donated by former student V. A. Berezovskii, containing especially valuable critical analyses on the Russo-Japanese War. The book market was saturated with

⁶⁶ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁷ A. S. Popov, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 22; V. M. Ivanov, p. 23.

⁶⁹ L. Nikulin, p. 26.

⁷⁰ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 11.

⁷¹ L. Nikulin, pp. 27-29. Unfortunately I have not been able to track down this book which would provide valuable memoir source material where scant sources are available.

books on this, but amongst the most valuable were those by participants such as A. A. Svechin.⁷²

This reflected the Russian military's preoccupation over the preceding seven years, searching for the reasons for Russia's defeat by Japan in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War, the first occasion a "modern" European Army had been defeated by an Asian foe. This had encouraged calls for modernisation of the Russian armed forces, including the military academies, making this a fertile period in military education. This was the period of debates between the "Young Turks" and Russian Nationalist schools of Russian military thought, which had developed from the twisting road of military development and modernisation that the Russian military establishment had undergone since the disastrous Crimean War of 1853-55. A brief glance through this process is useful to reflect the atmosphere under which Tukhachevsky studied at military academy.

D. A. Miliutin, an advocate of Suvorov's offensive strategy, had attempted to modernise the Russian military establishment before the Crimean debacle, but only the backwards display of the Russian forces and accession to the throne of the progressive Tsar Alexander II in 1855, provided the necessary impetus for his ideas to be implemented. He founded the military district system in 1862, made the first moves towards a general staff and modernised the army's weaponry in light of American Civil War developments. In 1863, he reformed the military education system, forming twenty new *gimnasii* with wide curricula, no longer emphasising drill. The policy was introduced whereby the top half of graduating years were commissioned 2nd Lieutenants and the bottom half ensigns. Entrance exams were introduced to raise admission standards and summer field exercises accompanied theoretical course work for the first time. Miliutin also created a Military History Commission in 1879 to combine current military developments with past campaigns, but his advances stagnated or were reversed after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and Miliutin's resignation in 1881.

The succession of the conservative Alexander III in 1881 and Nicholas II in 1894, prevented rapid modernisation by Miliutin's successors as War Minister, Vannovskii

⁷² A. I. Todorskii, pp. 12-13; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 22-23; Aleksandr Andreevich Svechin (1878-1938), a Tsarist Major-General.

(1881-97) and Kuropatkin (1897-1904). The Russian victory in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 was never properly studied, with Napoleonic tactics and those of von Moltke in Bismarck's wars, still used as a template, not the Russian Army's recent experiences. Therefore, incorrect lessons were drawn, with the lack of technology used leading to misconceptions in the use and changing roles of artillery, infantry and cavalry on the modern battlefield. Instead, the tactics employed by Dragomirov of using quick massed infantry attacks without sufficient artillery support and no effective cavalry reconnaissance, which succeeded against the technologically-deficient Turks, because of the well-drilled patriotism of the Russian soldier, was taken to be the correct way forward. The Suvorovian maxim "Bayonet wise, bullet foolish" was thus adopted and maintained through the Russo-Japanese War and even into The Great War. Dragomirov, as Commandant of Nikolaevskii General Staff Academy from 1878-89, remained the battlefield tactical supremo of the Tsarist Army, whilst his successor as Commandant, Leer (1889-98), dominated theatre-level strategical thinking before 1904. The Young Turks/Russian Nationalist debate Tukhachevsky studied under was preceded by debates invoked by the continued separation of these two military fields by these two figures.

Leer headed an "academic school", publishing *Strategiia* (Strategy) in 1867 and repeated reproductions to meet challenges to his theory. He was a devotee of Napoleon and viewed the latter's role as proof that the genius of the individual commander was the vital component in warfare. He believed Napoleon should be viewed as the example by which all commanders and campaigns should be measured, not as a phenomenon of his era. The ideas of Jomini were chosen ahead of Clausewitz, with the latter's inclusion of politics in his military writings uncomfortable to the Russian military within the Tsarist regime. Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege* (On War) was not published in Russia until 1899, but Jomini was more accessible to the Russian readership, being published in French, which was more commonly used in Russia than Clausewitz's German. The shock strike advocated by Jomini was therefore advocated by Leer, accompanied by the Napoleonic maxim of every action leading to the final battle, to achieve ultimate victory. Von Moltke's methods of the 1860s-1870s, using technology, new weaponry and mass forces to deploy, concentrate and attack rapidly, a strategy of "annihilation", were viewed as the natural progression of these ideas and the method to be followed.

This strategy was challenged in 1892 with the emergence of the Russian Nationalist school led by Bloch and Gulevich, an instructor at the Nikolaevskii Academy.⁷³ This school maintained Russia should look internally for military guidance, espousing Suvorov, the great Russian commander, over the German von Moltke. Its advocates believed all military eras should be studied, including recent events, not just the Napoleonic and Bismarckian periods favoured by Leer. The publication in 1900 of *Suvorov in the Studies of the Professors of the Nicholas Academy*, by the Academy of the General Staff, meant Suvorov was studied alongside Napoleon. However, the debate continued through the Russo-Japanese War debacle, which finally proved Dragomirov's ideas outdated, and into the post-War reflective period.

Weaknesses in the Russian Army exposed by Japan had to be remedied. Partially, these followed similar lines to Miliutin's reform attempts - creating an intelligent, uniformly-educated officer corps which displayed initiative and an ability to think independently. Combined with this was the need to incorporate new technology - artillery, transport and communications networks - to move large numbers of troops to and from the battlefield and maintain contact and control when in battle. The need to combine historical lessons with current developments was emphasised and Leer's utilisation of Napoleon and Moltke as a template challenged.

However, the offensive was still viewed as the method to bypass technological development, using march-manoeuvres and envelopments in meeting battles to avoid costly frontal clashes and reduce modern weaponry's effectiveness. However, strategy and tactics were still separated between academic "theorists" and officer "practitioners" and the Young Turks seeking modernisation of the Russian Army clashed with the Nationalist school, which still insisted on Suvorovian principles as the maxims to be employed. Amidst this debate, new instructional programmes were drawn up by the Nikolaevskii Academy staff for this and the other army institutions, which included the Aleksandrovskii Academy, although Mikhnevich, Commandant of the Nikolaevskii Academy, limited their impact.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ivan Stanislavovich Bloch (1836-1901), a Russian military theorist and economist.

⁷⁴ I have relied heavily for this section on the seminal work of B. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: the Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, to illustrate the ideas which Tukhachevsky may have ingested during his military education.

It was amidst this debate and politicking that Tukhachevsky gained his military education. Figures such as Svechin, who published the first critical appraisal of ground operations in the Russo-Japanese War in 1910, emerged. Neznamov, an instructor at the Nikolaevskii Academy, began linking tactics and operational ideas to strategic issues in an effort to combine them into a unified doctrine, but this was stopped by Tsar Nicholas II in 1912.⁷⁵ Neznamov believed in the application of history to modern industrial and technological developments to predict and plan for future wars and prescribed manoeuvre warfare, successive operations and combined operations as possible methods by which to win campaigns. These ideas were being discussed in military circles at this time. How much of them Tukhachevsky would have picked up during his Academy education is difficult to say, but figures such as Neznamov and Svechin would join the Red Army and Tukhachevsky would encounter them later. Debates over strategies of "annihilation" and "attrition" would continue after The Great War within the Red Army environment and Tukhachevsky would be part of these. As to the content of Tukhachevsky's studies at Aleksandrovskii, various suggestions are given and they are worth considering.

It is suggested he spent most time studying the new regulations and directions revised and published after the Russo-Japanese War, which became the 1912 Tsarist Army Field Regulations. He attempted to compare these with previous regulations to conclude what the changes meant.

Tukhachevsky read 40-50 military books whilst at Aleksandrovskii, including those by Mikhnevich, Leer and Dragomirov.⁷⁶ He read works by A. K. Puzirevskii, the 8-volumed *Encyclopedia of Military and Naval Science, Atlas of Battles of the 19th Century*, the series *Soldiers Library*, textbooks and memoirs.⁷⁷

He also read fiction, for example, rereading Tolstoi, and received lectures on past Russian military campaigns and military history. Lectures on tactics, artillery and fortifications were given by teachers who had graduated at various times from the

⁷⁵ Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Neznamov (1872-1928).

⁷⁶ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 11; A. I. Todorskii, p. 13; V. M. Ivanov, p. 23, puts the number at over 50 books.

⁷⁷ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 22-23.

Nikolaevskii General Staff Academy and therefore possessed excellent educational methods.⁷⁸

Gul' writes of Tukhachevsky reading the works of Clausewitz, biographies of Napoleon, Blukher, Suvorov and Moltke,⁷⁹ while Shchetinov and Starkov note that he read works in French, German and Latin, indicating it was at this time that he read *Essays on the Gallic War* by Julius Ceasar.⁸⁰ Whether he read this now or earlier, knowledge of foreign languages would have enabled Tukhachevsky to expand his military knowledge and possibly progress more quickly than fellow junkers without such linguistic talent. That he did read widely and continued to do so was suggested by N. I. Koritskii, Chief-of-Staff of Simbirsk Division under Tukhachevsky in 1918, who noted,

On Tukhachevsky's writing desk I noticed a volume of Pushkin open at "History of the Pugachev Rebellion". Beside it lay *Campaigns of Gustav Adolf*, *Applied Tactics* by N. D. Bezrukov, *Strategy* by Mikhnevich. Mikhail Nikolaevich caught my gaze.

"Yes", he sighed, "From the time of Razin and Pugachev this *krai* has not known war. And now here we are...."⁸¹

A. M. Kavelin, an officer-teacher at Aleksandrovskii who later went on to serve under Tukhachevsky in 5th Army, described him as being well-read, especially in military science and an acknowledged authority amongst his comrades. He recalled Tukhachevsky surprised him in this and also in his disregard for his future career and place "in society".⁸²

This confirms the assertion that Tukhachevsky attended Aleksandrovskii to gain a sound military education instead of a rapid rise up the military and societal ladder. The head start he had as a child, learning military history and foreign languages, stood him in good stead, and allied with the fact he had finally found a subject in which he was interested - military science - he applied himself to his studies as his father had demanded. The knowledge Tukhachevsky gained at Aleksandrovskii, examining works of military theory and history, studying tactics and the strategic decisions of

⁷⁸ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁹ R. Gul', p. 14.

⁸⁰ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 23.

⁸¹ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny i v dni mira" *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia друзей i soratnikov*. (Moscow, 1965), p. 57.

past commanders, and analysing these to gain a deep theoretical knowledge of tactics and the basis of strategy, gave him a deep professional military education. He was a product of the Tsarist military educational system, attending a highly rated cadet corps and military academy and his later success came from the study he carried out here and not just from some inner talent or his wish to be a soldier. He learned the basic knowledge behind the problems of military science and military art and the theory of tactics and strategy and developed these later, commanding in the Civil War, still studying volumes relevant to where he was fighting at any given time.

Theoretical knowledge was accompanied by practical exercises at Aleksandrovskii. In the summer, in Kholinskii Field, tactical training, shooting and topographical surveying were conducted. The junior junkers were formed into companies with the seniors to give them experience of formations, marching procedures and military operations at this level, with the seniors helping the juniors with their knowledge.⁸³

On 12th July 1914, Tukhachevsky graduated first in his year and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant.⁸⁴ He scored 11 "A" or top marks in military subjects and 9 in his others.⁸⁵ The reward as first graduate was the choice of regiment. Tukhachevsky chose the Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment, confirming further the theory he was following family tradition into the military. Suvorov had also started his military service in this regiment.⁸⁶ Again however, other theories are suggested for his entry.

Gul' asserts that to gain a commission to the elite Semenovskii or Preobrazhenskii Life-Guards Regiments, money or connections were required and it was necessary to graduate from the Pavlovskii Military Academy. However, the advent of The Great War permitted Tukhachevsky entry as "war does not need money, but bravery and talent".⁸⁷ This however, ignores Tukhachevsky's exceptional academic performance and the fact he had the choice of regiment.

⁸² N. N. Kuliabko, "Ia rekomendoval ego v partiiu" *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia družei i soratnikov*. (Moscow, 1965), p. 27.

⁸³ A. I. Todorskii, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁴ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 12.

⁸⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 12.

⁸⁷ R. Gul', pp. 13-15.

Suggestions are made that Tukhachevsky's political views were forming at this time. Popov writes that Tukhachevsky could see the everyday life of the autocracy in Moscow and at this time began to analyse it, coming to the conclusion he did not hold the same beliefs as the upper-classes.⁸⁸ This is probably based upon Nikolai Kuliabko who records that he met Tukhachevsky in 1912 and discussed the 1905 Revolution and the situation in Russia. Kuliabko was sure Tukhachevsky did not hold the same beliefs as the majority of cadets and junkers.⁸⁹ Tukhachevsky would undoubtedly have discussed and considered life in Russia under Tsarism, although it is unlikely he formed any political leanings at this time. It has already been mentioned he had no great respect for the Tsar, but he was concentrating on gaining his military education. It is possible he was troubled with the role the army had played in 1905, suppressing the uprisings, but from his later conduct this was not because he saw this as a role the army should not play, but from the weakness of the current regime in Russia.

Tukhachevsky's conduct during his academy education produces the greatest divergence in opinion. Ivanov suggests Tukhachevsky at this time possessed the abilities to manage people which were required in an officer and had no need to raise his voice or act in a threatening manner.⁹⁰ However, the émigré accounts Ivanov decried so vehemently emerge here. Vladimir Nikitich Postoronkin describes Tukhachevsky as detached and cold towards other students, making him the perfect drill instructor. He had no close friends or relations and as sergeant-major in the senior year, was a strict disciplinarian, even to juniors who had just started at Aleksandrovskii and were not used to the lifestyle. He would hand out punishments for errors without waiting to find out the reasons behind them and his conduct caused a trail of incidents and conflicts with sad endings - two junkers transferring away and three committing suicide.⁹¹ Ivanov dismisses Postoronkin as a Whiteguard émigré, bitter about the "red general from the nobility", calling his reliability as a source into question. However, Postoronkin tallies with Gul's account written in 1932. Gul' was

⁸⁸ A. S. Popov, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁹ N. N. Kuliabko, pp. 26-27.

⁹⁰ V. M. Ivanov, p. 25.

⁹¹ V. N. Postoronkin, "Neizvestnoe o Tukhachevskom" *Voenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No. 12, (1990), pp. 88-90. V. M. Ivanov introduces the document, dismissing Postoronkin as a Whiteguard émigré, jealous of Tukhachevsky's status. If this was a fabrication about Tukhachevsky, it was by no means the worst by a "White" émigré, with the paper trail leading to his 1937 execution possibly involving more Russian exiles alongside Stalin's *NKVD*.

another émigré and possibly used Postoronkin as a source. If Postoronkin was genuine, did the independent leadership streak evident in Tukhachevsky from an early age manifest itself more dominantly when he reached a position of power over others and did this give an indication of what was to come?

The Great War - First Combat Experiences

Following his graduation ball in Moscow on 12th July, Tukhachevsky began the summer in training camp at Khodinskii Field,⁹² before receiving leave. Travelling to Penza, he spent only two days with his family before the outbreak of The Great War.⁹³

The scale of the Russian Army and limitations of the transport and communications network had led *Stavka* to formulate a plan of general mobilisation simultaneously against Germany and Austria-Hungary.⁹⁴ Two Russian Fronts were formed, the North-West against Germany in East Prussia and the South-West against Austria-Hungary in Poland and Galicia. Despite the cumbersome initial process, slower than either of the Central Powers they were facing, the Russians envisaged an offensive strategy, striking quickly, utilising all available resources, with no thoughts of an extended conflict.

Eastern Front fighting in 1914 differed entirely from the stalemate which quickly closeted the Western Front. Poorer reconnaissance and wider space encouraged manoeuvre operations on a grand scale with envelopments involving huge numbers. This was the first type of warfare Tukhachevsky experienced and it would stay with him.

The Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment became a component of 1st Guards Corps under Adjutant-General Bezobrazov. Earmarked for General Rennenkampf's 1st Army in East Prussia, the Semenovskii began moving there from their summer camp with the Preobrazhenskii Life-Guards at Krasnoe Selo. However, initial deployment plans were changed, with mobilisation still not completed, as pressure grew from the *Entente* Allies for a Russian offensive to relieve the Western Front.

⁹² Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 12.

⁹³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 39.

⁹⁴ *Stavka* was the Tsarist Army General Staff.

New 9th and 10th Armies were ordered on 6th August for an offensive on Berlin,⁹⁵ with the Guards Corps to join 9th Army under General P. A. Lechitskii, assembling in the Warsaw Region. Tukhachevsky, initially posted to the Semenovskii Reserve Battalion in Petrograd, joined his regiment on the march to Warsaw.⁹⁶

However, the Berlin Offensive was postponed, with the Guards transferred to the stalling South-Western Front, to aid 4th Army under General Salza, who was replaced by General Evert on 25th August, in Ivangorod-Lublin Region, Poland.⁹⁷ The Semenovskii became involved in the massive Galician Campaign, involving a series of meeting battles and complex manoeuvre operations of whole armies, between the Wisła and Dniestr Rivers. This lasted 20 days with over half a million men on both sides fighting on a 500 *verst* front.⁹⁸ The Russians were initially successful around Lublin-Kholm, but then retreated towards Lublin. 9th Army arrived at this point on 1st September and went into battle with the Semenovskii fighting at the village of Sukhodoly.⁹⁹

General Mrozovskii's detachment, including General Olokhov's Guards Division of which the Semenovskii Regiment under General Von Etter was a component, inflicted a crushing blow on 10th Austrian Corps, taking 5,000 prisoners, on 2nd September.¹⁰⁰ The Austrian corps lost two-thirds of its men and guns.¹⁰¹ During the Galician campaign, the Guards further stood out in battles at the settlements of Zarashevo and Urshulin, south of Lublin and at Krzheshov, South-West of Sandomierz, the latter being taken on 14th September.¹⁰²

Tukhachevsky won the first of six decorations achieved during the Great War at Krzheshov. The town was to be taken whatever the cost, but despite fierce fighting between the Semenovskii and the Austrians, the fighting was indecisive. 7th Company of 2nd Battalion, in which Tukhachevsky fought, outflanked the Austrians,

⁹⁵ R. Gray & C. Argyle, *Chronicle of the First World War, Volume I: 1914-1916*. (London, 1990), p. 16.

⁹⁶ A. I. Todorskii, p. 15; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁷ N. Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917*. (London, 1975), p. 86; R. Gray & C. Argyle, p. 26.

⁹⁸ 1 *verst* = 1.06 kms, 100 *versty* = 106 kms.

⁹⁹ A. I. Todorskii, pp. 15-16; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 37-38.

¹⁰⁰ A. I. Todorski, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ N. Stone, p. 90.

¹⁰² R. Gray & C. Argyle, p. 38.

appearing in their rear. Retreating over the River San, the Austrians set fire to the bridge, defending their line of retreat. 7th Company Commander, Lieutenant Veselago, and Tukhachevsky led a bayonet charge over the burning bridge onto the far bank, winning the battle and capturing prisoners. Veselago received the George Cross and Tukhachevsky the Order of Vladimir, Level IV, with swords and bows.¹⁰³

Both Tukhachevsky and Veselago were missing in action for a time.¹⁰⁴

The Austrians lost East Galicia and half the fighting capacity of their army, some 400,000 men - each division losing around 4,500 men and 400 guns. Russia lost 230-250,000 men, but the loss of officers was never recovered during the War.¹⁰⁵ After the Russo-Japanese War, the Officer Corps had been increased from 46,000 to 80,000, but the vast majority of these were commissioned in front-line units and so were lost in the initial fighting. This left a vastly insufficient number in reserve to train new officer recruits.¹⁰⁶ Tukhachevsky rose from platoon to company commander with the high casualties.¹⁰⁷

9th Army, including Semenovskii Regiment, and 4th Army were withdrawn from the River San area and moved east of the River Wisła in late September/early October. The Russians attempted to cross the Wisła at Ivangorod and Novy-Aleksandrovo from 11th-15th October,¹⁰⁸ but were repelled by the Germans, who launched an offensive towards Warsaw and the fortress of Ivangorod.¹⁰⁹ The Semenovskii again excelled in battles South-West of Ivangorod, then fought in the Częstochowa-Kraków operations, north of Kraków and east of Oświęcim.¹¹⁰ At Ivangorod-Warsaw, units from South-Western Front (including the Guards) marched over 100 kms to help repel the German/Austrian offensive. 1st Austrian and 9th German Armies retreated in panic as the Russians pushed them back over 100 kms, but supply shortages and a lack of cooperation between North-Western Front of Danilov and Ruzski and South-Western Front of Ivanov and Alexeev, stopped the

¹⁰³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 4; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 38-39; R. Gul', pp. 20-22.

¹⁰⁴ V. M. Ivanov, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 16; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 38; N. Stone, p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ L. Nikulin, p. 32.

¹⁰⁸ N. Stone, p. 98; This battle is described in detail by R. Gul', pp. 22-27.

¹⁰⁹ R. Gray & C. Argyle, pp. 46 & 48; N. Stone, p. 98.

advance on 8th November. 9th Army had suffered staggering losses gaining these victories, with its numbers reduced from 196,000 to 93,000, the Guards Corps suffering 14,000 casualties.¹¹¹ These huge losses began to affect morale.

In December, a renewed German offensive pushed the Russians back to a defensive line along the Rivers Bzura and Rawka, which despite German breakthroughs, held until the freeze of deep winter ended campaigning until 1915, with the Russians thirty miles south-west of Warsaw. Russian supply shortages were growing critical, with some 800,000 recruits without rifles by 21st December and shell output far below expenditure, severely curtailing artillery capabilities.¹¹² The industrial backwardness of Russia vis-a-vis Germany was beginning to tell. This forced a change in the nature of the Eastern Front with manoeuvre warfare, because of Russian ammunition and supply shortages, giving way to smaller offensive operations and to static defensive trench warfare.

In January 1915, the Semenovskii were bivouaced at the settlement of Gostynin recuperating, using this time to assess operations, ingest new tactical knowledge and carry out exercises. On 24th January the Guards Corps were transferred from the Grodzisk area, 25 versts west of Warsaw, in South-Western Front, to North-Western Front, joining General Sivers' 10th Army, as part of Danilov's and Ruzski's new offensive through the Masurian Marshes into East Prussia.¹¹³ A simultaneous offensive was planned by Ivanov and Alexeev through the Carpathians to Hungary, but again no cooperation existed between the two fronts.¹¹⁴

Germany preempted the offensives, launching their Masurian offensive on 7th February, using poison gas for the first time in a diversionary attack on 31st January. This proved a disaster with the wind turning to blow the gas back towards the Germans and the severe cold negating its effectiveness.¹¹⁵ Significantly, however, Tukhachevsky had encountered poison gas, a weapon he would experiment with later.

¹¹⁰ A. I. Todorskii, p. 16.

¹¹¹ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 39; R. Gray & C. Argyle, pp. 50-62; N. Stone, p. 111.

¹¹² In October 1914 shell expenditure was 45,000 per day, but production was only 35,000 per month; W. Rutherford, *The Tsar's War 1914-1917. The Story of the Imperial Army in the First World War*. (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 74 & 84-89; R. Gray & C. Argyle, pp. 66-70.

¹¹³ N. Stone, p. 112.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 111.

¹¹⁵ R. Gray & C. Argyle, pp. 80 & 84; N. Stone, pp. 112-116; W. Rutherford, pp. 113-116.

Documents taken from a dead German officer by the Russians, indicating the Germans planned a giant pincer movement to envelop Sivers' 10th Army around the forests of Augustów, were ignored. The German 10th Army attacked from the north and 8th Army from the south along the line of Augustów and Suwalki, where the Guards Corps was positioned, west of the River Nieman. Terrible blizzards initially hampered the German advance, but simultaneously hid their numbers, with Sivers taken completely by surprise. Instead of digging in, the Russians decided to launch their offensive for Berlin again with the Prasnishskii Operation, from the fortress of Prasnysz. However, German artillery superiority was immense with "suitcase" shells, as they were dubbed, fired constantly against the Russian positions, with little in reply.¹¹⁶

10th Army advanced into Augustów Forest between Suwalki and Augustów, straight into the German pincer movement, becoming isolated strategically from Plehve's 12th Army, still advancing to the south. An attempted retreat from 14th February was prevented by the German 21st Corps marching 22 miles on 15th February, to complete the encirclement of 70,000 Russians in Augustów Forest by 17th February. This centre group comprising mainly Bulgakov's 20th Corps were forced into rearguard breakout actions, whilst the northern and southern (including Guards Corps) groups of 10th Army fell back. Some 56,000 Russians died and Bulgakov surrendered with barely 12,000 survivors of 20th Corps, mostly wounded, on 21st February.¹¹⁷

A counter-attack launched by 12th Army and the Guards Corps on 20th February near Łomża and Płock, to relieve the trapped central group failed,¹¹⁸ with the Semenovskii encircled and cut to pieces and Tukhachevsky taken prisoner. On 27th February, Regimental Order No. 34 reported Tukhachevsky and others as lost.¹¹⁹ His family only knew he was alive when he wrote later from prison.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 43-44.

¹¹⁷ R. Gul', pp. 27-28; N. Stone, pp. 116-119; W. Rutherford, pp. 116-118; R. Gray & C. Argyle, pp. 80-86.

¹¹⁸ R. Gray & C. Argyle, p. 86. This included 6th Company of the Semenovskii Regiment led by Tipol't, who sustained a shrapnel wound to the head, A. A. Tipol't, "Takoe ne zabyvaetsia" *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia družei i soratnikov*. (Moscow, 1965), p. 20.

¹¹⁹ A. I. Todorskii, p. 18.

¹²⁰ E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaiia & O. N. Tukhachevskaiia, p. 14.

A Semenovskii Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), who by the 1960s was a Lieutenant-General, K. P. Trubnikov, recalled Tukhachevsky as well-liked and respected by the men, not just as an officer, but as a person. Trubnikov related that on 19th February, the Semenovskii, along with the Egerskii and Kurinskii Regiments, occupied a forest before the village of Vysokie Duzhi, halfway between Łomża and Kolno. The Germans shelled the Semenovskii the whole day, but were unable to break them down. At night the Germans attacked in two companies, made a deep breakthrough and cut off 7th Company. The reserves restored the position, but 7th Company had already perished. It later emerged that Tukhachevsky led the remaining troops after Veselago had been killed, until being injured in the leg and captured. The prisoners were loaded onto trains at Suwalki and taken into East Prussia.¹²¹

The Senior NCO of Semenovskii Regiment, Petr Dorofeevich Riabov, recalled Tukhachevsky as the best officer in the regiment, highly educated and above all the knights, barons and princes who made up the majority of the officers. He described Tukhachevsky as a humanitarian man who would meet with the soldiers, even at this time when officers and soldiers were deeply divided. Riabov later fought for the Reds in the Civil War.¹²²

Todorskii notes that Tukhachevsky finished the War a hero. Todorskii served in 24th Siberian Rifle Regiment, fighting in the Warsaw Region, but he could remember of no one else winning six decorations in only six months of fighting, as Tukhachevsky did. He received three Orders of Anna: level 4 with the inscription "For Bravery", level 3 with swords and bows, level 2 with swords; two Orders of Stanislav: level 3 with swords and bows, level 2 with swords; and the Order of Vladimir already mentioned.¹²³

It is likely Tukhachevsky received these decorations for the battles at Ivangorod, Warsaw and Kraków where the Semenovskii fought well and for leading 7th Company after Veselago's death at Łomża.

One example of bravery and self-initiative he may have been decorated for is described by A. A. Tipol't, recalled to 6th Company of the Semenovskii in 1914 with the rank of ensign, having served his military service in 1907 when a final-year

¹²¹ A. I. Todorskii, p. 18; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 44-45; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 13.

¹²² L. Nikulin, pp. 32-33.

¹²³ A. I. Todorskii, p. 18.

jurisprudence student. He met and befriended Tukhachevsky and describes an episode of September/October 1914, when the Semenovskii were positioned on the right bank of the Wisła, near Kraków. The Germans had fortified the left bank, but in the middle of the river lay a small sandy island. While the officers debated how to reach this island to carry out reconnaissance unnoticed, Tukhachevsky obtained a small fishing-boat and sailed at night to the island. The boat was so small the side barely came out of the water. Tukhachevsky spent the night and part of the next day alone on the island, returning with information on the German positions. He returned not knowing whether he would be praised or reprimanded for his actions, but was possibly decorated for this.¹²⁴

Smirnov suggests Todorskii invented some of these decorations because if Tukhachevsky received the Order of Vladimir, Level 4 with swords and bows in September 1914, he would not have received lesser awards after this, as this did not happen.¹²⁵ However, this is an unlikely scenario with decorations awarded specifically for separate deeds and not dependent upon decorations already received.

Tukhachevsky served actively on the Eastern Front for barely six months, but witnessed a great deal of savage, bitter and varied fighting in this time. He could evaluate operations as an officer in action, witnessing the initial emphasis on manoeuvre warfare giving way to more static defensive entrenchment as supplies ran low, but then having to attack in 1915 with few supplies and scant ammunition or artillery support. The shortcomings of the Tsarist war machine were glaringly apparent and would have been considered by him in his years of captivity to come, as would the contrast between the brave performance of the Russian soldier with the inept leadership above. He would also have contemplated how effectively he had been trained at cadet corps and military academy and wondered if changes could be made here to create a more capable and professional army. Tukhachevsky possibly began reaching the conclusions he would record in December 1919 for Lenin when evaluating *voenspetsy* in the Red Army, that the most capable were the young, educated in the military academies after 1908-10.¹²⁶ His wartime experiences thus far

¹²⁴ A. A. Tipol't, pp. 19-20.

¹²⁵ G. V. Smirnov, *Krovavyyi marshal, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, 1893-1937*. (St. Petersburg, 1997), pp. 232-235.

¹²⁶ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom. I*. (Moscow, 1964), pp. 27-28.

would be supplemented by those of the prisoner-of-war camps in Germany and how he reacted to incarceration.

POW Camps and Escapes

Information on the two and a half years Tukhachevsky spent incarcerated is contradictory with most sources relating he made five escape attempts, but not agreeing where or when these occurred or the methods used. Tukhachevsky wrote letters to his family from the prison camps and if he was planning an escape he would write in the letters for them to read the Tale of the Igorev Regiment, indicating he was planning to escape.¹²⁷

Tukhachevsky was first detained in the officers' camp on the small island of Danholm on the German Baltic coast between Stralsund and the island of Rugen.¹²⁸ Ivanov and Popov write that Tukhachevsky first attempted to escape en route to Stralsund, but failed,¹²⁹ while Fervacque suggests Tukhachevsky first escaped from Danholm by swimming from the island, but was recaptured.¹³⁰ Gorelik writes Tukhachevsky waited until a warm July Sunday before going for a walk and not returning. He intended stealing a fishing-boat to sail to Rugen and on to Sweden, but was picked up on the shore three weeks later. He used this time to get his bearings, but was put into solitary confinement, then transferred to Beeskow, between Berlin and Frankfurt-den-Oder, which housed around 100 officers. Gul' suggests this was because Tukhachevsky and others were termed "disruptive" for not removing their shoulder straps.¹³¹

At this time apparently, the German Military Administration had banned the wearing of shoulder-straps by POWs. Walks outwith the camp were abolished and solitary confinement given for any absence without special permission. Under these conditions and hoping to be transferred from Beeskow, a very difficult camp from

¹²⁷ I. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaya & O. N. Tukhachevskaya, p. 14.

¹²⁸ V. Alexandrov, p. 77; R. B. Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War: a study of diplomacy in captivity*. (New York, 1990), p. 64.

¹²⁹ V. M. Ivanov, p. 6; A. S. Popov, p. 9.

¹³⁰ P. Fervacque, p. 14.

¹³¹ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 13-14; R. Gul', p. 33; R. B. Speed, p. 64. The inconsistency within the sources is plain to see.

which to escape, Tukhachevsky penned a letter to the commandant asking if he could have permission for a walk outside the camp, in order to escape and return to Russia. Half a day later he was confined in solitary.¹³²

His wish was granted however, as he was soon transferred to Bad Stuer in Mecklenberg with several other officers. This housed around 150 officers in a looser regime allowing literature reading and chess. It is suggested Tukhachevsky first read the works of Lenin here in 1916, which were brought into the camp via the Swiss and Swedish Embassies. Ivanov writes of no international agreement existing for the treatment of POWs, meaning conditions inside the German camps could be terrible, especially for Russians. Therefore, since the Bolsheviks were the only Russian organisation to attempt any contact with POWs, this made a big impression. The Tsarist Government did not try to help, even hindering civilian organisations in Russia from doing so, putting the Bolshevik efforts in an even better light. Lenin formed a Commission in Berne in 1915 for the distribution of literature to the camps with works sent such as Alexandra Kollontai's "Who Needs War". 4,000 copies of this were distributed to the camps with an editorial by Lenin. After the February Revolution, Lenin informed the inmates and stated they should choose to fight for the people when they returned to Russia. A questionnaire was sent containing questions designed to help inmates support the Bolsheviks.¹³³ Blagodatov recalls that later, in Ingolstadt, where Tukhachevsky was incarcerated when the February Revolution occurred, information about this and subsequent events reached the inmates via "agitators".¹³⁴ Information from Bolshevik sources appears to have reached POWs, but whether Tukhachevsky first encountered this in Bad Stuer or Ingolstadt is unclear.

However, Speed suggests the Tsarist policy was not deliberate, but a symptom of the autocratic system collapsing under the strains of waging war. This is likely, given that frontline troops were already experiencing shortages from late 1914 onwards, as Tukhachevsky himself had witnessed. This administrative chaos prevented Russia sending food packages to her POWs. Western prisoners received these to supplement the diet provided by the German authorities, but Russians and other East Europeans

¹³² R. Gul', p. 34; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 14.

¹³³ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 14-15; V. M. Ivanov, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁴ A. V. Blagodatov, "Plen i pobeg" *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia družei i soratnikov*. (Moscow, 1965), p. 22.

did not. 94% of East Europeans and Italians existed purely on prison food, but 97% of Western prisoners had this diet supplemented with food packages. This led to a death rate twice as high amongst the former group and contributed greatly to Russians comprising 70-80,000 of the 118,000 POWs dying in German prisons during the War.¹³⁵

Speed's assertion perhaps needs qualifying by the simple fact that since Russians comprised 59% of prisoners in German camps,¹³⁶ more Russians inevitably would have died in captivity than any other nation, but the impression created on the inmates would obviously have been bad. This must have influenced opinion. With 2,417,000 Russian POWs held in Germany during The Great War, upon returning to Russia after 1917, the majority of these would have balked at the thought of a Tsarist restoration after their experiences. This was very likely a factor in White recruiting difficulties during the Civil War.

The German authorities would have encouraged Bolshevik literature in the camps, given the defeatist message the Bolsheviks preached and with the above circumstances, it would have seemed more appealing. Gorelik suggests reading the ideas of Lenin had a great effect on Tukhachevsky and stiffened his resolve to escape.¹³⁷ Tukhachevsky would speak of this later in Ingolstadt, but in Bad Stuer and earlier, escape was already foremost in his mind, with the wish to return to Russia and rejoin the War against his captors the most likely reason. It is unlikely he decided to escape from here because he read a pamphlet by Lenin.

Tukhachevsky's next escape attempt was from Bad Stuer. The camp was surrounded by two rows of barbed wire and prisoners were guarded round-the-clock. As a rule escape attempts were unsuccessful and Tukhachevsky had witnessed several failures before he tried. Varying versions of this are furnished with Ivanov suggesting the escape attempt was made with a 2nd Lieutenant Phillipov.¹³⁸ On 7th September

¹³⁵ R. B. Speed, pp. 2, 73-74 & 204. Speed cites 70,000 deaths, but Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov cite 80,000, pp. 45-46.

¹³⁶ R. B. Speed, p. 76.

¹³⁷ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 15.

¹³⁸ Two different names are given in the various biographies for this accomplice. R. Gul' called him Semenov, p. 34; Iu. A. Shchetinov and B. A. Starkov also named him Semenov, but stated he was called Phillipov in some accounts, p. 47; L. Nikulin gave the testimony of Aleksei Mikhailovich Osokii, who was in Bad-Stuer at this time, and named him Philippov, p. 34.

1916, they hid in boxes of bedlinen taken out of the camp,¹³⁹ possibly devising this from a story Tukhachevsky had read about political prisoners in Siberia escaping in a wagon inside a box of cabbage.¹⁴⁰ Hiding in a rubbish pit or forest outwith the camp until nightfall, they covered twenty kilometres a day for 26 days, travelling 500 kms to the Dutch border, with their knowledge of foreign languages helping them. Literally a step from the Dutch border they were captured. Philippov managed to hide and escape later, but Tukhachevsky was caught and imprisoned in a local jail. Escaping from here, he swam the Elbe in a bid for freedom, but was again captured.¹⁴¹

Ivanov writes Tukhachevsky was then incarcerated in Ingolstadt, but he was first transferred to Fort Zorndorff, a strict penal camp in the Cüstrin Fortress, east of Berlin. Here he dug a tunnel with English and French POWs including Roland Garros, but half an hour before they were due to go, it was discovered, possibly via an informer, leading to his transfer to Fort 9, Ingolstadt.¹⁴²

Within the German penal system, officers and lower ranks were separated with non-officers put to work. Officers were spared this, but Shchetinov and Starkov suggest they were kept in old castles and fortresses, in especially strict isolation.¹⁴³ However, Speed lists Bad Stuer and Cüstrin as enlisted men's camps, which suggests segregation was perhaps not always strictly adhered to. Camp regimes did differ markedly between the German military districts, with local authorities running them under no central coordination.¹⁴⁴ Possibly, disruptive officers such as Tukhachevsky would be transferred and housed with lower ranks in securer regimes. In Ingolstadt, however, Tukhachevsky had reached the securest officer facility in Germany.

Major A. J. Evans of the Royal Flying Corps was imprisoned in Ingolstadt after repeated escape attempts in late 1916/early 1917, when Tukhachevsky was there. He provides a tremendously detailed and entertaining view of life in the camp and writes that it was populated by those who had repeatedly escaped or were tagged "disruptive". Around 150 officers were housed in Ingolstadt, of whom "...at least 130

¹³⁹ V. M. Ivanov, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ R. Gul', pp. 34-35; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 47.

¹⁴¹ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 15; V. M. Ivanov, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴² P. Fervacque, p. 14. Roland Garros was a French flying ace in The Great War and progressed to become a top racing driver in the 1920s.

¹⁴³ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 45-46.

¹⁴⁴ R. B. Speed, pp. 66-73.

had made successful attempts to escape from other camps, and had only been recaptured after from three days to three weeks temporary freedom".¹⁴⁵ Barbed wire surrounded the camp.¹⁴⁶ The bars on the windows were as thick as two fingers and the cells had steel doors. The fortress was surrounded by deep and wide ditches filled with water and there were as many guards as there were prisoners. To make escape attempts even harder, the Germans mixed POWs of different nationalities - Russian, French, British and Italian. "Attempt to converse!", wrote Blagodatov, a Russian detained with Tukhachevsky.¹⁴⁷ Undeterred however, Tukhachevsky and others tried to dig under the walls. This was detected and vigilance became even more strict.¹⁴⁸ Evans recalls tunneling was impossible because water from the moat flooded in, but he writes "The camp was nothing less than an escaping club. Each man was ready to help anyone who wished to escape and had a plan, quite regardless of his own risk or the punishment he might bring upon himself".¹⁴⁹ The descriptions of Tukhachevsky's activities within Ingolstadt fit this, with more attempts tried. Blagodatov provides several examples, recalling that whilst everyone attempted to escape and disrupt life in the camp, making it more difficult for the Germans, Tukhachevsky was one of the most active and inmates were "...always ready to follow him on any risky affair".¹⁵⁰

At one point the commandant tried to change the taking of *appel* from the cells to the courtyard. When he ordered the guards to summon the prisoners, the inmates began whistling and shouting. The French sang the *Marseillaise* and fights broke out between prisoners and guards. The commandant eventually flung his arms up in the air in despair and left. Tukhachevsky was an instigator of this demonstration which characterised his and the whole camp's mood. When the inmates gathered in the French quarters to celebrate Bastille Day with bottles of wine and beer provided in

¹⁴⁵ A. J. Evans, *The Escaping Club*. (Harmondsworth, 1939), p. 61.

¹⁴⁶ V. M. Ivanov, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ A. V. Blagodatov, p. 22; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov's work also lists Belgians being held in Ingolstadt, p. 47; Mixing nationalities was German policy throughout the camps, R. B. Speed, p. 65.

¹⁴⁸ V. M. Ivanov, p. 7.

¹⁴⁹ A. J. Evans, pp. 61-62.

¹⁵⁰ A. V. Blagodatov, p. 22; V. M. Ivanov mentions that Tukhachevsky was involved in many sabotages of the camp guards, p. 5.

French aid packages, Tukhachevsky toasted to a land of no camps, fortresses or jail.¹⁵¹

Blagodatov further recalls Tukhachevsky responding to a rich landowning fellow inmate, Colonel Leotiev, on hearing him condemning the February Revolution as being carried out by "Black Rebels", that the land should go to those who worked it.¹⁵²

Tukhachevsky was very close with many of the French inmates and helped several of them escape. He helped a French officer, de Jaubert, by preparing a German uniform for his escape and personally staging a concert to divert the attention of the guards and hide the noise of cutting through the window bars. De Jaubert escaped through the window and walked out of the fortress in the uniform when the guards changed.¹⁵³ He reached the railway station, escaped to Holland and later the inmates heard he had shot down a German plane. This success led to even stricter security and barbed wire covered with bells strung round the camp. Several days later, a French naval officer, Captain Bogino, was killed trying to escape. However, helping successful escapes and the revolutionary events back in Russia strengthened Tukhachevsky's desire to escape.¹⁵⁴

Blagodatov also refers to accounts included in *The Tukhachevskii Affair*.¹⁵⁵ In this book Alexandrov cites General de Goys de Mezeyrac, honorary president of the *Amicale de Ceux du Fort No. 9*, who arranged a reunion for Tukhachevsky with twenty French officers incarcerated with him in Ingolstadt. De Mezeyrac recalled how Tukhachevsky had been mainly responsible for the former's escape, on 3rd April, with a British Major Gaskell in a biscuit case. For this, someone had to answer for de Mezeyrac at *appel* the next morning. This was a highly risky undertaking and would have resulted in death if detected. However, de Mezeyrac asked Tukhachevsky and he agreed instantly to do it, donning the Frenchman's uniform and greatcoat the next day.

Another officer remembered an inspection by a German general, several colonels and other officers. Tukhachevsky stood with his hands in his pockets and refused to

¹⁵¹ A. V. Blagodatov, pp. 22-23; P. Fervacque mentions the Bastille Day celebrations of 14th July 1917, p. 81.

¹⁵² A. V. Blagodatov, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵³ A. J. Evans mentions this, p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ A. V. Blagodatov, pp. 24-25; P. Fervacque also mentions the death of Captain Bogino, pp. 52-53.

salute the general. The general "nearly had apoplexy" and asked his aide-de-camp who this was refusing to salute him, but Tukhachevsky replied, "A Russian officer who does not salute those who massacred the French at Senlis and elsewhere".¹⁵⁶ Tukhachevsky was put in irons, narrowly escaping being shot.

An escape attempt made by Tukhachevsky himself originated with a French officer, Lombard, who had been detained in the Ingolstadt jail and returned with the news that a Swiss smuggler was imprisoned. He suggested Tukhachevsky have himself detained in the jail, meet the smuggler, and escape with him to the Swiss border. Tukhachevsky agreed to this, but since he could not write German well enough, asked an Ensign Tsurkov to write a report from one of the fort NCOs to the commandant, stating stolen items had been discovered in Tukhachevsky's room during a search. This was done and Tukhachevsky was thrown into the jail, but failed to meet up with the smuggler. The reason he had agreed to this plan was that Lombard had criticised him for wanting to attempt simple, amateurish Russian-style escapes such as just walking out of the prison. After this failed though, Tukhachevsky decided to do just that.¹⁵⁷

Lombard himself escaped and returned to France, which along with the growing popularity of the Bolsheviks in Russia, Fervacque suggests inspired Tukhachevsky to escape and return to Russia.¹⁵⁸

Tukhachevsky finally escaped successfully, donning civilian clothes, walking out of the camp and vanishing.¹⁵⁹ An international agreement existed which allowed POWs to walk outwith the camps if they signed a document giving their word not to escape whilst doing so. However, Tukhachevsky and a General Staff Captain Cherniavskii signed each other's documents for one of these walks and escaped.¹⁶⁰ They wandered for six days and nights, but on the seventh day ran into police. Tukhachevsky managed to escape, crossing the Swiss border later, but Cherniavskii

¹⁵⁵ A. V. Blagodatov, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁶ V. Alexandrov, pp. 80-84.

¹⁵⁷ R. Gul', pp. 48-49.

¹⁵⁸ P. Fervacque, pp. 53-57.

¹⁵⁹ Fervacque gave Tukhachevsky the civilian clothes to wear under his uniform, p. 91.

¹⁶⁰ A. V. Blagodatov, p. 25; P. Fervacque calls Cherniavskii Tchernoviesky in recounting the escape, pp. 85-93; R. Gul' calls him Chernovetskii, indicating again Gul', an émigré, used Fervacque's book as a source, pp. 50-52.

was captured.¹⁶¹ A Swiss newspaper reported the corpse of a POW found on the Swiss border by Lake Geneva a month after the escape and it was thought this was Tukhachevsky. A requiem was held in the camp, with a French curate taking the service in the absence of a Russian priest. Blagodatov did not know Tukhachevsky was alive until back in Russia himself during the Civil War.¹⁶²

Evans recalled the British were suspicious of orderlies in the camp who were Russian or French, but remembered other Russians better. He described them as,

...very generous fellows... With regard to escaping, if you needed anything such as a leather coat or a greatcoat (the Russian greatcoat can, with little alteration, be turned into a very respectable German officer's greatcoat), you could be sure to get it as a gift or by barter from the Russians if they could possibly spare it. The difficulty of saying anything about them is added to by the fact that I cannot recall their real names.

He did however recall,

There were... several Russians, real good fellows, whom I never got to know well. One of them had escaped from a camp with some friends, and had reached the frontier after walking for over thirty days. His friends had got across, but he had been recaptured. I heard a short time ago that he had escaped and had crossed the Swiss frontier at the same place as Buckley and I did.¹⁶³

This was a description of Tukhachevsky, his escape attempt to the Dutch border and successful flight from Ingolstadt.

Crossing into Switzerland, Tukhachevsky received documents at the Russian Embassy for his return home. With war waging, the direct route from Switzerland to Russia crossed two fronts and Germany. Therefore, Tukhachevsky had to go through France, Britain, Norway, Sweden and Finland.¹⁶⁴ He travelled to Paris, meeting the Soviet Military Attaché, Alexei Alexeevich Ignatiev, who progressed to the Administration of the Higher Military Academic Institution of the Red Army in 1936. He remembered his meeting with Tukhachevsky, retaining a document about this,

¹⁶¹ Fervacque and Gul' write that Chernovetskii was returned to Ingolstadt after four and three days respectively.

¹⁶² An operational report to him was signed by Tukhachevsky, but he did not know this was the same man until 1924, when he again met him at a meeting of the *Revvoensovet Respublika (RVSR)*, A. V. Blagodatov, p. 25.

¹⁶³ A. J. Evans, pp. 69-70.

¹⁶⁴ V. M. Ivanov, p. 11; A. S. Popov, p. 11.

which he had sent to N. S. Ermolov, Military Attaché in London, asking him to help Tukhachevsky return to Russia.¹⁶⁵ He did this just before the October Revolution.

Fervacque's memoirs in *Le Chef de L'Armée Rouge* provide arguably the most illuminating insights on Tukhachevsky in Ingolstadt. At the reunion organised by de Mezeyrac in 1936, Alexandrov notes Tukhachevsky,

...suddenly remembered that his fellow inmate at the camp, "Remy Roure", had written a book citing Tukhachevsky's remarks on Napoleon and his Napoleonic ambitions. The author was present, and so much the better. At least Tukhachevsky had the chance to put things in their right perspective. So he replied soberly that he was very glad to talk of the past and that, having read the book about himself, he would comment on the views he held very early in 1917.

"I was still very young... a novice at politics, and all I knew about revolutions was the last phase of the citizens' revolution in France: the Bonapartism whose military triumphs filled me with boundless admiration. When we celebrated the taking of the Bastille together, on 14th July, 1917, I already realized that our revolution was only in its first stage, like yours in 1789. But your *sans culottes* went no further. I felt that our revolution would be very different. And that is why I joined the Bolshevik Party when I got back to Russia. I had read a great deal; I had been able to complete my political education. I knew that Bonapartism on the French model could never be the outcome of the Russian Revolution. Ours is not a bourgeois revolution; its aims are different from those of the great French Revolution. I have set out my views in a book: *The Class War*; I became a Marxist. I never think of my views at Ingolstadt without regretting them, since they *could* cause doubts about my devotion to the Soviet motherland. I'm taking advantage of our reunion to tell you my true feelings".¹⁶⁶

This was Tukhachevsky emphasising his loyalty to the USSR and dispelling any notion he was a threat to Stalin. Tukhachevsky attended the reunion as part of a diplomatic visit to London and Paris, representing the USSR at the funeral of King George V, along with General Vitovt Putna, Soviet Military Attaché in London. However, Alexandrov writes that Tukhachevsky was closely shadowed by *OGPU* agents in Paris and de Mezeyrac recalled Tukhachevsky seemed "tormented" and anxious to talk to him privately, but this was impossible because of the constant attention of "...the two Soviet civilians who were with him". The plot against Tukhachevsky which originated with Stalin's secret police was being fabricated at this

¹⁶⁵ Ia. M. Gorelik, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶⁶ V. Alexandrov, pp. 83-84; Pierre Fervacque was a pseudonym for Remi Roure, J. Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Rebel- 1890-1944*. (trans. P. O'Brian), (New York, 1990), p. 44.

time, with Tukhachevsky accused of contact with Nazis and Western anti-Soviets during these visits. According to de Mezeyrac's recollections, Tukhachevsky was evidently already worried, but, with this being the case, it is significant he did not simply deny his earlier beliefs when he knew they could be held against him. Instead his explanation does add credence to the views Fervacque attributes to Tukhachevsky in Ingolstadt.

Blagodatov refers to the Fervacque book for Tukhachevsky's political views at this time and Shchetinov & Starkov point out Tukhachevsky never did deny these were his beliefs in 1917.¹⁶⁷ It is highly likely these views were used against Tukhachevsky in 1937 and were used to add fuel to émigré claims about him.¹⁶⁸ Gul', a White émigré writing in 1932, when Tukhachevsky was Deputy Minister for Defence, quotes extensively from Fervacque, but later Soviet biographies either quote Fervacque selectively or not at all. Shchetinov & Starkov provide the only Soviet biography to cite Fervacque significantly, but this was not until 1990 with *Perestroika* and *Glasnost'* undoubtedly allowing a more critical appraisal of Tukhachevsky than Gorelik or Ivanov could make five years earlier. If the object is to portray Tukhachevsky turning against his noble blood at a young age to support socialist ideals, then eventually joining the Bolsheviks when he had the opportunity, Fervacque's comments are a problem. However, if we see Tukhachevsky becoming gradually disillusioned with the class he was born into as he grew older and finally turning against it and the way Russia was governed after his Great War experiences, the views Fervacque attributes to him are more fitting.

In his own words Tukhachevsky stated he was politically immature in 1917 and this is commented on later by various biographers. He had not read Bolshevik or other left-wing literature extensively, with his time spent studying military works. He probably had an interest in politics as his father was an advanced, liberal man who associated with left-wing people. Tukhachevsky was exposed to these ideas, but until his war experiences, had probably never fully considered the effect of politics on his life. The assertion he was a fully-fledged Bolshevik in 1917 is almost certainly not true. Fervacque recalled asking Tukhachevsky if he was a socialist. Tukhachevsky replied,

¹⁶⁷ A. V. Blagodatov, p. 23; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 53-54.

Socialist? Certainly not! What a need for classification you have! Besides, the great socialists are Jews and the socialist doctrine is a branch of universal christianity. I laugh at money, and whether the land is divided up or not is all one to me. The barbarians, my ancestors, lived in common, but they had chiefs. No, I detest socialists, Jews and Christians.

He had earlier said,

The Jews brought us Christianity. That is enough to make us hate them. And then they are a low race. I do not speak of the dangers which they have brought to my country. You French cannot understand that; for you equality is a dogma. The Jew is a dog, a son of a bitch, who sheds his fleas in every country. It is he who has contributed most to infecting us with the plague of civilisation and who would like to give us his morality, the morality of money and capital.¹⁶⁹

However, despite this, Fervacque related a later discussion, in which he suggested a Bolshevik victory in Russia would lead to a separate peace in the War and the Russia of Tukhachevsky to defeat, implying Lenin would not represent Tukhachevsky's nation. Tukhachevsky replied though,

If Lenin could relieve Russia of its fetters of prejudice, de-Europeanise it, I would follow him. But he would have to make a clean sweep and throw us deliberately into barbarism. What a pure spring! With Marxist formulas mixed with democratic couplets he could raise up the world. The right of peoples to be their own masters! There is the magic key which will open to Russia the gates of the East, and which will close them to the English.

Fervacque - But in the West it would cause you to lose Poland, Finland and perhaps more.

Tukhachevsky - It is here that the Marxist formulas come in. A revolutionary Russia, propagating the class struggle, would extend its boundaries well beyond the limits marked out by treaties! We could in this way, and only in this way gain Constantinople. But we need a new religion. Between Marxism and Christianity I would choose Marxism. With the red flag rather than with our cross we shall enter Byzantium and consecrate Saint Sophia anew.

Fervacque - In the meantime there will be defeat and a separate peace.

Tukhachevsky - For us it is the same thing. Your victory cuts us off just as much as our own defeat. Just think! The Emperor Kerensky, victorious with the allies, will nevertheless be the defeated one. What a gaping wound on Russia's flank! Your democracy and your right of self-determination would tear Poland from us. The English contest the East with us. Only revolution and the most extreme form, will leave our hands free. Let the Polish workers and peasants also overthrow their bourgeoisie and they will become again the brothers of the Russian workers and peasants and the unity of our empire is assured. What a potent lever the

¹⁶⁸ For example, the Postoronkin story mentioned earlier.

¹⁶⁹ P. Fervacque, pp. 24-25.

revolution can be! And if the English bar our way to the Balkans and Asia, we shall rise up against them.

Fervacque - You are joking Mikhail! Are you dreaming?

He looked at me for a moment in silence, then he burst out in a laugh that was at once ironic and despairing.

Tukhachevsky - Of course I'm joking.¹⁷⁰

Here we have Tukhachevsky presented in 1917 as a Panslavist, anti-semitic, Russian nationalist-imperialist, willing to follow Lenin and use Marxism if this would secure the age-old territorial aims of the Tsars and cement Russia's position in the world. The comment about using revolution to hold Poland and the Balkans is especially interesting in light of Tukhachevsky's later proposals in the Polish-Soviet War. He said on another occasion that Poland must remain within the Russian Empire, whether under the Red Flag or otherwise.¹⁷¹ The classic Slavophile view Tukhachevsky outlined above is repeated in further statements he made to Fervacque.

Tukhachevsky was said to have been pleased with the overthrow of the Tsar, but felt Nicholas II had been at fault, not for failing to implement reforms, but for not being a "great intelligent tyrant". Tukhachevsky praised Napoleon for using the Jacobins and Robespierre and also praised Catherine the Great and Peter the Great for achieving their aims. He had no faith in the Cadets, socialists or Kerensky who wanted a democratic Russia, as he felt a constitutional democracy, as in France with its sense of "perspective", would never solve Russia's problems. Despotism was the only way to rule Russia, combining the guile of Peter the Great with the barbarism of the East. He felt the suspension of the death penalty by Kerensky was wrong and the "Democracy of Kerensky decked out with Marxism" disgusted Tukhachevsky and made him want to escape more than ever to play a part.¹⁷²

Tukhachevsky is described as holding futuristic and avantgardist views, stating when the Bolsheviks gained power they should dispose of old cultural norms and practices. Latin and Greek cultures were not for Russia and the Renaissance and Christianity were the greatest misfortunes to befall man. "Harmony and measure must above all be destroyed". He derided Petrograd as "cosmopolitan and damned", but believed Moscow should become the Russian capital and "a shining light for the East

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. pp. 58-60.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 52.

¹⁷² Ibid. pp. 33-37.

around which the ancient races, those called barbarians in the West, could gather".¹⁷³ Tukhachevsky loved to read and quote from Dostoevskii, whose works epitomised the barbaric nature of Russia and how it should be, and at one point compared Russia to Beethoven, stating that, "It does not know which symphony to present to the world, as it does not know even itself. It is confused now, but wait, one beautiful day all will be defeated by it...". As to the role he would personally play, Tukhachevsky stated, "At thirty years old I shall be a general... or I shall be dead."¹⁷⁴ As we shall see shortly, he effectively achieved this the following year, when he was only twenty-five.

The question about the reliability of Fervacque as a source must be raised again, with Ivanov possibly also referring to Fervacque when condemning émigré literature against Tukhachevsky. However, Tukhachevsky did not deny these beliefs later and why would former fellow French prisoners invent such stories in the late 1920s and 1930s? In sifting through the multitude of opinion on Tukhachevsky, Fervacque is a controversial source, but when taken with Tukhachevsky's background and later life, he appears reliable.

Tukhachevsky in 1917 saw in Marxism a method by which Russian supremacy could be maintained and the empire held together. The political and socio-economic underpinnings of this philosophy could be learnt later. It was truly a new religion which matched his atheistic beliefs and which would allow the Slavic Empire of Russia to show the way to Europe and the rest of the world, as Russia had been threatening to do for so long. Now was the time for this to happen and Tukhachevsky saw himself as part of this.

Shchetinov & Starkov suggest Tukhachevsky used his time in Ingolstadt as effectively more time in military academy, reading many books and perfecting his French, with Charles de Gaulle as his language teacher.¹⁷⁵ Fervacque recalled Tukhachevsky enthusiastically reading the *Memorial de Saint-Helene* about Napoleon and said history was one of Tukhachevsky's "great passions", further backing earlier assertions about this.¹⁷⁶ Nikulin contradicts this, stating no books were permitted, but

¹⁷³ Ibid. pp. 60-61 & 43-44.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 29, 57 & 63.

¹⁷⁵ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 48.

¹⁷⁶ P. Fervacque, p. 33.

that this resulted in great discussion amongst the officers.¹⁷⁷ Whether books existed or not, political and military discussions would have been commonplace, alongside plans to escape.

However, despite the differing cosmopolitan views and experiences Tukhachevsky amassed in his years of imprisonment, especially in Ingolstadt, he himself looked on this period as lost time and did not like to talk about it.¹⁷⁸ This perhaps explains the dearth of material by him on this time, or perhaps a reluctance to bring up the views he had expressed so explicitly and a need to move away from the past prevented him mentioning Ingolstadt.

POW Camps: Influential Figures

Undoubtedly the most famous and potentially influential fellow inmate of Tukhachevsky's was Charles de Gaulle. Simpkin and Erickson state there is no firm evidence that their meeting and sharing a cell, if it took place at all, influenced Tukhachevsky's thinking.¹⁷⁹

However, the gathering of old Ingolstadt inmates held in 1936 for Tukhachevsky's diplomatic visit to France is mentioned in a de Gaulle biography, with the two men sitting next to each other at the dinner.¹⁸⁰ This was again the reunion organised by de Mezeyrac who recalled, "Mikhail Tukhachevskii arrived at the Ingolstadt internment camp on the 19th or 20th of October, 1916, a week or so after the arrival of another young officer - Charles de Gaulle. I remember both events very well."¹⁸¹ This would suggest the two men did know each other and Tukhachevsky is listed amongst inmates de Gaulle met and associated with.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ L. Nikulin, pp. 35-36.

¹⁷⁸ I. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaya & O. N. Tikhachevskaya, p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ R. Simpkin & J. Erickson, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tikhachevskii*. (London, 1987), p. 7.

¹⁸⁰ J. Lacouture, p. 151.

¹⁸¹ V. Alexandrov, p. 80.

¹⁸² J. Lacouture, p. 44, also listed are Remy Roure, the publisher Berger-Levrault, Major Catroux, Captain Lelong and Roland Garros.

It is suggested Tukhachevsky and de Gaulle followed the War via German newspapers and spoke extensively, influencing each other.¹⁸³ They made reviews of events at the Fronts, discussed the development of military operations, strategy and tactics, their war experiences, how war might develop in the future, the advent of the tank and the need for massed tank strikes, which both would pursue later.¹⁸⁴ This is conjecture, but Tukhachevsky did later congratulate de Gaulle on his work with tanks and the two men were interned together in a prison which only housed around 150 inmates.¹⁸⁵ From Evans' recollections, all the inmates met, cooperated and conversed with each other about various topics.

Back in Russia

Tukhachevsky reached Russia on 16th October, only ten days before the Bolshevik uprising, travelled to Moscow and spent a few days with relatives.¹⁸⁶ His family had returned to Vrazhskoe after the death of his father, younger brother Igor and sister Nadia. Nikolai and Aleksandr were serving with the Semenovskii which left Tukhachevsky's mother with four young daughters.¹⁸⁷ Obviously wishing to see his family, but also undoubtedly concerned about their fate, with the revolution occurring and nobles being dispossessed, Tukhachevsky travelled to Vrazhskoe.

He arrived unexpectedly, dressed in rags, looking like a "mummy", his family only recognising him "by his smile". Any fears he may have harboured were dispelled, as the peasantry repaid the good treatment received from the Tukhachevskys as landlords, by allowing them to retain their house and some land.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ P. Fervacque, p. 31, writes that he and Tukhachevsky followed the course of the Revolution in the pages of *Abendblatt* and *Ingoldstadter Zeitung*. These presumably were the German newspapers mentioned by Lacouture by which he may also have followed the course of the War; V. M. Ivanov, pp. 3-5; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 48.

¹⁸⁴ J. Lacouture, pp. 60 & 582, footnote. However, it appears that this was discovered in 1920 during the Soviet-Polish War. De Gaulle wrote, "Tanks should be brought into the field in a body, not separately." If de Gaulle concluded this, Tukhachevsky also possibly did, but in 1920, not during the Great War. They may have discussed which method of tank usage was more favourable and the 1920 conflict was the first real opportunity for either to find out.

¹⁸⁵ J. Lacouture, pp. 151 & 583, footnote. Tukhachevsky did this in *Ecrits Sur La Guerre*, (Paris, 1967), p. 250.

¹⁸⁶ V. M. Ivanov, p. 12; L. Nikulin, p. 38.

¹⁸⁷ R. Simpkin, p. 6.

¹⁸⁸ I. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaia & O. N. Tukhachevskaia, p. 15.

Staying only three days and nights, probably until certain his family were in no danger, Tukhachevsky returned to his regiment, travelling to the Semenovskii Regimental Depot in Petrograd.¹⁸⁹ The Regiment had been situated on the South-Western Front, but was now in reserve. Reaching here on 20th November, Tukhachevsky was reunited with his two brothers.¹⁹⁰

Hardly any officers remained and after the Kornilov Affair they were under suspicion.¹⁹¹ Authority was held by a Regimental Soldiers Committee, but its authority had also largely disappeared with the situation in Petrograd.¹⁹² However, upon his arrival Tukhachevsky was elected commander of 9th Company and possibly promoted to Captain.¹⁹³ He was called Tukhachevsky the First in staff documents,¹⁹⁴ undoubtedly because his two younger brothers were in the regiment. Tukhachevsky was apparently greeted well by the men as he was not aloof like other officers. Officers who had escaped from POW camps were treated with respect and interest, if guardedly.¹⁹⁵ Riabov recalled Tukhachevsky was treated in such a way because he had earlier been a fair officer, treating his men with respect.¹⁹⁶

Tipol't relates he met Tukhachevsky again in late autumn 1917 and saw him almost daily, recalling "It seemed my room was converted into a Regimental speech club. To it came officers, NCOs and soldiers. Noise, debates, tobacco, smoke." The War, Revolution and what was to happen in their country was discussed during these meetings, but Tukhachevsky did not say much, listening to the views of everyone else. It seemed he was considering events and different opinions, searching for an answer. Tipol't thought that only in late autumn 1917/early 1918, did Tukhachevsky

¹⁸⁹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 3; I. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaya & O. N. Tukhachevskaya, p. 15; R. Simpkin, p. 6.

¹⁹⁰ V. M. Ivanov, p. 12.

¹⁹¹ The Kornilov Affair was a failed right-wing military coup in August 1917.

¹⁹² R. Gul', p. 55.

¹⁹³ Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 17, no other sources mention this promotion and Gorelik gives no proof as to who promoted him. Possibly he meant that Tukhachevsky now had the effective rank of Captain as he was a Company Commander.

¹⁹⁴ V. M. Ivanov, p. 12.

¹⁹⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 24; V. M. Ivanov, p. 13.

¹⁹⁶ V. M. Ivanov, p. 13.

decide which way to turn.¹⁹⁷ These meetings would presumably have continued until the Semenovskii was disbanded.

Tukhachevsky returned to Petrograd at this time because he was a soldier and his regiment was in reserve here. Tipol't's account backs up the assertion that Tukhachevsky had no real idea, despite his political views, over which way to go. At this stage he merely wished to get back into the War, to defend his homeland against the Germans, who had held him prisoner for the past two and a half years.

However, varying versions of Tukhachevsky's motives and movements are provided for this period. Suggestions are made that Tukhachevsky had decided by this point that the Bolshevik Revolution was the only way forward, but was concerned about the fate of the Russian Army, because as a military man he could not conceive of government without a military force and was concerned about the Red Guard force currently employed by the Bolsheviks.¹⁹⁸

The Tsarist Army was disintegrating at this time through desertion and Bolshevik agitation with unreliable formations disbanded. The Semenovskii were similarly viewed as untrustworthy and open to counter-revolution.¹⁹⁹ The Petrovskii Brigade had played a decisive role in the February Revolution, but did not back the Bolsheviks, supporting the convoking of the Constituent Assembly. It still published the SR newspaper *Seriia shinel'* (Grey Overcoats), caricaturing the Red Guards and attacking Lenin as their enemy.²⁰⁰ Tukhachevsky apparently met Nikolai Krylenko, who spoke at a regimental meeting, trying to turn regimental opinion towards the Bolsheviks.²⁰¹ However, he was barracked by the troops and approached the Regimental Committee, upon which Tukhachevsky sat, advising it to convince their troops to change their minds. Although Krylenko was unsuccessful at this meeting, he was the first speaker to impress Tukhachevsky with his manner and tone in front of the soldiers and at this point Tukhachevsky began to disagree with other officers on political grounds.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ A. A. Tipol't, pp. 20-21.

¹⁹⁸ V. M. Ivanov, p. 13; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 17.

¹⁹⁹ A. I. Todorskii, p. 24.

²⁰⁰ R. Gul', pp. 55-62.

²⁰¹ Nikolai Vasil'evich Krylenko, (1885-1938), a Bolshevik since 1904.

²⁰² Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 61; Ia. M. Gorelik, p. 17.

No direct proof exists of this occurrence and it seems inaccurate to suggest Tukhachevsky had definitely decided to follow the Bolsheviks at this point. What is certain is the Semenovskii Regiment was disbanded, probably in November 1917. Tukhachevsky's sisters recall he returned to Vrazhskoe in December and stayed for a month, carrying out physical work such as gathering firewood for the family, before travelling to Moscow in January.²⁰³

The reason Tukhachevsky travelled to the capital now was almost certainly the 15th (28th) January *Sovnarkom* decree announcing the formation of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (*RKKA*). This decree gave Tukhachevsky the opportunity to once again serve in the Russian Army, a regular army being established by the government to replace the Red Guard militia. Tukhachevsky was a professionally-trained soldier who wished to fight in an organised professionally-based regular army. If the Bolsheviks had not formed such a force, but retained the militia Red Guard, it is doubtful Tukhachevsky would have joined the Red forces. The opportunities provided by a new army were immense and Tukhachevsky wished to be part of it, defending his country and building the army from scratch.

As the son of a landed noble, Tukhachevsky was ineligible to join the Red Army, but he decided to try to join this newly-emerging force anyhow.²⁰⁴ Therefore, he travelled to Moscow as a professional soldier attempting to find his place in the new society, seeking employment in the field he was trained in - the military. He was not driven here by support of the Bolsheviks or any wish to join them in a civil war, but by the wish to move on with his life after his recent experiences and rejoin the army to continue the fight with Germany. Joining the Red Army to defend his country was the reason Tukhachevsky travelled to Moscow, as so many other former officers and soldiers of the Tsarist Army did at this time.

²⁰³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, pp. 4-5; E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaja & O. N. Tukhachevskaja, p. 15.

²⁰⁴ Ivanov, (1990), p. 14

Conclusion: Who was Tukhachevsky in January 1918?

By January 1918, Tukhachevsky was twenty-four years of age, had completed a professional military education in the Tsarist Army, served through The Great War in battle and imprisonment, and had been elected Company Commander in the "democratised" Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment shortly before its disbandment.²⁰⁵

Tukhachevsky came from an unusual background. His father was of noble blood, his mother a peasant girl. In late 19th Century Russia, this placed him wholly in neither the aristocracy nor the peasantry. His father could most accurately be described as a member of the new intelligentsia emerging during the 1800s. Tukhachevsky was raised to appreciate literature, music, the arts, and to recognise the importance of history, with definite ideas of what Russia represented. Living in a household constantly hampered by impoverishment, he developed a disregard for wealth and a disdain for those who coveted and exploited via money. His father was an atheist and instilled this in his family, with Tukhachevsky adopting this belief fully, ridiculing and resenting religion. After an apparently chequered early schooling in Penza where he displayed the above tendencies and performed poorly, his academic performance changed remarkably in Moscow. Attending credited military educational institutions where he could finally concentrate on subject matter he found stimulating, Tukhachevsky graduated top of his year to join the Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment, following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather and Suvorov to fulfill his childhood ambition.

At this stage, politics and revolutionary ideals did not play a part in Tukhachevsky's life, but his experiences in The Great War altered this dramatically. He witnessed the sheer ineptitude and incompetence of the Russian Army High Command, twinned with the shambolic supply system of the Tsarist war machine, as compared to the devotion and bravery displayed by the rank-and-file soldier. This convinced Tukhachevsky that the autocracy, headed by a weak Tsar, ruling Russia through monetary corruption and manipulation of the weak Orthodox Church, required changing.

²⁰⁵ "Democratisation" was the Bolshevik term for the process of altering the Imperial Army to a socialist force.

Hardened by this combat experience and two and a half years imprisonment in the strictest German POW camps, Tukhachevsky never lost faith in his home nation or what he envisaged Russia to be, but looked to alter and rebuild the weak ruling strata before it was too late. In this way, the rise of Bolshevism in 1917 with its militant Marxist outlook and wish to drag backwards Russia into the Twentieth Century, appealed to him. Prejudices harboured by Tukhachevsky against religion, semitism and socialism were overcome by the sheer radicalism he saw in the Bolshevik Party, which could root out the corruption of the current regime and lead Russia onwards more effectively than the weak alternatives of liberalism or moderate socialism. Despotism was the natural order for Russia and the combination of Marxism with Russian Nationalism could provide this potent force. To enforce this, however, an army was required.

The Tsarist Army had all but collapsed when Tukhachevsky returned to Russia and the new Bolshevik Government employed a militia force to deal with internal opposition. A regular, professional army no longer existed and the polarisation of Russian society, culminating in the revolutionary Bolshevik takeover, had created a chaotic, anarchic internal situation, leaving Germany the opportunity to occupy vast tracts of European Russia to destroy any chance of Russian recovery. Tukhachevsky wished to rejoin the defence of Russia against the foreign aggressors. Only the decision forced upon the Bolsheviks to create the Red Army in January 1918 provided the opportunity to do this.

Alternatives provided by anti-Bolshevik forces did not emerge until later in 1918, but these emerged in regions distant from Tukhachevsky and his family, making the Red Army based on his doorstep, around Moscow, a better prospect. The family home was in Vrazhskoe and with his father dead, Tukhachevsky would now feel responsible for their care. These were times of hazardous travel for a man alone, far less with his whole family, but uprooting the family from Vrazhskoe would never have been a realistic option and probably did not cross his mind. He did not want to leave his family alone and going to fight for the anti-Red forces would effectively have meant saying goodbye to them for ever. Besides, these forces were led by generals who wished to restore the regime which Tukhachevsky had personally witnessed as already failing Russia. The emergence of a regular army created by the Bolshevik Government, the regime ruling Russia and the one Tukhachevsky felt most likely to

restore the nation again, was a golden opportunity he grasped, despite being officially ineligible to join in January 1918. Therefore, all roads led to Moscow and to finding some involvement in the Bolshevik Red Army.

In the next chapter I shall examine how Tukhachevsky did this by joining the Red Army and building upon his Tsarist military education and Great War experience, to become a Red Army Commander by summer 1918 and launch his active Civil War career. However, he also joined the Communist Party, a highly unusual step for a former Tsarist officer at this early stage. This perhaps reflected the individual leadership streak evident in him from a young age and would be significant for the ambitions he began to display in this new stage of his military career. The changing nature of the Bolshevik state, as pre-revolutionary ideals were reconsidered in the light of the practical reality of Russia in 1918, meant that Tukhachevsky did not have to wholly adjust his beliefs to fight for the regime, as it developed closer to the ideals he had voiced in Ingolstadt than he could possibly have hoped.

Chapter II: From Tsarist Lieutenant to Red Army Commander-Communist:

January-August 1918

Joining the Red Army

The first eight months of 1918 were turbulent for the young Bolshevik regime in Russia. By March, Lenin had withdrawn Russia from The Great War, but peace only lasted until May, when the first large-scale fighting in the Russian Civil War began in the Volga Region. By the end of August, a Red Eastern Front had been formed and organised into five Revolutionary Armies, the first of which was commanded by Tukhachevsky. How had he advanced so quickly in such a short period? He left Vrazhskoe in late January, a company commander of a disbanded regiment, but by early September, was 1st Army Commander, leading his troops against anti-Soviet forces in Lenin's hometown of Simbirsk. Events within the Soviet Republic, especially the evolution of the Red Army, developed in such a manner as to propel Tukhachevsky into his Red Army career. His previous experience combined with work he carried out and key decisions he made in the months ahead, and a sizeable element of luck, to set him on his way. In this chapter, I shall examine how he joined the Red Army and the Communist Party and proved his worth in administrative posts before gaining his first frontline command. Tukhachevsky played a vital role in the formation of the Red Army in 1918 and I shall closely examine the origins of the Bolshevik armed force to highlight Tukhachevsky's importance in this process. Tukhachevsky recorded his experiences on the Eastern Front in an essay written in 1921, *Pervaiia Armia v 1918* ("First Army in 1918"). Studying Tukhachevsky's recollections alongside other memoirs, documents and archival sources, I shall analyse his contribution to events in this period.

Conflicting versions exist over how Tukhachevsky joined the Red Army. Gul' provides a dramatic account of Tukhachevsky attending the Constituent Assembly meeting in Petrograd and encountering Nikolai Kuliabko.¹ He took Tukhachevsky to

¹ Kuliabko's parents were old family friends of the Tukhachevskys and had been active in the 1905 Revolution. Kuliabko had known Tukhachevsky since 1912, N. N. Kuliabko, "Ia rekomendoval ego v partiiu", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia друзей i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 26-27.

the Smolny Institute,² introducing him to various high-ranking Bolsheviks such as Sverdlov and Antonov-Ovseenko, the latter giving Tukhachevsky a position in the Red Army.³ However, this is almost certainly inaccurate. Gul' fails to record Tukhachevsky returning to Vrazhskoe after the Semenovskii's disbandment and no other source mentions him attending the Constituent Assembly or returning to Petrograd. Furthermore, the Constituent Assembly met on 5th January, ten days before the Red Army was proclaimed, making it impossible for Tukhachevsky to join it on that day.

Tukhachevsky's sisters also write of him meeting Kuliabko, but in Moscow.⁴ Kuliabko was working with the Bolshevik Government and transferred with it from Petrograd to Moscow on 11th March,⁵ by which time Tukhachevsky was already working with the Red Army, in the Military Department of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Todorskii and Ivanov suggest Tukhachevsky found temporary accommodation with Kuliabko's parents in Moscow. Kuliabko's father worked for the Bolsheviks and, knowing Tukhachevsky's military background, recommended him to the Military Department.⁶ However, although Tukhachevsky possibly lived with the Kuliabkos, it is possible he joined the Red Army via another source.

Lidia North suggests Tukhachevsky met his old Aleksandrovskii Military Academy friend, Nikolai Kuibyshev, in the railway station in Moscow. Nikolai is described as a career soldier with no special interest in politics,⁷ very similar to Tukhachevsky. However, Nikolai was on his way to enlist in the Red Army, encouraged by his older brother Valerian Vladimirovich, a former military doctor turned Bolshevik, who headed the Red Army Political Department at this time. Nikolai introduced Tukhachevsky to Valerian, who acquired him the military position three days later.⁸ Therefore, a significant element of chance was involved at this early stage.

² Smolny was the seat of the Petrograd Soviet from February 1917 and the base of the Bolshevik Government until it transferred to Moscow on 11th March 1918.

³ R. Gul', *Tukhachevsky: krasnyi marshal*, (Berlin, 1932), pp. 60-61.

⁴ I. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaiia & O. N. Tukhachevskaiia, "On liubul zhizn'", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia друзей i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), p. 15.

⁵ N. N. Kuliabko, p. 28.

⁶ A. I. Todorskii, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, (Moscow, 1963), p. 25; V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, 2nd Edition, (Moscow, 1990), pp. 15-16.

⁷ L. North, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, (Paris, 1978), p. 31.

⁸ Ibid.

The Military Department had existed since early November 1917, providing the link in military matters between the CEC and the Bolshevik Party Central Committee (CC),⁹ and specifically at this time, the creation and construction of the Red Army. Joining this body was an important step for Tukhachevsky, involving him in the military process at a crucial point. Brest-Litovsk had just been signed and the breathing-space of the next three months would enable the Bolsheviks to appraise the situation within Russia and begin the formation of an army. This intense activity and military build-up had been preceded by several months of fierce activity and debate, especially within Bolshevik ranks, and by simultaneously dismantling the old Tsarist army, whilst attempting to build a new army.

A glance through the first few months of military formation after October introduces many important Bolshevik figures and illustrates various strands of opinion within the Party. Visible from the outset are people important for Tukhachevsky's short and long-term prospects.

Assessing how the Red Army became the force by which the Bolsheviks won the Civil War, understanding the complex process this encompassed and the varied characters and cliques which emerged at this initial stage, is important for placing Tukhachevsky in the picture. How he compared to those involved in military construction, how it evolved before and after he appeared, and how he fitted in, are crucial in determining his early contribution to the development of the Red Army.

Early Developments in Red Armed Forces

The necessity of defending the gains of 25th October was pressed home only a day later when a force of 1,000 cossacks under Kerensky and Krasnov had to be repelled at Pulkovo Heights north of Petrograd.¹⁰ On 29th October, a rising led by Colonel G. P. Polkovnikov and the "Committee for the Salvation of the Fatherland" was repressed, with 200 killed in these actions. This was accomplished by 10,000 Red Guards under A. P. Antonov-Ovseenko, a professionally-trained soldier who now chaired the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC/*Revvoensovet*,

⁹ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, *Krasnyi Marshal*, (Moscow, 1990), p. 62.

¹⁰ Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky (1881-1970) was leader of the Russian Provisional Government; Petr Nikolavich Krasnov (1869-1947) was a Tsarist Lieutenant General.

RVS).¹¹ He proceeded to lead forces comprising Red Guards, revolutionary soldiers, sailors, armed workers and partisans along Russia's railway lines into the Northern Caucasus, Southern Urals and Ukraine, defeating the Cossacks of Dutov and Kaledin and the Ukrainian National Government in Kiev.

By February 1918, Lenin declared the Civil War won and that no imminent internal threat to Bolshevik consolidation existed. Antonov-Ovseenko had won the Railway War (*Eshelonnaia Voina*) with relatively few forces, which, out of necessity, had been very quickly thrown together, created by local Party organisations, Soviets and *RVS*-y, acting under general instructions from the "All-Russian Bureau of Front and Rear Military Organisations under the Central Committee" (*Voenska*).¹² This had been created in summer 1917 to agitate amongst the Tsarist soldiers and sailors and begin forming Red Guard detachments, with Bolshevik figures such as Lenin, Sverdlov, Dzierżyński and Bubnov involved.¹³

These were voluntary militia forces, with elected commanders, who had little experience of conducting modern large-scale warfare and no knowledge of military theory. Centralised administrative and command apparatuses did not exist. Although these detachments successfully defeated internal insurgents, external factors developed to necessitate a larger, centrally organised military force to defend the Soviet Republic.

On 26th October 1917, the 2nd Congress of Soviets had proposed an armistice of three months for the negotiation of a general peace between all belligerent nations, to end the Great War.¹⁴ No response from Russia's former Anglo-French Allies prompted Soviet moves for a separate armistice with the Central Powers, which was signed on 2nd December at Brest-Litovsk.¹⁵ Allied reaction was to begin plans for intervention into Russia to reopen the Great War Eastern Front,¹⁶ but the more immediate threat was still posed by the 1.5 million strong Austro-German Army along

¹¹ Vladimir Aleksandrovich Antonov-Ovseenko (1883-1939) became a Bolshevik Party member in 1903.

¹² S. M. Kliatskin, *Na zashchite Oktiabria: Organizatsiia regularnoi armii i militsionnoe stroitel'stvo v Sovetskoi respublike, 1917-1920*. (Moscow, 1965), p.45.

¹³ S. V. Lipitskii, *Voennaia deiatel'nost' TsK RKP(b)*, (Moscow: 1973), p. 87; Feliks Edmundovich Dzierżyński (1877-1926) became head of the *Cheka* in December 1917; Andrei Sergeevich Bubnov (1884-1940); Iakob Mikhailovich Sverdlov (1885-1919).

¹⁴ J. Bunyan and H.H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1918. Documents and Materials*, (California, 1934) pp. 124-128.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 273.

Russia's European border. The potential threat posed by the Central Powers, especially with armistice negotiations stalling, had already supplied the stimulus for the Bolsheviks to begin the process of creating a regular "standing army". Practical realities outweighed revolutionary principles, although few theoretical guidelines existed in Marxism for military construction. However, the ideal of a "people's militia" was never abandoned and militia construction was to continue side-by-side with the creation of regular army formations. The contradictions between theoretical want and practical necessity set the scene for great debate in late 1917/early 1918.

The Peoples Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs (*Narkomvoen*) was formed at the 2nd Congress of Soviets, comprising Antonov-Ovseenko, A. I. Dybenko (Head of Naval Affairs), Krylenko (Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces) and Podvoiskii as members, and Mekhonoshin, Lazimir, Eremeev, Vasiliev and Sklianskii as candidates.¹⁷ Meeting from 3rd-5th (16th-18th) November, *Narkomvoen* discussed what to do with the Tsarist War Ministry and Tsarist Army. Commissars were placed at the head of War Ministry departments and had to sign all documents for them to be legal. Counter-revolutionary activities by former War Ministry members, Generals A. A. Manikovskii and V. V. Manushevskii, led to a *Sovnarkom* decree of 6th (19th) November for their arrest, and the formation of the "Collegiate of *Narkomvoen*" of B. V. Legran, Mekhonoshin, and Sklianskii, led by Podvoiskii, which took over War Ministry duties on 11th (24th) November.¹⁸

Meanwhile, on 8th November Krylenko announced "democratisation" of the old army.¹⁹ This envisaged abolition and replacement of rank by elected commanders, with full citizens' rights and education for soldiers, confirming Bolshevik promises made throughout 1917 in their efforts to undermine the Tsarist Army. The "democratisation" policy aimed to replace anti-Bolshevik officers and generals with approved, elected men and use those components of the old army trustworthy enough to form the core of the new army. Bolshevik fears over the numbers of anti-Bolshevik

¹⁶ However, recent evidence suggests the Allies hedged their bets by supplying advisers for Antonov-Ovseenko, whilst preparing separate interventionary plans against the Reds.

¹⁷ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 60.

¹⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Voennaia perepiska 1917-1922*, (Moscow, 1987), (hereafter *L-Vp*), p. 23; S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 63-64.

¹⁹ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 63.

voenspetsy still active in the army were in fact exaggerated, as only 3% of the officer corps were actively prepared to oppose the October Revolution in late 1917.²⁰

To achieve democratisation, *Sovnarkom* began demobilising the Tsarist Army on 10th November. As mentioned in chapter I, the Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment was deemed unreliable and disbanded during this democratisation process. Lenin already envisaged the use of *Voenspetsy* (Military Specialists) to work out the "military-technical supply of a revolutionary army",²¹ with *Stavka* recruited for this. On 30th November, the *RVS* at *Stavka* provided a "Project of the Position about Democratisation of the Army", which was telegraphed to all soldiers' committees.²² These by now ran army formations at all levels, but needed guidance from Moscow on demobilisation.²³

The idea of using a core of the old army to form the new one, favoured by the old General Staff, was but one strand of opinion at this time. The General Staff of the Red Guard proposed expanding their force, whilst M. S. Kedrov, who was appointed to *Sovnarkom* on 23rd November and was in the Collegiate of *Narkomvoen* as Head of the Army Demobilisation Department, proposed a "People's Guard" composed purely of workers, not using the old army at all.²⁴ Discussions were held at the "All-Army Conference on Demobilisation" on 17th (30th) December at which Lenin produced a questionnaire for delegates to complete.

Krylenko had reported to *Sovnarkom* on 16th (29th) December, "About Transitional Forms of Construction of the Army in the Period of Demobilisation", but no decision on the matter was reached. However, with the aid of the questionnaires, *Sovnarkom* instructed *Narkomvoen* to commission *Stavka* to produce a plan for reorganising the army and reinforcing the fronts. The need to maintain military action against Germany with a new voluntary army was particularly stressed. In this way, on 21st December (3rd January), *Stavka* produced a plan for retaining 100 infantry

²⁰ A. G. Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty na sluzhbe Respubliki Sovetov, 1917-1920 gg.*, (Moscow: 1988), p. 50. - The heavy losses suffered by the Tsarist Army early on in the Great War resulted in "democratisation" of the officer corps already taking place as more and more lower ranking officers and NCOs were drafted to replace the casualties, thus changing the social composition of the officer corps and removing a buttress of the autocratic regime.

²¹ J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", R. Pipes ed. *Revolutionary Russia*, (Harvard, Oxford, 1968), p. 295; *Voenspetsy* was the title bestowed by the Bolsheviks on former officers and generals of the Tsarist Army as the word "specialist" was deemed not to have the same autocratic overtones as the military terms and therefore to be more acceptable to the common soldier to gain trust and obedience.

²² J. Bunyan & Fisher, H. H., pp. 232-275 on Bolshevik takeover of *Stavka*.

²³ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 67.

divisions on Russia's borders for the War's duration, whilst raising a new army of 360,000 men, 36 divisions, in the Moscow Region, using soldiers from units withdrawn from front areas and volunteers.²⁵

This was the embodiment of the Bolshevik wish to use the old army as a temporary stopgap measure and also to aid in the creation of a new militia volunteer force. However, this ideal remained just that. Reports from the Rumanian Front noted the army had all but dissolved, with desertion reaching new heights.²⁶ The General Staff plan was impossible with a new army required to defend the European borders immediately.

A meeting in Petrograd, chaired by Podvoiskii, discussed this and a staff was formed containing members of *Voenka* and the Red Guard General Staff, including Nikonov, Trifonov and Iurenev (the latter given the task of formulating how to create the new army).²⁷ This group met on 26th December (8th January) with Podvoiskii and V. I. Nevskii elected the heads of *Voenka*. Plans were outlined to raise a new army of 300,000 men within one and a half months, comprising politically conscious volunteers at the core.²⁸ Party cells were to be an integral part of the army, maintaining Party control and ensuring loyalty.²⁹

Sovnarkom allocated 10 million roubles on 23rd December (5th January) for raising volunteer detachments and Krylenko assigned Bonch-Bruевич and *Stavka* to formulate orders for troops joining the new army at the front. On 28th December (10th January), *Stavka* produced a "General Report on Forming the Army by Voluntary Origins" and "Approximate Instructions on the Formation of Revolutionary Battalions of the Peoples-Socialist Guard in *Raion* Divisional Reserves and in Units, Situated in Pre-Front Areas", the latter becoming the basis for the later *Sovnarkom* decree on the formation of the Red Army.

Under this system, Corps Soldiers Committees should select elements of their corps suitable for the new army, enlist volunteers from these and reorganise them into battalions and regiments. Unsuitable elements would go into "regular" formations,

²⁴ J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", p. 295; S. M. Kliatskin, p. 75.

²⁵ S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 75-79.

²⁶ J. Bunyan & Fisher, H. H., pp. 567-568 on situation at front.

²⁷ Valentii Andreevich Trifonov (1888-1938), a Bolshevik since 1904; Konstantin Konstantinovich Iurenev (1888-1938), a Bolshevik since 1905.

²⁸ Vladimir Ivanovich Nevskii (1876-1937).

²⁹ S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 81-82.

continuing guard duties until new units were prepared, at which point the “regulars” would be demobilised.³⁰

The plans for the new army were discussed at the All-Army Conference and pushed through by Podvoiskii by 153 votes to 40 with 13 abstentions, to proceed with army formation immediately. These plans were laid out by *Stavka*, *Voenka* and the Petrograd Red Guards General Staff, after discussing the two aforementioned *Stavka* reports, and instructions were telegraphed by Krylenko on 17th (30th) December to all troops. The Conference formed an Agitational Collegiate to raise volunteers, but by 2nd (15th) January, the Red Army on the Northern Front numbered only 7,500, with similar levels elsewhere. Krylenko's plan of raising and basing the new force at the fronts from volunteers of the old army was replaced by Podvoiskii's scheme to organise it in the rear, drawing recruits from the poor and unemployed proletariat and peasantry. Reports of more desertions and chaos at the fronts supported this. The first appeal for volunteers appeared in newspapers on 29th December (11th January) and the name *Raboche-Krest'ianskaia Krasnaia Armia* (*RKKA*, Workers'-Peasants' Red Army) was first mentioned in Lenin's 3rd (16th) January 1918 report to the CEC which became the "Declaration of Rights of Workers and Exploited Peoples". Twelve days later, 15th (28th) January, the *RKKA* was announced as a regular volunteer army.³¹ This decree provided the opportunity for Tukhachevsky to again defend his country against Germany.

In January 1918, the Agitational Collegiate created the "Provisional Bureau for the Creation of the Red Army", made up of Grigoriev, Litke, Iorgensberger, Mikosho and Nikonov.³² This existed from 8th (21st)-18th (31st) January and worked with *Narkomvoen* and the delegates from the front, at the 3rd Congress of Soviets, to produce a report on forming the "All-Russian Collegiate for the Organisation and Administration of the Workers'-Peasants' Red Army", which was accepted by Podvoiskii on 18th (31st) January. The All-Russian Collegiate was created by *Sovnarkom* on 21st January (3rd February), but only one of the eight departments the Provisional Bureau had proposed for it - the Organisation-Agitation Department - had been created. Therefore, a commission including Grigoriev, Iorgensberger, Litke and

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 82-87.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 88-98.

³² Grigorii Timofeevich Grigoriev (1894-1966).

Mikosho of the Provisional Bureau, with Andreev and Sheshukov, was formed to work out the functions and tasks of the remaining departments.³³

The Provisional Bureau had also proposed an Operational Department for the All-Russian Collegiate (*Operod*), setting various matters for it to resolve, and the formation of a "Provisional Staff" for the Red Army. A five-man leadership of Krylenko, Podvoiskii, Mekhonoshin, Trifonov and Iurenev was appointed for the All-Russian Collegiate with the Heads of Departments becoming Grigoriev, Litke, Mikosho, Nikonov and Sheshukov.

The voluntary nature of the new army was underlined by the omission of a Mobilisation Department from the final organisation. Instead of this, the All-Russian Collegiate attempted to coordinate the work of local Soviet Military Departments which had appeared throughout the country from 17th (30th) January. (These were coordinated by the Military Department of the CEC in which Tukhachevsky would work). *Narkomvoen* aided this instance of the localities leading the Centre by dismantling the old Tsarist military apparatus gradually (on the same lines as the demobilisation of the army), using any reliable supply networks which already existed, whilst dispensing with the rest and handing responsibility for these to the Military Departments of the Soviets on 22nd January (5th February). On 31st January (12th February), "Instructions for Leaders of Soviets and Committees in Localities for the Creation and Administration of the Red Army", prepared by the All-Russian Collegiate, were sent out by *Narkomvoen*.³⁴

This was the fragmentary structure through which the Red Army was intended to evolve. However, even as Tukhachevsky travelled to Moscow to rejoin the fight with Germany, events with his recent hosts escalated to further accelerate Red Army development. Negotiations between the Soviets and the Central Powers at Brest-litovsk had been stuttering forward since 9th (22nd) December. On 29th January (10th February) 1918, Trotsky informed the astounded German delegation that the new Bolshevik Republic believed a state of "no war, no peace" existed. This invited a telegram from General Hoffman on 16th February (New Style) declaring the armistice

³³ Ivan Il'ich Andreev (1896-1920).

³⁴ S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 93-112; J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", pp. 300-308.

at an end from 12.00pm on 18th February and an invasion of Soviet territory at that hour.³⁵

Brest is a perfect example of the deep divisions within Bolshevik ranks in all policy areas in early 1918. Splits over Brest encompassed military, political, social and economic elements and displayed the essence of the Bolshevik position at this time - attempts to secure their state to enable Marxist development were being pushed further and further from their ideals by circumstance, as internal opposition emerged alongside the German juggernaut, threatening to smother the Republic in its infancy.

Left Communists, with the young Nikolai Bukharin prominent, wanted a "revolutionary war" against the Imperialist Central Powers, carrying the October Revolution into Europe by force. This was entirely unrealistic with the armed forces in such disarray, but the idea of "exporting revolution on the points of bayonets" did not go away and would be picked up by Tukhachevsky in 1920 against Poland. Trotsky's "No peace, No war" was just as unrealistic in terms of imperial power politics and showed the absolute idealism the Bolsheviks hoped to impose on the world. Lenin again had to grasp reality and, after initially acquiescing to Trotsky's judgement, forced the Bolsheviks to agree to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3rd March, accepting much harsher terms than previously offered, with German troops now close to Petrograd and threatening Moscow.³⁶ This secured the breathing-space necessary for building the Red Army, but undermined the governmental coalition the Bolsheviks had enjoyed with the Left SRs, which worsened to a complete breakdown by July 1918 when the Left SRs revolted in Moscow, assassinating the German Ambassador Mirbach. This would play an important part in Tukhachevsky's career.

However, in early March, events leading to Brest-Litovsk forced a further reevaluation of Red Army construction. The poor quality and numbers of disorganised detachments formed via voluntary recruitment led to the creation of the Supreme Military Soviet (*Vysshi Voennyi Sovet/VVS*) under Trotsky's chairmanship on 1st March.³⁷ This contained *voenspetsy* from the Tsarist General Staff to direct and command the new Red Army and the Central Committee decision on 21st March to use *voenspetsy* at all levels legalised Tukhachevsky's participation in the Red Army.

³⁵ J. Bunyan and Fisher, H. H., pp. 476-540, for documents on the Brest-Litovsk negotiations.

³⁶ The severe splits in opinion are clearly shown by the CEC vote to accept the Brest-Litovsk Treaty - 116 for, 85 against, 26 abstentions - a majority of only 5.

³⁷ *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR: Entsiklopediia*, (Moscow, 1983), pp. 137-138.

With the German invasion, detachments of troops like Tukhachevsky, who wished to defend their nation, had appeared spontaneously all over Soviet-held Russia. However, before a Military Department could be created on any level, Soviet power had to be secure there, with a Soviet in existence and enough trained staff available locally to run the Military Department. By the end of March, 27 of the 33 provinces of European Soviet-held Russia had Military Departments, but only 70 of the 314 *uezdy*.³⁸ Lack of these necessary preconditions prevented improvement, with German occupation, following Brest and White risings in the South, reducing even these figures. The disaster of the German invasion illustrated clearly the need to move from *partizanshchina* to regular formations.³⁹ Established and new Red Guard detachments and the sole part of the Tsarist Army which readily sided with the Bolsheviks, the Latvian Rifle Regiments, provided the core for these new formations.

The decision to employ *voenspetsy* widely on all levels of the military apparatus, which Lenin himself forced through after much bitter debate on 25th March, provided the necessary expertise to pull together these dispersed detachments and provide the discipline and leadership for them. Many of the former Imperial General Staff had already thrown their lot in with the Bolsheviks, wishing to organise the army to fight against Germany. Bonch-Bruevich, Vasilevskii, Eremeev and Lashevich had been appointed members of the "Extraordinary Petrograd Military District Staff" along with Mekhonoshin and Iurenev,⁴⁰ by the Petrograd Military Affairs Commissariat. This had been formed in answer to the German invasion, alongside the 15-man "Committee for the Revolutionary Defence of Petrograd", chaired by Sverdlov, with Gusev as Secretary and five of the "Extraordinary Staff" also members.⁴¹ This Petrograd Defence Staff developed into the *VVS* under Trotsky and from early March began to organise defences against German encroachments.⁴² The transfer of Podvoiskii, a militia advocate, to *Vsevoluch*, to begin construction of militia reserve forces accompanied the resignation of Supreme Commander Krylenko, a staunch

³⁸ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 109.

³⁹ *Partizanshchina* was the Soviet term used to describe unregulated militia or partisan formations.

⁴⁰ Mikhail Dimitrievich Bonch-Bruevich (1870-1956), a Tsarist Lieutenant-General; Aleksandr Mikhailovich Vassilevskii (1895-1977), a Tsarist Staff-Captain; Konstantin Stepanovich Eremeev (1874-1931), an *RSDLP* member since 1896; Mikhail Mikhailovich Lashevich (1884-1928), an *RSDLP* member since 1901; Konstantin Aleksandrovich Mekhonoshin (1889-1938), a Bolshevik since 1913.

⁴¹ Sergei Ivanovich Gusev (1874-1933).

⁴² J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", pp. 306-308; S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 125-140.

advocate of voluntary, workers-only militia forces. The latter's replacement by Trotsky, who also became People's Commissar for War, heading *Narkomvoen*, shows the axial shift which occurred at this point. Therefore, Tukhachevsky, a staunch advocate of a regular, centrally-organised army, joined the CEC Military Department, the hub of Red Army formation, at precisely the time Trotsky assumed control of the process at the Centre. Practical realities had moved the Bolshevik regime towards Tukhachevsky's ideal of a centrally-organised, regular army, just as he appeared. What impact would he have on the construction and development of the Red Army?

A Communist in the Military Department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee

The 4th All-Russian Congress of Soviets met in Moscow from 14th-16th March 1918. Nikolai Kuliabko was elected a member of the CEC and appointed Military Commissar of the Moscow Defence Staff, making him a good friend to have.⁴³ Upon finding Tukhachevsky working for the Military Department, learning of his military record and asking his opinions on the state of Russia, Kuliabko recommended Tukhachevsky join the Communist Party. Kuliabko recalled Tukhachevsky was "deeply anxious" and thought it over "very seriously" before agreeing. Tukhachevsky had joined the Red Army to fight Germany, but joining the Communist Party was another matter. This was the step by which he chose sides for the forthcoming Civil War. Hitherto, he had not involved himself in civil unrest and had paid scant regard to politics. Therefore, joining a political party was a big decision. However, he decided to do so and on the oral and written recommendation of Kuliabko, Tukhachevsky joined the Khamovniki District Party in Moscow on 4th April 1918.⁴⁴

By joining the Communist Party, Tukhachevsky completed his credentials for advancement in the Red Army. This was a regular army, but a politically-based one. Tukhachevsky had professional military training and wartime experience, but now also had a "Party Father" in Kuliabko and was a Party member, not just another *voenspets*. This was a rare phenomenon in Russia at this time. Indeed Smirnov

⁴³ Kuliabko rose to become Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the *RKKA* during the Civil War, a figure of some influence, A. I. Todorskii, p. 25, note 2.

⁴⁴ N. N. Kuliabko, p. 28.

suggests only around 100 "Commander-Communists" existed and believes this explains the rapid rise Tukhachevsky achieved over the next few months.⁴⁵

Tukhachevsky would have realised the favourable position Party membership combined with professional military training and experience would give him, when deciding to join the Party, and it was most likely this consideration which led to his decision. Political loyalty was essential in the new climate and Party membership guarded him against his noble heritage, but now he had to prove his worth to advance further.

Tukhachevsky had been working at this for some 5-6 weeks before joining the Party. His work in the Military Department involved him at the very heart of the military construction process. He could study the evolution of the Red Army, note limitations and possibilities imposed by the prevailing situation and conclude from this how army development could best proceed.

Working in the Military Department, Tukhachevsky encountered a plethora of advisers from whom he could learn and understand the military and political processes developing around him. The Military Department lay at the hub of the simultaneous demobilising of the Tsarist Army and the formation of the Red Army. It was the link between the CEC, the Central Committee, *Narkomvoen* and local military organs (Soviet Military Departments and from 8th April the Commissariats of Military Affairs (*voenkomaty*) at *okrug*, *guberniia*, *volost* and *uezd* level), which were forming military detachments across the Republic.⁴⁶ This generated a mountain of work for Military Department employees. Operating since early November 1917 under Avel' Safronovich Enukidze,⁴⁷ between 1st November and 1st March 1918, it entertained 1,397 delegations from the fronts. These brought letters, surveys and requests to be answered by Military Department staff. Special Front and Rationing Commissions were set up, receiving around 400 delegates a month, supplying them with political and military literature published by the Military Department and answering questions on subjects such as peace, land, the organisation of Soviet power, national self-determination and the worsening conflict with counter-

⁴⁵ G. V. Smirnov, *Krovavyyi marshal, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, 1893-1937*, (St. Petersburg, 1997), pp. 244-245.

⁴⁶ A. I. Todorskii, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁷ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 62; Avel' Safronovich Enukidze (1877-1937), a member of the *RSDLP* since 1898.

revolution.⁴⁸ Therefore, by the time Tukhachevsky joined, the personnel employed, although probably completely embattled, were the most experienced figures in Red Army construction - experts in the field. This was the perfect place for Tukhachevsky to rapidly hone his military knowledge, following the fluctuations of current political and military events, to become an expert in the field of Red Army formation, viewing and learning the process from all angles.

Possessing the keen mind for this, Tukhachevsky would have quickly anticipated the central role of politics in creating the new army and the need to apply Marxism, as preached by Lenin, to military problems. Understanding Marxism and its symbiotic relationship with the new army the Communists were creating was vital if Tukhachevsky was to fulfill his duties correctly. He had the military acumen necessary, but knew very little of Marxism.⁴⁹ However, this problem was solved during his first months in Moscow. The Moscow and District Party Committees held courses of meetings, lectures and discussion groups on Marxist Science and the theories behind socialist construction, which Tukhachevsky attended. He also saw Lenin speaking in the capital.⁵⁰ This supplemented the theoretical and practical knowledge he gained working within the Military Department. Besides Enukidze, Tukhachevsky encountered almost every major figure in the military construction process outlined above, as they were either in the CEC or worked through or with the Military Department. He met such figures as Podvoiskii, Krylenko, Dzierżyński, Mekhonoshin, Trifonov, Dybenko, Antonov-Ovseenko, Eremeev, Kedrov and Sverdlov.

Working closely with such prominent Bolsheviks who had spent years in the revolutionary underground, suffering exile and imprisonment for their political beliefs, could only benefit Tukhachevsky in terms of learning Marxist theory and practice. Also, exposure to such people during his earliest weeks in the Military Department before joining the Communist Party left Tukhachevsky with no illusions about the regime the Bolsheviks wished to create and their preparedness to fight for it.

Tukhachevsky joined the Party with his eyes wide open, knowing exactly what it entailed. The *Cheka* had been set up on 7th (20th) December 1917 and Red Guard detachments had been requisitioning grain from the peasantry for the towns since late

⁴⁸ Iu. I. Korablev, *V. I. Lenin i zashchita zavoevanii Velikogo Oktiabria*, (Moscow, 1979), p. 164.

⁴⁹ R. Gul', p. 62.

1917.⁵¹ Working with the Military Department, Tukhachevsky knew this and the need for extreme wartime measures if the Bolsheviks were to survive. Arriving in Moscow during the February German advance, Tukhachevsky would have appreciated this all the more, witnessing at first hand the panicked retreat of Red forces, which illustrated starkly the need for an organised army to defend against external aggression. With German occupation augmented by rising civil unrest, Tukhachevsky joined the Communist Party and worked at the hub of the intense military build-up in the Military Department, knowing precisely what was occurring and the measures employed by the Reds in the early stages of the Civil War. He threw his whole weight behind this. The heady combination of a strong Bolshevik Russia, opposing Germany and any restoration of the rotten Tsarist autocracy, with the excitement and possibilities of being involved at the very origins of the new Red Army, proved too much for Tukhachevsky to resist. The Marxism underlining it all was simply something to be learned and applied to his work towards this process. It provided the alternative to weak autocracy and a centre for the Russian nation to rally round.

Tukhachevsky became a master of applying Marxism to military theory and practice, using this to great effect in later years. He learned this swiftly after joining the Military Department. That he did so is shown by reports he produced for the Military Department and then as Military Commissar for the Moscow District of the Western Screens, before transfer to the new Eastern Front. To understand the significance of these reports and appreciate the importance of the Military Department, it is useful to first briefly assess the process of Red Army formation from March-May, a period of development no less complex or tempestuous than the previous three months.

Moves Towards Conscription and Red Army Regularisation

This period began with the creation of the Supreme Military Soviet (*VVS*) and witnessed Lenin treading the line between pro-militia leftists in the Communist Party and the *VVS voenspetsy* building a "standing army" to face Germany. Lenin himself still envisaged the ideal workers' armed force as a territorially-based militia, but this

⁵⁰ A. I. Todorskii, pp. 25-26, Todorskii suggests Tukhachevsky saw Lenin "at least 20 times".

⁵¹ J. Bunyan & Fisher, H. H., pp. 297-298.

could only be built up gradually and needed unchallenged Soviet control of Russia. This was not the case in the first half of 1918 with German occupation and the emergence of anti-Bolshevik movements in the south.

To deal with the latter, the *VVS* formed the North Caucasus Front in early May.⁵² The German threat was addressed on 5th March with the creation of the Northern and Western "Screens" (*zavesy*) and the Petrograd and Moscow Zones of Defence.⁵³ Collegial command of one *voenspetsy* with two political commissars was first experimented with here and, proving effective, lasted throughout the Civil War.⁵⁴ This illustrated Bolshevik mistrust of former officers and the perceived need for political control of the army from the outset.

Disparate detachments which had developed within different sectors were drawn together into regular formations, with seven divisions formed by April in the two "screens", four in the Moscow Defence Zone, one in Petrograd and four in other areas. The *VVS* plan had been for 88 divisions, with 28 to be raised in the western frontier areas, requiring 720,000 men at full wartime complement. However, with only 450,000 men raised, half-strength companies (36 men) were ordered.⁵⁵ This was as far as Red Army development had proceeded by the time of the Czechoslovak Uprising, but even this point was only reached through great ruptures and debates within the Party and Government.

The "screens" were intended as temporary measures to enable the build-up of the main body of the army in the rear. To facilitate this, the administrative apparatus had to be streamlined and *Sovnarkom* brought the separate Peoples' Commissariats of Military and Naval Affairs within the *VVS* on 19th March, uniting *voenspetsy* like Bonch-Bruевич, Miasnikov and Aralov with Bolsheviks like Podvoiskii, Sklianskii and Mekhonoshin.⁵⁶ Whilst removing the parallelism of these agencies, this inevitably produced antagonisms within the enlarged *VVS*.

Alongside the *VVS*, *Sovnarkom* had created a Special Commission for planning militia construction, including *voenspetsy* such as former Generals A. N. Aledogskii

⁵² S. M. Kliatskin, p. 190; J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", p. 312.

⁵³ *Direktivy Glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi Armii (1917-1920). Sbornik dokumentov*, (Moscow, 1969), (hereafter *DGkKA*), doc. 29, pp. 30-31. The "screens" were a defensive system whereby infantry units were supported by artillery, with cavalry used for reconnaissance and communications.

⁵⁴ S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 153-155.

⁵⁵ J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", p. 312.

⁵⁶ S. M. Kliatskin, pp. 147-148.

and Iu. N. Danilov and Rear-Admiral V. M. Al'tfater.⁵⁷ It compiled a report for 15th March on creating an army based on socialist militia and universal arming of workers and peasants,⁵⁸ but, as this Commission worked, the *VVS* proceeded with its own plans.

Initial intentions were for a 1.5 million man army to match that of the Central Powers, organised into regular divisions, regiments etc, with one-man command replacing elected commanders and soldiers' committees. This army would be raised through the Tsarist military district system by compulsory mobilisation. With the abolition of elected commanders,⁵⁹ accompanied by the decree on the deployment of *voenspetsy* within the Red Army on 21st March,⁶⁰ "leftist" Bolsheviks were incensed and intra-Party disputes ensued, leading to heated debates on 25th March in Lenin's study in the Kremlin, where 40-50 of the top military men argued for several hours over how the process of Red Army construction should develop. The results of this meeting were discussed by Lenin at a CC plenum on 31st March and on 7th April the CC ratified the decisions reached here.⁶¹ Lenin and the Central Committee basically compromised between Party ideals, the professional expertise of the *voenspetsy* and practical reality.

The compromise solution which emerged was a 1 million man army led by *RVS-y* through collegial command of one *voenspetsy* and two political commissars. Voluntary recruitment would be maintained, but the military district system favoured by the *voenspetsy* was installed, with six created in March and a further five in Asia and the Caucasus on 4th May.⁶²

The retention of voluntarism was to prevent industry, ravaged after four years of war, being stripped of workers by conscription. Also, harvest time was approaching and Trotsky declared on 22nd March, "For the time being we shall confine ourselves to introducing universal compulsory military training and the formation of volunteer

⁵⁷ Vasilii Mikhailovich Al'tafer (1883-1919), was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Fleet on 29/12/18, J. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers*, Vol. 1, (The Hague, 1964), p. 80.

⁵⁸ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 149.

⁵⁹ L. D. Trotsky, *How The Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, Vol. I, (trans. & annotated Brian Pearce), (London, 1979), p. 137, This was ratified on 22/4/18 by the CEC, at Trotsky's instigation, at the same time *Vsevobuch* was decreed.

⁶⁰ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 159.

⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 160-161; J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", p. 309.

⁶² Trifonov bitterly opposed this and proposed the Red Army be raised through four "proletarian centres" in the South, the Urals, Siberia and the Volga, J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", pp. 309-310.

fighting units which will serve as the skeleton of the new army".⁶³ Demobilisation of the old army was still continuing (it was completed on 17th April) and general war-weariness dictated the adverse reaction which would have accompanied another mobilisation, was best avoided. Besides, apparatus for mobilisation did not exist and could not be created quickly.

The All-Russian Bureau of Political Commissars was founded on 8th April under Iurenev to recruit the vast numbers of commissars needed for collegial command.⁶⁴ This organisation took over the Agitational-Educational Section of the All-Russian Collegiate, giving commissars the dual role of watching the *voenspetsy*, whilst educating and politically inculcating the troops, thus cementing the Party grip on the Red Army from top to bottom.

The temporary nature of this army was underlined by the 22nd April decree on Compulsory Training (*Vsevobuch*).⁶⁵ The population was to be prepared militarily to defend the country and reserves were to be raised, but in the longer term, a militia army was to be prepared to succeed the "standing army" currently forming.

Vsevobuch would come under Podvoiskii, who was disillusioned by the *VVS* plan, but he was first appointed Head of the Supreme Military Inspectorate (*VVI*), founded on 24th April by *Narkomvoen*.⁶⁶ This body sent representatives around the country, settling disputes or confusion which arose over Party or Government decrees on military construction, but this temporarily contributed to an overlapping of agencies.

The *VVI*, *VVS* and the All-Russian Collegiate on the Organisation and Forming of the Red Army were all at this time involved in Red Army construction, but were entirely uncoordinated, preventing effective central control and hindering progress. Alongside this, *Operod*, the Operations Section of *Narkomvoen*, was independently handling internal insurgency matters. Comprising seasoned revolutionaries, not *voenspetsy*, other Party bodies preferred to deal with *Operod*. This unsatisfactory situation was addressed on 8th May by the creation of the All-Russian Main Staff (*Vserosglavshstab*), which assumed organisational matters, leaving the Military-Economic Soviet to handle financial or quartermastering activities and the *VVI* to ensure military development ran smoothly. These organisations were under

⁶³ L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, Vol. I, pp. 124-125.

⁶⁴ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 177.

⁶⁵ L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, Vol. I, pp. 126-130.

⁶⁶ S. M. Kliatskin, p. 174; J. Erickson, "The Origins of the Red Army", pp. 310-311.

Narkomvoen and acted in their own fields, thereby removing parallelism, but complete coordination was only achieved with the creation of the *Revvoensovet Respublika (RVSR)* in September 1918, which centralised all military administrative and command structures.

The March-May 1918 period witnessed the Red Army developing further towards regulation and centralisation, with figures like Podvoiskii, Krylenko and Trifonov either falling by the wayside or having to compromise to remain active. However, matters still did not proceed as smoothly as the leadership hoped with some local soviets standing by their military departments. Lenin and Sverdlov had to send out a threatening circular to soviets on all levels with instructions to fulfill the 8th April decree to create military commissariats (*voenkomaty*), as only 14 of the 33 provinces and 50 of the 304 *uezdy* in Soviet territory, had done so by 18th May.⁶⁷

This was not just down to intransigence, but also because of the shortage of trained staff to set up *voenkomaty* and the lack of secure Soviet rule in many areas. *Vsevoluch* workers began setting up soviet organs in areas where none existed, with soviets and *voenkomaty* later developing around these, quickening the organisation of soviet and army organs in the localities.

The complexities involved in this overlapping of agencies, attempted centralisation of the military process and two different armies being created at the same time are plain to see. The Military Department of the CEC provided the crucial link in the fragmentary chain. The ever-growing number of detachments required constant guidance on how to proceed and the CC and CEC required information on the situation around the Soviet Republic. This task was still performed by the Military Department, even with the appearance of the *VVI*. The former still gathered information from the constant stream of delegations, letters, surveys and requests it received from the localities, but was now also sending representatives to all areas of Soviet-held territory to assess the situation, report back on this and advise detachments and local organs how to fulfill Moscow guidelines. These reports were carried out by Inspectors of Red Army Formations, the post Tukhachevsky held by May.

⁶⁷ *Etapy bol'shogo puti - Vospominaniia o grazhdanskoi voine*, (Moscow, 1963), p. 117.

Inspector of Red Army Formations within the Military Department

On 18th May, Tukhachevsky submitted a report to Enukidze, compiled from a tour of Riazansk, Voronezh and Tambov Provinces and the Don Region, inspecting recently formed military commissariats,⁶⁸ apparently experiencing his first Civil War fighting in skirmishes with White Cossacks here.⁶⁹ He began,

As a basis for this work I was presented with a principal plan, but I encountered various local conditions which often forced me to deviate from it. Following this I was forced to compile the report not as a reply to the prescribed questions, but to throw light on the work, which involved the whole essence and peculiarities of local conditions.⁷⁰

This suggests that conditions were far worse than the Military Department in Moscow perceived them to be. This is borne out by the report which provides an excellent insight into the disarray which exemplified Red Army construction in these early days. Tukhachevsky initially reported on each area individually, highlighting problems specific to each locale, then reported on the “general position and general needs”, noting conditions common to all four regions and providing recommendations from his conclusions.

He reported that the “*Sovnarkom* decree about military commissariats is very slowly, sometimes even unwillingly put into practice. There are even cases of open hostility”. The effect of the Lenin/Sklianskii telegram was evidently limited thus far, but Tukhachevsky stressed, “It is essential to insistently put into practice the decree about military commissariats. Only this will mean a uniform army” and “All traitors should be brought before the courts” to enforce this. He noted the decree had to be developed to provide definite guidelines and boundaries for the various departments within the commissariats - formation and training, transport, artillery, medical and paymaster. Existing military commissariats were functioning poorly, but these measures would create five uniform departments in each one which would have to be

⁶⁸ V. O. Daines, "Istoricheskie Portrety - Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii" *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 10, (1989), p. 41.

⁶⁹ A. I. Todorskii, p. 30.

⁷⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Doklad Voennomu otделу VTsIK Sovetov tov. Tukhachevskogo o resul'tatakh obsledovaniia sovetskikh chastei Krasnoi Armii v Riazanskoi, Tambovskoi, Voronezhskoi guberniiakh i Donskoi respublike*, published as appendix in V. M. Cheremnikh, *Na zashchite zavoevanii revoliutsii: Voennoe-organizatorskaia deiatel'nost' VTsIK v pervye gody sovetskoi vlasti*, pp. 219-234. (hereafter *Doklad Voennomu otделу*), (Moscow, 1988), p. 219.

centrally controlled for efficient administration and positive results. Further centralisation should be introduced for supplying food and horses to the troops.

As to unit composition and discipline, relations between command staff and regulars were good, but Tukhachevsky felt this was only because military action had yet to begin. Troops were still enlisted by voluntary means, although conscription was now being introduced. This had been carried out without using the recommendation system,⁷¹ therefore, unreliable elements existed. Most of these had signed up for purely monetary gain and with a scarcity of committed socialists enlisted, revolutionary discipline was absent.

To remedy this, Tukhachevsky insisted a proper command cadre was necessary and,

In recruiting officers of the old army for the command cadre, it is essential to see this as a necessary, but temporary measure.

Military academies are needed. At least part of them must be with shortened courses, in order to have some socialist commanders by the autumn. For the old officers it is necessary to weed out the traitorous elements. Now specialists must be used - officers and NCOs, especially of the cadres.⁷²

Therefore, a careful endorsement of his fellow former officers was given here, illustrating he already felt he had moved from this status himself. He was calling for socialist commanders like himself to be quickly trained.

The lone plus point Tukhachevsky identified was in cultural-educational activities, with libraries, clubs and lectures well-established. However, any impact this had would have been negated by other problems he identified - absence of military courts and general conditions. Most barracks were in disrepair and supplies of clothing, food, horses and weaponry were scarce and unregulated, with no cartage supply system or quartermaster and paymaster sections organised. These problems would be solved by the administrative restructuring and organisation of cart supply lines, but he noted in general,

The composition of the army is the same everywhere. The system of recruitment is the same everywhere. It would be criminal to close one's eyes to the composition of the army. The system of recruitment altogether, as is shown by military history, was always found to be the weakest

⁷¹ This was the system by which recruits had to be recommended by two others for entry to the Red Army, with one referee usually being a Party member. Evidently the system was not uniformly in use at this stage.

⁷² M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Doklad Voennomu otdelu*, p. 233.

system. It is giving especially bad results now, when there is hunger in the country and we see this in the army kitchen. In the army there are no staunch socialists. In this way there is no self-discipline... discipline is in total collapse. There is no sense of socialist duty. Towards their signature [about registering for military service - *NC*], soldiers regard this with complete indifference and do not believe they are bound by it. This is the real situation. Commanders are powerless. They avoid giving out orders. Even among the soldiers such a position sometimes rouses fear and they themselves establish order.

To instill discipline and prevent a total collapse of the army, he recommended setting up military tribunals.

From the highest commander to the lowest soldier, no-one must remain outside the law. The main buttress of discipline - is the military tribunal... Military laws must hurriedly be prepared and brought within the new socialist structure... There is no doubt that the brave and energetic introduction of practices of ordered measures will create new revolutionary discipline, and together with it even a mighty socialist army... No less important than discipline, is the ignition of a spirit of creative work. For this it is necessary to promote people who are talented and who believe in success. This guarantees all. Creative work is not possible without self-sacrifice, and this is why this last demand must be a principal one.⁷³

Tukhachevsky's report was a critical assessment of the disorganisation he saw in local military commissariats and the voluntary detachments they had formed. He was accustomed to the order of a regular army, saw the current methods did not work and emphasised the need for a disciplined force with a proper command system. The way to do this was to temporarily recruit professionally-trained *voenspetsy* and ensure only those worthy of promotion received it, whilst training Red Commanders. A proper, fair and effective disciplinary system was required and military tribunals would provide this. Tukhachevsky would be the first to install military tribunals in the Red Army in the summer, carrying out his own recommendations. The experience gained during his May tour would prove vital, preparing him for what to expect in the East, and he would implement other measures reported here.

Daines suggests this report was used in formulating the CEC decree of 29th May announcing compulsory military service and mobilisation.⁷⁴ This is very likely. Military Department reports were submitted to the CEC to provide guidance on military construction, based on evidence collected, and it apparently participated in

⁷³ Ibid. pp. 220-234.

drafting decrees.⁷⁵ Tukhachevsky's report, completed eleven days before the CEC decree, does suggest measures which were introduced. The decree announced the transition from a voluntary army to one based on conscription of workers and poor peasants. However, due to difficulties in conducting this in all areas of the Republic, it would begin in those areas most threatened and the main centres of the working movement. In this way Moscow, Petrograd, the Kuban and the Don were selected. Soviet institutions were urged to energetically and actively ensure military commissariats fulfilled their tasks.⁷⁶

As noted, Tukhachevsky had recommended conscription, heavily criticising voluntary recruitment as the “weakest” link and he had reported on the patchiness of military commissariat work, specifically criticising voluntary recruitment in the Don Region. He also reported that the Don was a “theatre of operations, little by little going to the enemy”, with military organs collapsing, possibly explaining why it was recognised in the 29th May decree as one of the areas most under threat. He had advised that two members of the military collegiate, newly-formed in the Don, had gone to Moscow and they should be consulted for information.⁷⁷ This also very likely occurred before the decree was published.

Similarly, the lack of a command cadre was addressed by mobilising *voenspetsy* and on 2nd August, a mobilisation specifically for NCOs raised 17,500 recruits. Did Tukhachevsky's report have any influence here?

The report also demonstrates Tukhachevsky's rapid assimilation of Marxism in relation to Red Army formation. He had to date encountered most major Bolshevik figures, but whilst touring the provinces, he met Red Guards, partisans, armed workers and revolutionary soldiers and sailors - the fighting men of the Red forces. He would have appreciated the depth of feeling and hopes these people had for the new society and their willingness to fight for it. He noted the motivation of the politically-active core compared to those indifferent to Bolshevism and recalcitrant about fighting, ie. peasantry joining the Red Army purely for money.⁷⁸ This made an impression on Tukhachevsky and he acted accordingly in his future organisational work. Whether this early encounter of the motivational power of revolutionary

⁷⁴ V. O. Daines, p. 41.

⁷⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 29.

⁷⁶ *Sbornik dekretov, 1917-1918gg*, (Moscow, 1920), p. 39.

⁷⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Doklad Voennomu otdelu*, p. 230.

ideology altered his perception of Marxism is doubtful, but he now knew political trust was necessary not only for advancement, but also to strengthen the army in the current climate. With sides being drawn, the troops needed something to fight for and he had witnessed at first hand the binding ability of Marxism. Also, with his report influencing the mobilisation decree, he saw the advantage of using Marxism to have his ideas accepted. His appreciation of the intrinsic link between politics and military policy and organisation was demonstrated clearly in the next work he produced.

Military Commissar of the Moscow Section of the Western Screens

Tukhachevsky wrote this next work in June 1918 while serving his short stint as Military Commissar of the Moscow District of the Western Screens. Enukidze had recommended Tukhachevsky for the post of Province Commissar, three days after receiving his report on Red Army organisation, stating,

21st May 1918. To the Bureau of Military Commissars. The present Military Department recommends the appointment of comrade Tukhachevsky to the post of commissar, as one of the experienced workers of the department. Comrade Tukhachevsky inspected: Riazansk, Tambov, Voronezh Provinces and the forces of the Don in relation to the organisation of the Red Army, about which a detailed report was presented by him, in which he made a mass of valuable directives. Comrade Tukhachevsky, in the opinion of the department, can fully cope with the duties of Province Commissar.⁷⁹

Enukidze's recommendation was endorsed by Kuliabko, now Deputy Chairman of the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars.⁸⁰ However, Kuliabko's superior Iurenev intervened and recommended to Trotsky that Tukhachevsky gain the higher posting of Military Commissar of the Moscow District of the Western Screens.⁸¹ Tukhachevsky was installed in this post on 27th May.⁸² He only occupied it for 22 days, before being posted to the Eastern Front, but these three weeks provided experience in mobilisation, the reorganisation of variegated detachments into regular army formations and handling supply matters. Ivanov notes that Tukhachevsky performed well in this period, gaining respect from those he worked with as both an

⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 220, 222 & 224.

⁷⁹ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 66.

⁸⁰ N. N. Kuliabko, p. 28.

⁸¹ V. O. Daines, p. 42.

⁸² A. S. Popov, *Trud, Talant, Doblest'*, (Moscow, 1972), p. 15.

administrator and commander, and by his respectful and sympathetic nature.⁸³ Whether this is overstated or not, military commissar was one of the most responsible posts at this time. This was a direct reward for his Military Department work and an important development in his career.

Whilst in this post, Tukhachevsky was very likely commissioned by Kuliabko or Iurenev to write his "Project on the Organisation of Courses for Military Commissars" for the 1st All-Russian Conference of Military Commissars, held in Moscow from 7th-11th June. Around 300 delegates attended the conference, with the opening and closing speeches delivered by Trotsky and Iurenev respectively.⁸⁴ The conference was held to outline the rights and duties of military commissars and discuss how construction of the Red Army and cultural-educational work amongst the troops was to proceed, based on information collected in the localities by military workers who comprised the conference delegates.⁸⁵ Military Commissar Tukhachevsky would have attended this conference and, with reports submitted on 8th June on conditions and military construction in the localities,⁸⁶ he would have delivered his May report as well as preparing his project.

As illustrated, Tukhachevsky stressed the need in his report for military academies to create an organised command cadre. Kuliabko or Iurenev, upon reading this, very likely commissioned Tukhachevsky to prepare his project for the June conference. Korablev suggests this was used in December 1918 to work out a programme for the Central Courses for Military Commissars.⁸⁷ Tukhachevsky sent the project to Iurenev on 4th December, with a brief note stating, "Compiled in the month of June of this year in Moscow by military commissar of the Moscow District". In a covering letter Tukhachevsky wrote, "I send to you for your consideration regarding political agitation in the armies at the current moment, a project for the organisation of Courses for military commissars...". He had earlier written to Iurenev about the lack of military experience amongst the majority of commissars and in the introduction to his

⁸³ V. M. Ivanov, p. 31.

⁸⁴ *Voennoe delo*, No. 3, (15th June 1918), pp. 14-15; The conference is recorded as meeting from 6th-11th June with 359 delegates, 271 of whom were communists, *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Krasnoi Armii (Aprel' 1918-Fevral' 1919). Dokumenty*, (Moscow, 1961), p. 343.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 78

⁸⁶ *Voennoe delo*, No. 3, (15th June, 1918), pp. 14-15; L. D. Trotsky, (trans. B. Pearce), *How The Revolution Armed*, vol. I, (New York, 1979) p. 559.

⁸⁷ V. Korablev, "O maloizvestnoi stranitse deiatel'nosti M. N. Tukhachevskogo v gody grazhdanskoi voiny (k 80-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia)" *Voенно-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No.2, (1973), pp. 79-83.

project, commented on the formation of *RVS-y* containing two political commissars and one *voenspets*, stating,

Such an organisation is considered temporary and will only exist until Party commanders are prepared...

For this aim it is proposed to form "Courses for military commissars" with two-month courses. Completing such courses, military commissars will be completely knowledgeable in the circumstances, in the demands of military art, and receiving valuable experience in practice, will easily make independent revolutionary commanders.

Military commissar courses did not begin until 10th October 1918, probably because all efforts were concentrated towards aiding Eastern Front. On 25th September, by which time the Eastern Front had rallied, Sklianskii instructed the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars to create courses.⁸⁸ By the end of the year, 1,773 from a total of 6,389 serving military commissars had passed through the special short courses.⁸⁹ However, Trotsky criticised the standard of these graduates in October and, on 14th November 1918, the *VVI* Political Department was transferred to the Military Commissars' Bureau,⁹⁰ to help with political and cultural-educational work. It is possible Tukhachevsky sent his project to Iurenev two weeks later to aid with this, or that Iurenev requested it, as he had done in June. Whether the project was used or not, it provides an excellent insight into Tukhachevsky's ideas and capabilities at this time.⁹¹

The ideas Tukhachevsky advocated in his report and project matched the direction Trotsky was taking the Red Army. Tukhachevsky almost certainly met Trotsky for the first time at the conference. In his opening address, Trotsky commented on the evolution of the Soviet armed forces, saying,

The small voluntary detachments of the first period of the October Revolution, despite all their bravery and enthusiasm, showed it was impossible to fight with success an army organised in all matters of modern technical warfare. The previous administrative apparatus is

⁸⁸ *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Krasnoi Armii (aprel' 1918-fevral' 1919). Dokumenty*, (Moscow, 1961), pp. 85-86 & 343.

⁸⁹ *Direktivny komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii (1917-1922). Sbornik dokumentov v4-kh tomakh*, (Moscow, 1971-1978), (hereafter *DkfKA*), *Tom IV*, pp. 342-343; V. G. Kolychev, *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Krasnoi Armii v gody grazhdanskoi voyny, 1918-1920*, (Moscow, 1979), pp. 98-99.

⁹⁰ *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Krasnoi Armii (aprel' 1918-fevral' 1919), Dokumenty*, p. 90.

⁹¹ The report is reproduced in full in *Voenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal*, No.2, (1973), pp. 79-83.

ruined, the new one is just created. We do not even know how much military hardware we have in the Centre or in the localities.⁹²

This set the background to the conference. Progressing to outline the evolution of Red forces to date and how the Red Army was to be constructed, Trotsky informed the delegates that military commissars were the vital link needed to complete the chain and form a socialist army. Outlining Military Commissar duties, Trotsky stated,

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

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

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

We appealed for volunteers for the Red Army in the hope that the best forces of the working masses would respond. Have our hopes been realised? It must be said that they are realised only 33 1/3 percent. There are, of course, in the Red Army, many heroic, self-sacrificing fighters, but there are also many worthless elements - hooligans, ne'er-do-wells, the dregs.

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

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

We must draw into the work of creating the army the younger generations, the youth who have not experienced war, and who are always distinguished by the élan of their revolutionary spirit and their display of enthusiasm... But here arises the question of the commanding apparatus: experience has shown that lack of technical forces has a baneful effect on the success of attempts to form revolutionary armies, because the revolution has not brought forth from the midst of the working masses warriors with a knowledge of the military art. This is the weak spot of all revolutions...

If among the workers there had been a sufficient number of comrades who were military specialists, the problem would have been solved very

⁹² *Voennoe delo*, No. 3, (15th June 1918), p. 14; excerpts of this speech are also in No. 2, (8th June, 1918), p. 15.

simply, but, unfortunately, we have extraordinarily few persons with military training.

The duties of members of the commanding apparatus can be divided into two parts... The commissar is a political worker, a revolutionary. The military leader answers with his head for all his activity, for the outcome of military operations and so on. If the commissar has observed that there is a danger to the revolution from the military leader, the commissar has the right to deal ruthlessly with the counter-revolutionary, even to the point of shooting him.

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

...At this congress we shall exchange our observations, we shall learn something from each other, and I am sure that you will go back to your localities and continue your creative work in the interests of the labour revolution.⁹³

This was the critical point in Tukhachevsky's entry into the Red Army, meeting Trotsky to "exchange observations [and] learn something from each other". Trotsky would have wanted to meet the man recommended to him so recently by Iurenev as Military Commissar of the Moscow District of the Western Screens, one of the most important zones during German occupation. Tukhachevsky's May report matched Trotsky's demand for "the need for revolutionary order and discipline". His June project provided a platform for the "schools of instruction" about which Trotsky spoke. Discussing these issues with Tukhachevsky, Trotsky found a man experienced in military affairs and Red Army organisational work, but also crucially a man capable and prepared to deal with the "worthless elements" and to "ruthlessly eradicate the undesirable element" within the Red forces, whilst organising partisan bands into regimented formations. Also, Tukhachevsky was a Communist Party member, not just a *voenspets*, providing a military specialist from within the ranks of socialism who could prepare commissar courses, but more pressingly would receive respect from the rank-and-file in the East, which a *voenspets* would not. No matter that Tukhachevsky was not an old revolutionary or pre-October Bolshevik. His political experience would develop, but he had already imbibed the ideology, he seemed reliable and had the necessary military capabilities.

Trotsky later wrote on 23rd July,

⁹³ L. D. Trotsky, *How The Revolution Armed, Vol. 1*, pp. 164-167. The speech reproduced in this volume differs from the excerpts in *Voennoe delo*.

A very important, although alas, as yet only small group consist of officers who, to a greater or lesser extent, understood the significance of the revolution and the spirit of the new age. These officers are now working tirelessly at the creation of the armed forces for the Soviet Republic. To require that they repaint themselves as Bolsheviks would be absurd. They must be appreciated and given support.⁹⁴

In Tukhachevsky, Trotsky had a *voenspets* who “understood the significance of the revolution and the spirit of the new age” to such a degree, he had joined the Party. This was enough for Trotsky if Tukhachevsky would build a successful Red Army to keep the Bolsheviks in charge. Trotsky knew Tukhachevsky was not a born-again Marxist devotee, but was willing to serve the Bolsheviks. The goal of the June conference was to discuss the situation, discover solutions and despatch delegates with these, to aid military construction in the localities, thus beginning the centralisation and regularisation of the Red Army. Tukhachevsky wished to build the Red Army in the same manner as Trotsky and had presented his ideas at the conference. Trotsky had found one of his first Red Commanders. He would become the one to implement and experiment with these measures first. After meeting Trotsky, Tukhachevsky was destined to go eastwards. All that was required, was an escalation in the situation. This occurred in May-June 1918.

Outbreak of Civil War in the Volga

The second half of 1918 was a period of extreme danger for the Soviet Republic. Uprisings by internal counter-revolutionary forces comprising Right and Left SRs, Mensheviks, Liberal and Rightist Parties, White officer battalions and the Czechoslovak Legion, combined with German occupation of European Russia and the Crimea. Anglo-French, Japanese and American intervention into the far north, south and east of Imperial Russian territory began. The Soviet Republic was beset from all sides and with no organised army.

However, by December 1918, the Reds had won Eastern Front battles on the Volga and in the Urals, and the end of the Great War signalled the withdrawal of the Central Powers from Russian soil, with Germany in revolutionary turmoil and the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsing. This heralded increased Allied intervention and

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 188.

offensives by far larger and better-equipped White forces in 1919, but the crucial difference was the existence of a large, experienced, organised, regular Red Army. The Reds did not enter 1919 defenceless as they had 1918.

To achieve this required enormous efforts at central and local levels and coordination from both ends. Numbers had to be raised quickly for the emerging armed forces from both frontline and central areas. With commanders having to simultaneously judge men capable or not of serving in and around the battlefields, whilst tackling enemy forces, the critical situation soon showed who were able, loyal fighters, agitators and organisers and who were not, or were simply treacherous. Trotsky later stated, "it was precisely the acuteness of the danger to which we were subjected that saved us. If we had had more time for discussion and debate we should probably have made a great many more mistakes".⁹⁵ In September 1918 he noted, "It can be said that if the Czechoslovak Legion had not existed, they would have had to be invented, for under peacetime conditions we should have never have succeeded in forming, within a short time, a close-knit disciplined, heroic army".⁹⁶ These hint at the methods Trotsky deemed necessary for moulding the Red Army - absolute in style and content and to be complied with unquestioningly.

The above assessments can also be applied to Tukhachevsky. If the Czechoslovak Uprising had not occurred, he would not have been propelled into the limelight so dramatically. On the surface it appears surprising a more seasoned Bolshevik or higher-ranking *voenspets* than young former 2nd-Lieutenant Tukhachevsky was not selected as 1st Revolutionary Army Commander in June 1918. The fact he was both a *voenspets* and a communist played its part, as did the relationship he had forged with Lenin and Trotsky. His work for the Military Department had brought him to their attention. The emergence of the Eastern Front gave Tukhachevsky the opportunity to prove himself in the frontline and this combined with events, which, although not apparent at the time, were great strokes of luck for Tukhachevsky, who happened to be in the right place at the right time.

The "breathing-space" won with the signing of Brest-Litovsk ended on 25th May with the uprising of the Czechoslovak Legion. This had been formed by the Tsarist

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 26.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 347.

Government in 1914 from Czechs and Slovaks settled on Russian territory. They had fought during the Great War and after the February Revolution, swelled in number with the Provisional Government releasing Czechoslovak prisoners of war.⁹⁷ By mid-1918, the Czechoslovak Legion numbered 38,000 men.⁹⁸ The crumbling Hapsburg Empire sparked Czechoslovak nationalist sentiments with hopes for an independent state centred around Tomas Masaryk in Paris. To help achieve this, plans were hatched to extricate the Legion from Russian soil to fight on the Great War Western Front with the Allies. Agreement was reached between the Soviet Government and Czechoslovak Legion representatives for their departure along the Trans-Siberian Railway through Vladivostok, with the intention of crossing the Pacific, America and the Atlantic to eventually reach Western Europe.

This scheme had little chance of success in 1918 Russia. Mutual suspicion from all sides made a clash almost inevitable. The Czechoslovaks wished to leave immediately, fearful of the Bolsheviks handing them over to Germany, currently advancing eastwards and southwards into Russia. The Bolsheviks meanwhile grew ever more suspicious of Allied intentions, with the latter vacillating over employing the Czechoslovaks in Europe or inside Russia, to reopen the Great War Eastern Front. Japanese landings in the Far East also threatened the possibility of a joint Japanese-Czechoslovak force on Russian soil.

One of the terms imposed by the Bolsheviks for the Czechoslovak withdrawal was handing over the majority of their weaponry. This had been supplied by the Tsar and in the Bolsheviks' opinion was now theirs by right. The retention of only 120 rifles and one machine-gun per rail echelon was permitted.⁹⁹ The Czechslovaks never intended to do this. With the interception of a telegram from Trotsky instructing Soviets, Military Departments and Red forces to disarm any Czechoslovaks or shoot them,¹⁰⁰ followed swiftly by an armed clash with Hungarian troops at Cheliabinsk on 14th May,¹⁰¹ the Czechoslovaks decided to fight their way eastwards.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ W. B. Lincoln, *Red Victory - A History of the Russian Civil War*, (New York, 1989), p. 93.

⁹⁸ J. D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The anti-Bolshevik government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 26.

⁹⁹ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie Pervogo armii i osvobozhdenie Simbirskia" *Simbirskaia guberniia v 1918-1920 gg: sbornik vospominanii*, (Ul'ianovsk, 1958), p. 50.

¹⁰⁰ L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, Vol. 1, pp. 277-281.

¹⁰¹ These were Austro-Hungarian POWs travelling westwards to return home, Z. A. B. Zeman, *Pursued By a Bear - The Making of Eastern Europe*, (London, 1984), p. 63.

¹⁰² E. I. Medvedev, *Grazhdanskaia voina v srednem povolzh'e (1918-1919gg.)*. (Saratov, 1974), p. 79.

The situation swiftly deteriorated for the Soviets. Spread out along the Trans-Siberian Railway in three main groups,¹⁰³ the Czechoslovaks occupied virtually every major town along it. In the Urals, Cheliabinsk and Ekaterinburg fell, the occupation of the latter on 17th July prompting the panicked execution of Tsar Nicholas II and his family three days earlier, on Sverdlov's orders. On the Volga, Penza, Syzran' and Samara were occupied and the Czechoslovaks agreed to fight for the SR-Menshevik Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (*Komuch*) Government, which was proclaimed in Samara on 8th June.¹⁰⁴

Other uprisings occurred in towns such as Vologda, Murom and Iaroslavl. The latter was led by the Right SR Boris Savinkov on 6th July to coincide with the Left SR uprising in Moscow,¹⁰⁵ lasting until 21st July when it was suppressed by 6th and 8th Latvian Rifle Regiments.¹⁰⁶ Unchecked, these threatened to link the Czechoslovaks in the east with British forces landing in Arkangel'sk and Murmansk in the north.¹⁰⁷

However, the crux of the matter was not that the Czechoslovak Uprising occurred, but that the Reds had no forces in the east with which to quell them, with no more than 300,000 volunteers, scattered around some 8,000 kms of frontiers at the end of May.¹⁰⁸ The largest and most effective Red formations were the 18,000 strong Latvian Rifle Regiments.¹⁰⁹ They matched the Czechoslovaks when they eventually met, but in May they were scattered around the Soviet zone, forming the core of the existing Red forces.

Most Red troops were deployed on the Western "screens" with German occupation preventing a withdrawal of troops from west to east.¹¹⁰ Also, the Red leadership initially under-estimated the seriousness of the Czechoslovak Revolt. Not

¹⁰³ J. D. Smele, p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Where *Komuch* is used to describe those fighting against Red forces, this means a mixture of Czechoslovak, White and "Peoples Army" troops. The latter was the force proclaimed by the *Komuch* social-democrat members, but never attracted great numbers.

¹⁰⁵ Boris Viktorovich Savinkov (1879-1925); E. I. Medvedev, pp. 147-148, Savinkov later stated that the Right SRs intended to occupy the towns of Iaroslavl, Rybinsk, Kostroma and Murom and had received 2 million roubles from the "Imperialists" for this; W. Bruce Lincoln, p. 143.

¹⁰⁶ V. V. Shtein, *Boevoi put' latyshskikh krasnikh strelkov*, (Riga, 1978), pp. 18-19.

¹⁰⁷ *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo, 1918-1924*, reel 67, *delo* 142, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ S. V. Lipitskii, pp. 207-208.

¹⁰⁹ E. Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 41.

¹¹⁰ In fact, in mid-June the Germans advanced towards the Crimea on the pretext of the Soviet Governments lack of fulfillment of Article 5 of the Brest Treaty - the scuttling of the Black Sea Fleet. This caused great concern to the Communist leadership and meant troops had to be kept here which

until the formation of Eastern Front *RVS* on 13th June was the danger really acknowledged.¹¹¹ Even then, once Lenin and the political hierarchy grasped the gravity of the situation, the *VVS*, with its *voenspetsy* concentrating on Germany, was reluctant to turn east and leave the west open.¹¹²

The eastern situation was dire for the Reds. Small partisan and armed worker detachments could not match the Czechoslovaks. A regular army under one unified command system was needed.¹¹³ Help was needed from Moscow to form this, providing the catalyst to launch Tukhachevsky eastwards.

Posting to the Eastern Front

Kuliabko relates that, on his suggestion, Lenin interviewed Tukhachevsky as a candidate for posting to the east after the Czechoslovak Revolt. Returning from this, Tukhachevsky told Kuliabko that Lenin had asked him two main questions - Why had he escaped from Germany and how did he envisage the construction of a new socialist army? Tukhachevsky replied he could not stay in jail when such revolutionary events were occurring in Russia and then "laid out his thoughts about how to unite the scattered Red Guards cadres into one regular army", presumably reiterating his May report. Kuliabko notes, "Evidently these thoughts pleased Lenin and very soon yesterday's Lieutenant received the promotion to the post of 1st Army Commander of Eastern Front".¹¹⁴

S. I. Aralov's recollections of Lenin being closely involved with the military process on a daily basis, taking decisions personally if necessary, suggest this could have occurred,¹¹⁵ but doubts have been cast over Kuliabko's authenticity. Ivanov comments that no record exists of this meeting in the *Biograficheskaya khronika*

could otherwise have been released for the east, J. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers: 1917-1922*, Vol. I: 1917-1919, (The Hague, 1964), pp. 48-57.

¹¹¹ *DGkKA*, doc. 104, pp. 97-98.

¹¹² A Bolshevik Party CC debate on the international situation and upon which front Red forces should be concentrated, in light of the increased threat of a Japanese and American presence in the East, alongside continued strained relations with the Central Powers in the West, resulted in the decision of 6th May to still concentrate nearly all available forces in the West, due to its close proximity to the Red heartland, S. V. Lipitskii, pp. 218-219.

¹¹³ E. I. Medvedev, p. 94, Three uncoordinated Red command staffs existed in the East at this point: Ural-Orenburg Front Command; Front Command headed by M. Kadomtsev; and the Communist Armed Workers Detachments.

¹¹⁴ N. N. Kuliabko, pp. 28-29.

¹¹⁵ A. I. Todorskii, p. 26; see S. I. Aralov, *Lenin vel nas k pobede. Vospominaniia*. (Moscow, 1962).

Lenina, which lays out Lenin's day to day activities in great detail.¹¹⁶ This is true, but does not prove the meeting never occurred. Kuliabko is not listed as a source used for compiling the *Khronika* which would explain his absence. Tukhachevsky was in Moscow for a four month period and his report in May was used towards drafting the 29th May decree. Through his work it is highly likely Tukhachevsky met Lenin, even if briefly at a meeting or after a speech by the Party leader, and very possibly at the 1st All-Russian Conference of Military Commissars. Kuliabko's story is consistent with Tukhachevsky's sisters and Koritskii, who recall Tukhachevsky met Lenin before leaving for the east and discussed how to proceed with army reorganisation.¹¹⁷ Party workers deemed most qualified and capable of salvaging the situation in the east were mobilised and sent there in mid-late June and Tukhachevsky was one of these. Lenin spoke publicly to many of them before their departure. Perhaps Tukhachevsky met Lenin at a briefing about his tasks ahead.

Kuliabko's account is inaccurate insofar as Tukhachevsky was not sent eastwards specifically as 1st Army Commander, but in fact with the following mandate,

The bearer of this, Military Commissar of the Moscow Region - Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky is despatched on a mission at the disposal of Supreme Commander of the Eastern Front Murav'ev for fulfilling work of exceptional importance in organising and forming the Red Army into higher troop formations and commanding them.

An accompanying letter from the Moscow Military District Staff to Murav'ev gave a CEC recommendation of Tukhachevsky as one of the few military specialists-communists who should therefore be given the most responsible work at the Front.¹¹⁸ Aralov sent a telegram from *Narkomvoen* Operations Section (*Operod*) to Murav'ev, which would have had Trotsky's backing, stating Tukhachevsky, "was one of the few military specialists in the Communist Party" and should therefore be entrusted with "the most important and responsible work in the struggle with the Czechoslovaks".¹¹⁹ In possession of the mandate and covering letter, Tukhachevsky travelled by train eastwards, leaving Moscow on 19th June and arriving at Kazan', on the Volga, on 25th June.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ V. M. Ivanov, pp. 30.

¹¹⁷ E. N. Arvatova-Tukhachevskaiia, & O. N. Tukhachevskaiia, p. 15; N.I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny i v dni mira", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, pp. 56-57.

¹¹⁸ A. S. Popov, pp. 16-17; A. I. Todorskii, p. 33.

¹¹⁹ V. O. Daines, p. 42.

¹²⁰ V. M. Ivanov, pp. 30-31.

Smirnov's assertion that Tukhachevsky was sent eastwards because he was one of only around 100 "commander-communists" is partially true, with the shortage of similarly qualified candidates making him a prime choice. However, he had reached this position through his own efforts, by virtue of his military career and decision to join the Party. The fact he was a "commander-communist" gave him both the political credibility a *voenspets* did not have, and the military background a Party member did not enjoy. However, he was not posted as 1st Army Commander, as Smirnov maintains, but to carry out organisational work, as he had done already in the Military Department, to put into practice the recommendations of his May report. His work in the Military Department and as Military Commissar had gained commendations from Kuliabko and Enukidze, the latter being one of the most seasoned Bolsheviks in the game. Tukhachevsky was adjudged capable of repeating this work on the frontline and brought to the attention of the military and Party hierarchy, notably Lenin and Trotsky. Tukhachevsky had earned his position by merit, with his report and project demonstrating his high level of military knowledge on a theoretical and practical organisational level, and personal interviews with Lenin and Trotsky demonstrating his political reliability. It perhaps seems ironic he was one of the rare "commander-communists", but his devotion to the Communist cause was not for political ideals, but the opportunity to lead the army of a great Russian state rising through these. However, Tukhachevsky provides the perfect example of how the escalation of civil war brought together the Bolshevik regime and specialists from the Tsarist era. Lenin and Trotsky knew what Tukhachevsky was - a professional soldier who wanted to patriotically serve his nation - but in his Party membership and military record they saw the embodiment of the Red Commander they wished to create and were willing to take a risk on him, as the Bolsheviks did with many others. Tukhachevsky saw in the Bolsheviks a party which wished to create a powerful Russian nation and empire, with a new powerful army to defend it, in which he could serve at a senior level. He had studied Marxism and been impressed by its impact on the core of the evolving Red Army, but whether he was impressed personally by these ideals remains doubtful. He did not want Tsarist autocracy, but did not believe in the pure communist state either. Events in 1918 Russia brought Tukhachevsky and the regime together.

Eastern Front *RVS* Headquarters were established at Kazan'. Its initial membership was Commander-in-Chief Murav'ev (despite Podvoiskii's disagreement),¹²¹ Political Commissars Kobozev and Blagonravov, and Mironov as Secretary.¹²²

On 18th June, the *RVS* received instructions from the *VVS*, outlining actions to be taken against the Czechoslovak forces, which were identified as being in three main groups around Samara, Cheliabinsk and Omsk.

Red forces in Simbirsk, Syzran' and Nikolaevsk were to concentrate in Simbirsk, then move to Ufa, to cut off the Czechoslovaks in Samara, enabling an attack on the latter from the north and north-east. Troops in Ekaterinburg, Zlatoust, Troitsk and Kamyshlov were to crush the Czechoslovaks in the eastern sector up to Kurgan, occupying the right bank of the River Tobol', to cut off the second Czechoslovak group from the third in Omsk.¹²³ This presumably would be faced after these operations, as no instructions concerning it were forthcoming. This was due to the lack of Red forces in the east in June 1918, forcing them to tackle enemy groups in adjacent areas first. These instructions show immediately the fluidity of the Eastern Front, with conventional set fronts replaced by manoeuvre amid constantly changing circumstances and positions of forces from both sides. This was typical of Civil War fronts throughout the conflict.

Eastern Front *RVS* put these instructions into practice on 19th June, combining all troops along the railway lines of Syzran'-Simbirsk sectors, into 1st Soviet Army.¹²⁴ Local Soviets, military heads and military organisations were instructed to begin mobilisation and A. I. Kharchenko, nominated 1st Army Commander on 16th June, was to prepare an offensive from Penza and Inza sectors.¹²⁵

On 20th June, *Osobaia* Army was created from troops in Saratov-Ural'sk sectors to cooperate with 1st Soviet Army against the Samara Czechoslovak Group and on 3rd July all troops in Saratov and Saratov Province were subordinated to its

¹²¹ E. I. Medvedev, p. 135.

¹²² O. Iu. Kalnin, "Bor'ba na vostochnom fronte" *Simbirskaiia guberniia v 1918-1920 gg: sbornik vospominanii*, (Ul'ianovsk, 1958). (hereafter *Simbirskaiia guberniia*), p. 34.

¹²³ *DGkKA*, doc. 108, pp. 100-101; *Boevoi put' pervoi revoliutsionnoi armii Vostochnogo i Turkestanskogo frontov, Iiun' 1918-fevral' 1921 gg. (Sbornik dokumentov i materialov)*, (hereafter *BpPRA*), (Ashkhabad, 1972), doc. 1, pp. 23-24.

¹²⁴ Troops were still travelling and living in their *eshelony*, fighting under the conditions of *eshelonnaia voina*, with no other transportation organised as yet.

¹²⁵ *BpPRA*, doc. p. 25; O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 36; *DkfKA*, doc. 326, pp. 386-387; *BpPRA*, doc. 2, p. 25.

Commander Rzhevskii.¹²⁶ On 22nd June, 2nd Soviet Army was formed from troops in Ufa and Orenburg sectors to act against the Czechoslovaks there, under the command of the Left SR Iakovlev, former Supreme Commander of Ural-Orenburg Front.¹²⁷

Efforts to create 3rd Soviet Army by regulating Northern-Ural-Siberian Front were made from 14th June,¹²⁸ but it was not officially decreed until 20th July in response to the fall of Ekaterinburg three days earlier.¹²⁹ Also on 20th July, *Osobaia* became 4th Army,¹³⁰ with 5th Army formed at Sviiazhsk after the fall of Kazan' on 6th-7th August, with the task of retaking the town.¹³¹ These were the five armies of the Red Eastern Front.

Tukhachevsky and Murav'ev

Tukhachevsky replaced Kharchenko as 1st Army Commander on 26th June, the day after reaching Kazan' to begin his organisational work.¹³² Kharchenko had commanded 1st Army barely a week, but already dissatisfaction was rife. Tukhachevsky immediately departed for Inza Station, location of 1st Army HQ, arriving on 28th June and accepting command.¹³³ The circumstances surrounding Tukhachevsky's appointment as 1st Army Commander encapsulate the whole Eastern Front situation in summer 1918. Czechoslovak support of *Komuch* added a new dimension to Bolshevik-Left SR policy differences which were pulling their governmental coalition apart. These had degenerated into open rivalry and disputes over regularisation and control of the disparate Red forces in the East would culminate in the Murav'ev revolt, in which Tukhachevsky was directly involved, narrowly escaping execution. However, this proved to be the greatest stroke of luck for Tukhachevsky, who benefited from being in the right place at the right time, was able to take advantage of situations presented by Bolshevik-Left SR rivalries and emerged from his first few weeks in the East as 1st Army Commander, fully trusted by Moscow, if not by all those around him.

¹²⁶ *DkfKA, Tom 1*, docs. 327 & 339, pp. 387 & 393.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, doc. 331, p. 389.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 392.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, doc. 346, p. 398.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, doc. 347, p. 398.

¹³¹ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii i osvobozhdeniia Simbirska", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 58.

¹³² *DkfKA, Tom 1*, p. 386; *BpPRA*, p. 25.

¹³³ *BpPRA*, doc. 3, pp. 25-26.

How much the local SRs and Murav'ev's actions before 10th July were premeditated and fulfilled on orders from the Moscow Left SRs is uncertain, but likely.¹³⁴ The Left SR Central Committee decided on 24th June to rebel against the Bolsheviks, to overturn Brest-Litovsk and reopen the Great War Eastern Front for a "revolutionary war" against the Central Powers.¹³⁵ Tukhachevsky described Murav'ev as "Napoleonic" and "...an adventurous scoundrel and nothing more. His Left SRism was completely false, serving only as a label for him",¹³⁶ but the revolt coincided with the Left SR uprising of 6th July in Moscow. Murav'ev ordered an Eastern Front offensive on this day to disguise and prepare his coup. He intended to win control of the Volga area either to aid the Left SR rising or, as Tukhachevsky and Chistov suggest, to use this to his own advantage and set up his own "Independent Volga Republic".¹³⁷

With the fall of Samara, Simbirsk was crucial for the Reds in the East, guarding the railway line westwards to the Red interior and the Volga to Kazan' and the north. The Simbirsk Communist Party was small compared to the Left SRs, who held several important posts in the Executive Committee of the Simbirsk Province Soviet, such as Head of Simbirsk Army Group (Klim Ivanov) and Province Military Commissar (Nedashkovskii).¹³⁸ With Murav'ev, they recruited *voenspetsy* loyal to their Party, which proved crucial in the days after Murav'ev's uprising as mass betrayals aided the *Komuch* advance on Simbirsk.¹³⁹

The Simbirsk Bolshevik Party's first step to recovering their position, vis-a-vis the Left SRs, was the arrival in May 1918 of I. M. Vareikis, a 24 year-old locksmith-

¹³⁴ A. P. Nenarokov, *Vostochnii front 1918*, (Moscow, 1969), p. 100; I. I. Mints, *Grazhdanskaia voina v povolzh'e: 1918-1920gg*, (Kazan', 1974), p. 63; E. I. Medvedev, p. 145. These sources suggest Murav'ev, when Supreme Commander, kept in close contact with and acted through only the narrow circle of Left SRs he had secured military postings for. He instructed them to hinder reorganisational work within the Red Army in the period before his revolt. However, Nenarokov writes there is no hard evidence these actions were carried out on the instructions of or in concert with the Left SR CC in Moscow.

¹³⁵ E. I. Medvedev, p. 147.

¹³⁶ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 godu", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Vol. I, 1919-1927*, p. 76.

¹³⁷ B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia v dni grazhdanskoi voiny", *1918 god na rodine Lenina*, (Kuibyshev, 1936), (hereafter *1918 god*), pp. 64-65; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 godu", p. 76.

¹³⁸ V. M. Kadyshev, "Iz perezhitogo", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 155; B. I. Chistov, *1918 god*, p. 65; B. I. Chistov, *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 173.

¹³⁹ G. D. Kauchukovskii, "Simbirskie bolsheviki i avantiura Murav'eva", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 123.

toolmaker, who became head of the Simbirsk Town Party Organisation.¹⁴⁰ Kauchukovskii, a 20 year-old technician, became secretary.¹⁴¹ With the help of Podvoiskii, who was in Simbirsk whilst touring Volga Region as Head of *VVI*,¹⁴² and Oskar Iu. Kalnins, who arrived at Inza on 14th June to become 1st Army Political Commissar on 16th June,¹⁴³ Vareikis worked to strengthen the Bolshevik's military position. On 22nd June, Simbirsk Party Committee instructed its Military Commission to select Communists to form a political apparatus under the Staff of Simbirsk Army Group, which was being created for 1st Army.¹⁴⁴ Amongst those selected were B. I. Chistov, Pershin, S. M. Izmailov (Head of Communications) and K. S. Shelenshkevich (Head of Transport Department).¹⁴⁵ Lavrov, who had just arrived from Kazan' with an *RVS* mandate for service, became Simbirsk Group Political Commissar. Samara Revolutionary Committee members, who had arrived in Simbirsk on 9th June after the fall of Samara, were drafted into the Staff.¹⁴⁶ Podvoiskii appointed Kuibyshev, Chairman of Samara Revolutionary Committee, as 1st Army Political Commissar.¹⁴⁷ Working closely, the Simbirsk and Samara Bolsheviks formed 1st and 2nd Simbirsk Regiments.¹⁴⁸

The Simbirsk Communists strove to gain more influence than the Left SRs in the local institutions as relations deteriorated in the East. The tightening up of Simbirsk Party Organisation, launching of armed patrols in Simbirsk and agitation in the surrounding countryside were steps in the right direction, but crucial to supremacy was control of 1st Soviet Army. The formation of the two regular Simbirsk Regiments, headed by the new Staff, helped redress Left SR dominance of the

¹⁴⁰ A.M. Ural'tsev, "Ego ukrashala skromnost", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia soratnikov i druzei*, p. 102.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 102; G. D. Kauchukovskii, p. 122.

¹⁴² B. I. Chistov, "V tiazhelye dni obrony Simbirsk", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 173; *DGkKA*, p. 794, endnote 19.

¹⁴³ *Geroi grazhdanskoi voiny. Sbornik*, (Moscow, 1974), p. 17; *DkfKA*, Tom I, p. 533.

¹⁴⁴ The "Special Party Military Commission" was selected on 1st June at a General Meeting of the Simbirsk Communists, where Vareikis passed the resolution to form a "Military Detachment" under the Simbirsk Party Committee. The Military Commission of Zvirbul', Oleinik, Neiland, Shver and Chistov were to organise this, B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 47.

¹⁴⁷ *DkfKA*, Tom IV, p. 573 - The exact date for Kuibyshev taking this post is given as 15th July 1918, after the Murav'ev Revolt, but it is highly likely he was working unofficially in this capacity, as Chistov suggests, before this date.

¹⁴⁸ B. I. Chistov, "V tiazhelye dni...", pp. 173-174.

unregulated, partisan Simbirsk Army Group and Extraordinary Staff,¹⁴⁹ but the Left SRs still tried to hold onto the important posts, counter-acting any Bolshevik influence from new postings. Also, although the Bolshevik P. Smirnov became Commander of 2nd Simbirsk Regiment and the Left SR, Iagodin, Commander of 1st Simbirsk Regiment, this seemingly fair distribution was undermined by the existing town militia being drafted into 1st Battalion of 1st Regiment, ensuring Left SR control of the best troops, if necessary, for use against the Bolsheviks.¹⁵⁰

The crucial post was still held by the Left SR Kharchenko as 1st Army Commander. Therefore, the arrival of Tukhachevsky in Kazan' on 25th June, a "commander-communist" with excellent credentials and recommendations, was viewed as a godsend by Vareikis and Kalnins. Chistov notes that Kalnins, "exposed Kharchenko as a traitor",¹⁵¹ which is perhaps slightly inaccurate at this exact time, with Murav'ev securing Kharchenko another posting as 2nd Army Commander, from 3rd-18th July, before the latter defected to the Whites during their later advance on Simbirsk.¹⁵² However, Kalnins did succeed in convincing Kobozev and Blagonravov in Eastern Front *RVS* of the need to replace Kharchenko.¹⁵³ In this way, the candidature of Tukhachevsky, the right man in the right place, at the right time, was forced on Murav'ev. Murav'ev was probably not too disappointed at Tukhachevsky's appointment, believing he could win over the former "noble" officer.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, Tukhachevsky was a man both sides felt they could use, meaning no opposition was raised to him becoming 1st Army Commander. Chistov recounts Vareikis introducing 1st Army Commander Tukhachevsky to him on 3rd July 1918 and registering him with Simbirsk Party Organisation. He recalls, "When I told friends at the Communist Club later of Tukhachevsky's visit to the Party Committee

¹⁴⁹ This headed Simbirsk Army Group and had been formed on 31st May by the Province Executive Committee. The Military Commissar of Simbirsk Province, Gladyshev reported, "At the head of the Staff, Military Commissar of Simbirsk Province Ivanov, Chief of Staff Pen'evskii, members of staff: Freiman, Gol'man, Izmailov, Gladyshev and Dolnikov", *1918 god na rodine Lenina*, p. 322.

¹⁵⁰ B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", p. 53.

¹⁵¹ B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia družei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 33-34.

¹⁵² *DkKA, Tom IV*, p. 534.

¹⁵³ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 38.

¹⁵⁴ Murav'ev did try this at Simbirsk on 10th July after Tukhachevsky had reacted with derision to his plans stating, "Lieutenant Tukhachevsky, you are a Russian landowner! I promise you any responsible post in the armies, which I shall organise on the Volga unifying the Red Army with the Czechs", B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 42.

they took it almost as victory on the Front. And indeed it was a victory over the Left SRs for position in the Army".¹⁵⁵

The arrival of Tukhachevsky and Kuibyshev began the second period in the formation of 1st Army,¹⁵⁶ when real, effective organisational work commenced, transforming it from a partisan to a regular force. Tukhachevsky travelled to Simbirsk, arriving there on 3rd July, after appraising 1st Army's condition and assessing the need for urgent mobilisation of a command staff to bind together the variegated Red forces. He and Vareikis did this the next day, but proper reorganisation of Red units in Simbirsk Province into a regular army was impossible in early July.

The Czechoslovaks, with virtual control of Siberia, tried to extend this with their Southern Urals and Volga Groups. Therefore, Red units, instead of pulling back for reorganisation and regrouping, were constantly forced into skirmishes to prevent further advances. This hindered reorganisation, meaning the scattered, partisan nature that the Red High Command was so anxious to extinguish, remained. In this state, hindering the organised Czechoslovak forces was possible, but Eastern Front could never hope to match or defeat them. In late June however, in an effort to stop the Czechoslovaks' advance, the *RVS* were forced to try, ordering counter-attacks to crush the Czechoslovak Groups in the Volga Region at Samara and in the Urals at Cheliabinsk.

The main thrust of the offensive was to concentrate on Samara, *Komuch's* base, but Tukhachevsky recorded, this "simple task was expressed by Murav'ev in the form of a fantastic and completely impracticable plan".¹⁵⁷ Murav'ev was laying the foundations for his revolt. Northern-Ural-Siberian Front was ordered to move on Omsk, Cheliabinsk and Kysht on 20th and 23rd June.¹⁵⁸ On the Volga, *Osobaia* Army at Saratov, was instructed on 20th June to move towards Samara, Buzuluk and Ural'sk.¹⁵⁹ It was then to continue north-east to Orenburg.¹⁶⁰ Also on 20th June, Ufa Military Detachment was to advance towards Samara, occupying Miass, or digging in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁵⁶ B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", p. 52; V. V. Kuibyshev, "Pervaia revoliutsionnaia armiia", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 75.

¹⁵⁸ *DkfKA, Tom I*, docs. 329 & 333, pp. 388-389.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, doc. 328, pp. 387-388.

before it, if it was occupied.¹⁶¹ On 23rd June, 2nd Army, was ordered to take Buzuluk and combine with *Osobaia* Army's left flank at Nikolaevsk,¹⁶² then coordinate with 3rd Army at Cheliabinsk.¹⁶³ 1st Army was to attack along an initially wide front stretching from Kuznetsk-Sengilei-Bugul'ma, gradually closing a pincer movement around Syzran' and Samara, with troops moving from Surgut and Bugul'ma, cutting the Czechoslovaks' line of retreat from Samara to Ufa. Tukhachevsky relates this elaborate plan, which envisaged the Czechoslovaks in Samara and Cheliabinsk relying on each other, was a complete miscalculation. The Czechoslovaks in Samara were well-fortified and self-sufficient. Splitting Red forces to attack from different areas, with no effective communications for coordination, simply meant the Czechoslovaks could handle them separately.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the Red forces were easily encircled and wiped out.¹⁶⁵

This offensive came too early for the Reds, which although on paper divided into 1st, 2nd, 3rd and *Osobaia* Armies and occupying distinct areas by 28th June,¹⁶⁶ were still an amalgam of partisans, Red Guards and workers. Only the scattered Latvians were organised. In Simbirsk Province alone, 1st Army encapsulated 80 units, numbering between 20-250 bayonets each, spread out, not cooperating and still in their *eshelony*,¹⁶⁷ despite instructions from Murav'ev and Blagonravov on 24th June to find alternative transport.¹⁶⁸ This limited any military action. These problems are well-illustrated by the telegram sent by Northern-Ural-Siberian Front Commander Berzin on 1st July reporting, "The Czechoslovaks are attacking along the whole front. Reserves and artillery are essential... I ask for the transfer to us of Moscow or Gomel' Regiment. Mobilisation is impossible here".¹⁶⁹ Lack of manpower and the poor standard of existing Red forces, combined with peasant support for the Czechoslovaks, meant the Reds struggled to hold them, far less counter-attack.

However, 1st Army made some progress under Tukhachevsky before Murav'ev rebelled. On assuming command, Tukhachevsky received a detailed plan of 1st

¹⁶⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 77.

¹⁶¹ *DkfKA, tom I*, doc. 330, p. 388.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, doc. 332, p. 389.

¹⁶³ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 77.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁵ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 38.

¹⁶⁶ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 336, pp. 392-393.

¹⁶⁷ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", p. 64.

¹⁶⁸ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 334, p. 390.

¹⁶⁹ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 337, pp. 392-393.

Army's role. He was to divide his 8,000 men into seven columns, which were to attack simultaneously along a front of 300 *versty*. The main attack was to be made by a column containing only 800 bayonets, starting from Melekess and Musorka and advancing through Stavropol' to Samara.¹⁷⁰ The other six columns would conduct diversionary attacks, whilst surrounding Samara at a radius of 150 *versty*. This was how Murav'ev proposed Tukhachevsky take a well-fortified town containing over 5,000 Czechoslovaks. Red forces were to attack by rail from Syzran', which would have been costly, and overland across sandy, partially wooded steppeland, when no form of transport for this existed. Seeing the potential for disaster, Tukhachevsky radically altered the plan.¹⁷¹ He decided to transport the main attacking force, Simbirsk Division, in boats up the Volga and up each river bank with both cavalry and armoured-cars, to attack the most advanced White group around Usol'e-Musorka-Stavropol' and then onto Samara. The smaller Inza and Penza Divisions were to cover the flanks with diversionary attacks on Syzran' and Bugul'ma.¹⁷² Tukhachevsky calculated 1st Army would be operational by 15th July,¹⁷³ but was ordered to launch the offensive nine days earlier. Chistov suggests Murav'ev did this deliberately to inflict defeat upon the unorganised Red troops, even mixing up the operational maps,¹⁷⁴ but a Red counter-attack was essential at this point. A renewed attack by the Czechoslovaks from Samara towards Ufa and Cheliabinsk had witnessed their occupation of Sergievsk, Birsk, Sterlitamak, Bugul'ma and other towns, on their way to uniting with the Czechoslovak Siberian Group at Zlatoust.¹⁷⁵ This opened up 1st Army's left flank and threatened the entire Red position. Therefore, Tukhachevsky was ordered on 6th July to retake Bugul'ma and attack Czechoslovak forces along the Volgo-Bugul'ma Railway.¹⁷⁶

On the same day, Kalnins reported to the Eastern Front *RVS* Political Department (*Politotdel*),

¹⁷⁰ B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", p. 60.

¹⁷¹ I. I. Mints, p. 64; E. I. Medvedev, p. 146. These sources suggest Tukhachevsky drew up the first plan of attack, which Murav'ev then altered, but Tukhachevsky's version is that he had to change the Murav'ev plan.

¹⁷² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", pp. 78-79; B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", pp. 60-61.

¹⁷³ *BpPRA*, doc. 10, p. 32.

¹⁷⁴ B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 38.

¹⁷⁵ N. E. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia, Tom I, 1917-1918gg*, (Moscow, 1990), p. 198.

¹⁷⁶ *DkfKA. Tom I*, doc. 340, p. 394.

Inza Division under the command of comrade Lacis has seized the left flank up to Syzran'-Zaborovka. Penza Division has occupied the right flank from Zaborovka to the Volga. Mood of the units, operating at Syzran', hearty. Everyone fully believes in victory over the enemy.¹⁷⁷

Taking Syzran', the first Red victory, gave the opportunity to attack on a wider front than had been possible in June, with the Red line stretching some 30 *versty*. However, the undisciplined nature of the Red troops took over with drunkenness breaking out. In an effort to combat this, Kalnins and Lacis ordered an immediate attack to Batravka Station, from where the Whites were still able to shell Syzran'. However, Murav'ev at this point recalled the International Regiment, which was serving with Inza Division, to Simbirsk, leaving insufficient troops to hold the line. The Czechoslovaks counter-attacked at Zaborovka, forcing Inza Division back with the undisciplined Red troops panicking under shellfire.¹⁷⁸ Tukhachevsky sent two telegrams from 1st Army HQ at Inza Station on 8th July, the first to Kuliabko stating, "Carefully prepared operation of 1st Army has been completed brilliantly. The Czechoslovaks were beaten and Syzran' taken with a battle".¹⁷⁹ He also sent a congratulatory telegram to 1st Army Groups reporting, "Today, 8th July, at 8.00 in the morning, Syzran' was occupied by the brave revolutionary units of Inza and Penza Divisions after stubborn resistance from the Czechoslovaks and White Guards. The pursued enemy in a panic is fleeing to Samara".¹⁸⁰

However, the success of the two supporting groups was limited by further treachery on Murav'ev's part, giving orders over Tukhachevsky's head, countermanding directions given by Tukhachevsky to his forces. The main attack group was to contain 1st Kursk *Broneviki* Armoured Division, but this had been withheld by Murav'ev since 9th-10th June, when it was ordered to travel from Kazan' via Ruzaevsk to Samara, to help retake the town from the Whites and Czechoslovaks. However, Murav'ev continually redirected it around the rear stations, keeping it out of the firing-line, for later use in his coup. In this way, the *Broneviki*, commanded by a Left SR Beretti, arrived in Simbirsk on 8th July to participate in the offensive, but was instructed by Klim Ivanov to remain in Simbirsk, under Murav'ev's direct command, contrary to Tukhachevsky's order for them to reinforce the offensive on

¹⁷⁷ *BpPRA*, doc. 5, p. 27.

¹⁷⁸ O. Iu. Kalnin, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷⁹ N. N. Kuliabko, p. 29.

¹⁸⁰ *BpPRA*, doc. 6, pp. 27-28.

Usol'e and Stavropol'.¹⁸¹ Therefore, on 9th July, even as *Pravda* printed news of 1st Army's success in taking Bugul'ma and Syzran' and their imminent capture of Stavropol',¹⁸² Tukhachevsky had to leave Inza for Simbirsk to find out what was going on. The next morning, en route at Kindiakovka Station, he wrote a scathing report to be sent to Murav'ev.

I am going to Inza-Syzran'. Syzran' is abandoned. I still wanted to begin an offensive yesterday, but the armoured division was forbidden to advance by you, and therefore our attack on Usol'e and Stavropol' was conducted only by sparse cavalry units. My independence is completely impossible with such interference as you give.

It is visibly better for me on the spot, to see how things need to be done. Give me tasks and they will be fulfilled, but don't give me methods - this is impracticable... Armies are bound by regulations... they receive only tasks and directives of the most general character. Even to give orders to armies is avoided. You command for me and even for my divisional commanders.

Perhaps, this was called for with previous inefficient commanders, but it seems to me, that until now I have not summoned your dissatisfaction in this respect...¹⁸³

Murav'ev's order to the *Broneviki* to remain in Simbirsk was his final preparation and signalled the beginning of his revolt proper.

Such subversive activity or conversely inactivity was commonplace amongst Murav'ev's appointees and was a major factor behind the Red defeats in late June/early July. Kharchenko was heavily criticised in the telegram sent to him at Inza on 26th June, the day he was replaced by Tukhachevsky. This stated,

Penza Army Group is heroically attacking and driving the enemy out of Syzran'. It is a disgrace that Inza Group is not supporting their comrades.

¹⁸¹ F. M. Ivanov, Pyrkov, M. P. & Seluianov, A. S., "Rol' Kurskogo bronedivisiona v likvidatsii avantiury Murav'eva", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 141; B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", p. 62.

¹⁸² *BpPRA*, doc. 7, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸³ *TsGASA*, f. 157, op. 3, d. 39, ll. 59-59, in A. P. Nenarokov, pp. 103-104; I. I. Mints, pp. 64-65, these sources date this telegram as 1st July. However, Chistov suggests 10th July (with no archival reference given) as the date of this telegram, with Tukhachevsky writing it in his command train on his way to Simbirsk to meet Murav'ev. This date is echoed by various Soviet biographers. 10th July appears to be the date which fits in with events, with Tukhachevsky in Inza on 28th June and then travelling to Simbirsk and arriving there on 3rd July. There is no evidence he led an offensive between these dates and this seems unlikely, since 1st Army at Inza was in disarray, in no fit state to attack and had no organised command staff. Hence Tukhachevsky went to Simbirsk to raise this. The order to attack Bugul'ma on 6th July was the first offensive order he received and therefore, it would appear the telegram criticising Murav'ev fits in with the offensive starting on 7th July, B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", pp. 40-41; *1918 god na rodine Lenina*, p. 63; L. Rakovskii, *Mikhail Tukhachevsky - Povest'*, (Leningrad, 1967), pp. 169-170; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, pp. 71-72; V. M. Ivanov, p. 43.

I order: immediately, move forwards, to occupy Zaborovka Station, establishing links on the right with Penza Group through Rep'evka, and on the left with Simbirsk Group through Goriushka.¹⁸⁴

That Murav'ev had to send this to his own trusted appointee shows the tricky position he and his cohorts occupied, planning the coup, whilst appearing to lead Red forces loyally, if incompetently. That this charade was successfully maintained has already been illustrated by the fact that Murav'ev secured Kharchenko the position of 2nd Army Commander. The plot thickens further as Kharchenko replaced F. E. Makhin, a Right SR and another Murav'ev appointee,¹⁸⁵ who lasted barely a week,¹⁸⁶ before defecting to the Whites himself.¹⁸⁷ Makhin had only become 2nd Army Commander after Murav'ev was forced to remove Iakovlev from this post on 26th June for inaction and a general failure to organise Red troops or prepare defensive positions,¹⁸⁸ very similar "shortcomings" to those displayed by Kharchenko. However, Murav'ev again succeeded in retaining his accomplice, appointing him to the *RVS* Staff, then as 2nd Army Political Commissar on 3rd July under Kharchenko.¹⁸⁹ Iakovlev defected in early July, as did Mel'nikov and Voronov, commanders of Sengilei sector and Simbirsk Communist Detachment respectively.¹⁹⁰

With such incompetence from his subordinates, Murav'ev himself did not escape suspicion. Tukhachevsky sent a telegram to Moscow at the end of June, complaining that Murav'ev was deliberately hindering, "essential work in organising First Army".¹⁹¹ After the Left SR Revolt in Moscow, Mekhonoshin, by now in Eastern Front *RVS*, questioned Murav'ev over his loyalties, with the latter replying he had left the Left SRs. Upon receiving this news on 7th July, Lenin ordered Mekhonoshin to, "Record Murav'ev's report about his leaving the Left SR Party, maintain vigilant

¹⁸⁴ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 335, p. 391.

¹⁸⁵ B. I. Chistov, "Kommandarm-Kommunist", p. 32, Murav'ev had appointed Makhin Head of the Defence of Ufa. He also led Ufa Military Detachment which combined with Orenburg Military Detachment, under Iakovlev, to form 2nd Army. Chistov blames Makhin's and Kharchenko's treachery for the fall of Ufa on 5th July.

¹⁸⁶ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 534.

¹⁸⁷ I. I. Mints, p. 63.

¹⁸⁸ E. I. Medvedev, p. 91; This same Iakovlev had failed to organise any Red resistance to the Czechoslovaks whilst Supreme Commander of Orenburg-Ural Front. He left Samara for Kinel' with his staff and did nothing to prevent the Czechoslovak advances. Traitorous behaviour was also in evidence here in May at the start of the Czechoslovak Uprising, I. I. Mints, p. 40.

¹⁸⁹ I. I. Mints, p. 63.

¹⁹⁰ *DkfKA, Tom I*, p. 774 (note 95); B. I. Chistov *1918 god na rodine Lenina*, p. 60.

¹⁹¹ *TsGAKA*, f. 157, op. 3, d. 26, pp. 174-175, in E. I. Medvedev, p. 145.

control... The struggle with the Czechoslovaks and Cossacks must be conducted with threefold energy".¹⁹²

A message from *Sovnarkom* Secretary N. P. Gorbunov to Eastern Front Staff followed, warning, "Comrade Lenin asks you to transmit the following: The Left SRs were bragging they are counting on Murav'ev... I instruct you to establish threefold control over Murav'ev".¹⁹³

Therefore, Tukhachevsky's complaint was acted upon, displaying his rising stature. This was the first of several episodes during the Civil War involving Tukhachevsky appealing directly to Moscow about his commanding officers. Trust in Murav'ev was visibly waning from the end of June, but with no suitable replacement and fighting continuing, the Reds had to retain him and watch for signs of treachery, if they arose. Also retained were Murav'ev-appointed *voenspetsy* on 1st Army Staff. As Kalnins recalled, "From a number of in all 60-70 staff, not including Kobozev and Blagonravov, there were four communists and 3 "Left" SRs. All the remainder were "specialists", who were selected by Supreme Commander Murav'ev".¹⁹⁴ These were all men loyal to him.

With such treacherous leadership, it is not surprising the Red counter-offensive failed and the Czechoslovaks continued to make ground on all fronts, with local uprisings provoked by SR, Menshevik and White agitators contributing.¹⁹⁵ This was exactly as Murav'ev had planned. Loyal Red forces were split into small, weak groups which could be easily defeated by the Czechoslovaks, leaving those formations headed by Left SRs or which Murav'ev felt he could control, in the rear and unharmed.¹⁹⁶

On 9th July Murav'ev attempted to take control of Eastern Front *RVS* HQ in Kazan', but was arrested. Escaping, he secretly left the town aboard the steamship *Mezhen*.¹⁹⁷ He sailed to Simbirsk, arriving during the evening of 10th July,¹⁹⁸ with

¹⁹² V. I. Lenin, p. 64.

¹⁹³ E. N. Medvedev, p. 148.

¹⁹⁴ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 34.

¹⁹⁵ *DkKA, Tom I*, doc. 341, pp. 394 & 774, note.

¹⁹⁶ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 38; B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 38.

¹⁹⁷ The *Mezhen* was formerly the Tsarina's royal yacht. Murav'ev had earlier commandeered it as his mobile HQ, B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Komunist", p. 41.

¹⁹⁸ Vareikis gives the exact time of arrival as 7.00 pm in his memoirs of the affair, whilst Kuibyshev in his official report to *Sovnarkom* at the time gave the time as 9.00 pm, I. M. Vareikis, "Ubiistvo Murav'eva", *1918 god*, p. 5; *TsAOR*, f. 1235, d. 525, op. 52, in *1918 god*, p. 330.

600 men comprising his Yugoslavian bodyguards and Ufa Detachment under Khlebnikov, to add to the International Regiment and *Broneviki* already there.¹⁹⁹

Murav'ev summoned the Simbirsk Soviet Praesidium to the *Mezhen* and, with no warning from Kazan' of the previous day's events, several members obeyed.²⁰⁰ Those who arrived were arrested and imprisoned on the ship, including Chistov, S. M. Izmailov and *Cheka* Chairman Levin.²⁰¹ Murav'ev despatched his adjutant Chudoshvili to fetch Tukhachevsky, who duly arrived at the yacht.

The Supreme Commander's arrival worried Tukhachevsky as he feared Murav'ev was planning to direct the Red offensive himself and would discover Tukhachevsky had disobeyed his orders and completely altered the offensive plan. Worse though was the possibility Murav'ev would reinstate his original suicidal plan.²⁰² However, when Tukhachevsky boarded the *Mezhen*, he relayed his critical report of the previous day. Murav'ev listened, then informed Tukhachevsky it no longer mattered, as war had again broken out with Germany and they must ally with the Czechoslovaks who were fighting for the Anglo-French and Americans. Tukhachevsky disagreed, stating if war had started against Germany, Red forces must immediately strive to defeat the Czechoslovaks and Whites on the Volga to guarantee the Red Army's rear.²⁰³ When Murav'ev then appealed to Tukhachevsky's "noble" roots,²⁰⁴ asking him to counter-sign his order to the Czechoslovak Legion to turn their *eshelony* westwards to reopen the Great War Eastern Front, Tukhachevsky branded him a traitor and was arrested.

Murav'ev did not imprison Tukhachevsky with the other Bolsheviks on the *Mezhen*, but took him to Simbirsk-1 Station where the *Broneviki* were assembled. Murav'ev announced the outbreak of war with Germany to the Kursk Armoured Division, promised them 10,000 roubles apiece if they backed him and stated he had arrested Tukhachevsky who, with Simbirsk Soviet Deputies, had wanted to arrest and execute the *Broneviki* Commander Beretti. At this, some of the *Broneviki* demanded

¹⁹⁹ *TsAOR*, f. 1235, d. 525, op. 52, in *1918 god*, p. 330; B. I. Chistov, "Partorganizatsiia...", p. 67. The Ufa Detachment had of course been under the leadership of Makhin and Iakovlev and by this point, as part of the 2nd Army, was under Kharchenko. The counter-revolutionary agitation by these three towards the Bolsheviks perhaps explains why the troops followed Murav'ev initially.

²⁰⁰ The sources in *Simbirskaia guberniia* attach a great deal of mystery to why no warning came from Kazan'.

²⁰¹ I. M. Vareikis, p. 6.

²⁰² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 gody", p. 79.

²⁰³ Tukhachevsky had outlined this plan of action to Vareikis only three days before, after learning of the Left SR assassination of the German Ambassador Mirbach in Moscow and the possibility this could lead to a renewed war, B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Komunist", p. 39.

Tukhachevsky's execution, but curiously Murav'ev refused. Instead Tukhachevsky was imprisoned in the *Broneviki eshelon* at Simbirsk-1, guarded by two *Broneviki* and several Red Army men. Possibly Murav'ev was attempting to get Tukhachevsky on side, reprieving him from execution, thereby winning him over through fear or gratitude, but entirely the opposite resulted.

Murav'ev sent three telegrams at this point.²⁰⁵ The first was to the Czechoslovak groups, stating the Soviets declared peace and wished to ally with them against Germany and detailing positions they should assume from the Urals through the Volga Region to Tsaritsyn.²⁰⁶ The second was to Ioffe, Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, declaring war with Germany and the third was to Red forces in the East, instructing them to ally with the Czechslovaks against Germany.

Upon receiving the latter telegram at Kuzovatovo Station,²⁰⁷ Kalnins telegraphed Kazan', inquiring what was going on. Kobozev relayed Murav'ev's treachery, reported Tukhachevsky was also in Simbirsk and therefore made Kalnins 1st Army Commander.²⁰⁸ Blagonravov sent an extraordinary telegram stating, "Under pain of death, it is the most severe responsibility not to permit or disseminate the provocational telegrams signed by Murav'ev".²⁰⁹ Penza and Inza Groups were by now in full retreat and it was not known whether or not Simbirsk Group were allied with Murav'ev. Kalnins attempted to stabilise the line and sent troops secretly to Simbirsk on 11th July to assassinate Murav'ev. From Ruzaevsk Station, Kobozev ordered an attack on Simbirsk, but this was not possible with 1st Army in such disarray.²¹⁰

After sending the telegrams, Murav'ev left with 80 infantrymen and six armoured-cars for the Cadet Corps building, in the centre of Simbirsk, where Simbirsk Soviet met. Fedor Mikhailovich Ivanov, a Moscow Communist in the *Broneviki*, was left at

²⁰⁴ See p. 94, note 152.

²⁰⁵ V. M. Kadyshev, p. 156.

²⁰⁶ I. I. Mints, p. 65.

²⁰⁷ Other Red units, receiving this telegram, abandoned the front and returned to Simbirsk as ordered, leaving the way open for the Czechoslovaks, N. Ia. Gimel'shtein, "S bronepoezdom "Svoboda ili smert'", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, pp. 191-192; Chistov found a telegram sent by Klim Ivanov to Gai (who was a Left SR before the Murav'ev Revolt, but swore allegiance to the Communist Party after it), to return to Simbirsk with his Red Sengilei Group, B. I. Chistov, "V tiazhelye dni...", p. 178.

²⁰⁸ A telegram was sent at 2.05 am on 11th July to all Eastern Front troops stating, "Revolutionary Military Soviet orders all armies, continuing the struggle with the Czechoslovaks, to fulfill earlier established orders, do not under any circumstances retreat back. Instead of Tukhachevsky, who has been arrested by the traitor Murav'ev, comrade Kalnin is appointed Commander of 1st Army" - *DkKA*, *Tom I*, doc. 343, p. 396.

²⁰⁹ *1918 god*, p. 328.

Simbirsk-1 as Murav'ev did not trust him, dressed in a black Communist Party state uniform. This was an error as Ivanov and Egorov, Commander of the *Broneviki* infantry detachment, learned from the Simbirsk-1 telegraph operator about the Left SR Revolt in Moscow and of Murav'ev's telegrams. Realising Murav'ev was committing treason, Ivanov ordered Egorov to free Tukhachevsky.²¹¹

Tukhachevsky meanwhile had been persuading his guards of Murav'ev's treachery. He informed them of the Left SR uprising in Moscow, explaining Murav'ev was supporting it. Questioned as to why he had been arrested, he declared, "Because I am a Bolshevik". As Bolsheviks themselves, the guards sent a delegate to the town centre to find out exactly what was happening.²¹² This, combined with the arrival of Egorov, resulted in Tukhachevsky's release. However, during his several hours of imprisonment, the revolt had already been suppressed.

Fedor Ivanov had gone to the town square, in front of the Cadet Corps building, where the *Broneviki*, Latvians and International Regiment were assembled. He relayed the situation and entered the Cadet Corps building to discuss what to do, with the most important figure in quelling the Murav'ev Revolt, Vareikis.

Vareikis had been waiting for a car to take him to the *Mezhen*, when he learned of sailors roaming the streets with machine-guns and heard bombs detonating. Therefore, he gathered the Latvians and Moscow Communist Detachment, under Pavel Medved', in the Cadet Corps building. Chudoshvili arrived to arrest Vareikis, but the troops forced the former to leave.

Vareikis then organised resistance against the revolt. Agitators from the Communist Detachment were sent to all troop formations in Simbirsk and to Gimov, Chairman of the Province Executive Committee and Simbirsk Soviet, to gain outside help. Meeting with Fedor Ivanov and discovering the *Broneviki*, Latvians and International Regiment in the Town Square had switched sides, Vareikis called a Soviet Executive Committee Extraordinary Meeting for 24.00 hours on 10th-11th July. Murav'ev was to be led to believe the troops were still loyal to him, invited to the meeting and arrested.²¹³

²¹⁰ O. Iu. Kalnin, pp. 39-40.

²¹¹ B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", pp. 43-44; F. M. Ivanov, Pyrkov, M. P. & Seluianov, A. S., pp. 142-144.

²¹² *BpPRA*, doc. 10, p. 32.

²¹³ F. M. Ivanov, Pyrkov, M. P. & Seluianov, A. S., pp. 144-146; I. M. Vareikis, p. 9.

For this, Vareikis assembled an ambush force of some 120 men led by Medved', made up of Latvians, *Broneviki* and Moscow Communist Detachment. They waited in rooms three and five of the Cadet Corps building, setting up machine-guns behind the doors and surrounding room four where the Executive Committee meeting was held. The remainder of the troops guarded outside the Cadet Corps building, arresting Chudoshvili, who arrived with a detachment of 80 men whilst the meeting was in progress, and other detachments backing Murav'ev.²¹⁴

When Murav'ev arrived, Klim Ivanov, smelling a rat, tried to have the meeting switched to another room, but Vareikis swiftly began the meeting. The meeting lasted several hours and began with a speech by Murav'ev, declaring his intentions and the necessity of the Executive Committee supporting him. The Left SR fraction supported Murav'ev in forming a new Volga Region Republic,²¹⁵ before the Bolshevik fraction, led by Vareikis, declared him a traitor and Ivanov declared *Broneviki* support for the Bolsheviks. The meeting was interrupted several times by noise from the adjacent rooms as more soldiers arrived and Vareikis had to leave the room several times to keep things calm.²¹⁶ These disturbances evidently aroused Murav'ev's suspicions as, "by the end of the meeting, he was terribly pale, constantly looking at the door".²¹⁷ He declared, "I will go and calm the detachment" and made for the door. At this, Vareikis gave the signal, Medved' flung open the door and Murav'ev was faced by the ambush.

Vareikis had ordered Murav'ev to be taken alive, so he could be taken to Moscow to face a military tribunal,²¹⁸ but on seeing he was trapped, Murav'ev opened fire with his Mauser, wounding three Red Army men,²¹⁹ before Medved' grabbed his arm and Murav'ev was felled by seven bullets.²²⁰ *Izvestiia Simbirskogo Soveta* wrongly reported on 12th July that Murav'ev had committed suicide with his last bullet, but this rather romanticised version was swiftly corrected by Vareikis who telegrammed Aralov and the *VVS* in Moscow with the correct details.²²¹

²¹⁴ I. M. Vareikis, p. 9; G. D. Kauchukovskii, p. 133; *TsAOR*, f. 1235, d. 525, op. 52, in *1918 god*, p. 330.

²¹⁵ I. M. Vareikis, p. 10.

²¹⁶ F. Valkhar & Forst, L. "Organizatsiia voennoplennykh v Simbirske", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 213; G. D. Kauchukovskii, p. 133.

²¹⁷ I. M. Vareikis, p. 10.

²¹⁸ S. M. Avvakumov, "Eto bylo 10 iulia", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 152.

²¹⁹ *Fond RVSR.TsAKA*, d. 119-851, p. 14, in *1918 god*, pp. 330-331.

²²⁰ I. M. Vareikis, p. 10.

²²¹ *Fond RVSR.TsAKA*, d. 119-851, p. 14, in *1918 god*, pp. 330-331.

Kobozev reported on 12th July that a train commanded by a Tsigebeev carrying some Murav'ev accomplices, was halted at Ruzaevka, with 23 arrests made. Blagonravov's wife was found on the train, although it is not clear if she was held hostage or otherwise.²²² With Murav'ev dead and his units disarmed, the revolt was over. It lasted barely 8-10 hours, but the effect the revolt had on Eastern Front, leading to a general collapse, prolonged fighting for months.

Tukhachevsky and Vareikis attempted to allay the confusion caused by the revolt. Tukhachevsky took command of Red troops in Simbirsk Province, and in Simbirsk, all Left SRs were removed, with Pugachevskii replacing Klim Ivanov as Head of Simbirsk Garrison and Ivanov replacing Beretti as *Broneviki* Commander.²²³ Tukhachevsky and Vareikis published an appeal in *Izvestiia Simbirskogo Soveta* to all Red forces on 12th July, outlining Murav'ev's betrayal, explaining the Soviets were not fighting Germany and calling for a renewal of the struggle with the Czechoslovaks.²²⁴ On 11th July, Lenin and Trotsky signed a "Government Report about the Betrayal of M. A. Murav'ev" before news of his death was known stating, "All honest citizens are instructed to shoot him [Murav'ev] on the spot... All orders for troops, acting against the Czechoslovaks, will, until newly instructed, be signed by Mekhonoshin and Blagonravov",²²⁵ thus removing Murav'ev from the *RVS* and declaring him an outlaw. However, none of these measures prevented the Czechoslovak advance.

The ultimate importance of the Murav'ev Revolt for Tukhachevsky on a personal career level was that he was now completely trusted by Moscow as 1st Army Commander. He had not been sent out to fill this position and had really fallen into it by chance. Doubts had remained over his trustworthiness. However, he stood aloof from Murav'ev's treachery and played his part in its suppression, thereby displaying his support for the Bolshevik regime and stating this wholeheartedly in the report he submitted on the Murav'ev Affair and its consequences, after the fall of Simbirsk later in July.²²⁶ With Moscow's trust confirmed, he had to now show his ability and retain the faith of all those in the East, by turning the conglomeration of Red forces into an

²²² *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, pp. 23-24.

²²³ F. M. Ivanov, Pyrkov, M. P. & Seluianov, A. S., p. 149.

²²⁴ *Izvestiia simbirskogo soveta* from 12th July, in *1918 god*, p. 329.

²²⁵ *DkfKA*, Tom I, doc. 342, p. 395.

²²⁶ *BpPRA*, doc. 10, pp. 31-33.

organised, disciplined 1st Revolutionary Army, the task he had originally been despatched to do.

Organiser and Commander of 1st Revolutionary Army

When I arrived at Inza Station on 27th July to assume command of 1st Army, the army staff consisted of only five men... In no way did an administrative apparatus exist; no one knew the army staff; units were equipped only thanks to the extraordinary energy and inventiveness of Shteingaus, who intercepted all loads, travelling across the army region, assessed them and always in time supplied the units.

These units almost without exception, lived in *eshelons* and conducted so-called “*eshelonnaia voina*”.

These detachments presented themselves as extremely united, with military traditions, despite their short existence. And the commanders and Red Army men suffered from extreme egocentrism.

They identified operations or battles only to the extent that detachments participating were guaranteed all possible advantages and security. There was not any kind of serious discipline to speak of. These detachments, disembarking from wagons, fought spontaneously and bravely in battle, but weak discipline and lack of self-control meant that under the slightest failure or even in one case of an envelopment, these detachments threw themselves in the *eshelons* and the entire *eshelon* “in file” made off sometimes as much as 100 *verstys* (for example from Syzran’ to Penza).²²⁷

Such was Tukhachevsky’s early impression of 1st Army. Like Eastern Front as a whole, it was completely unorganised or regulated, comprising workers’ detachments, Red Guards, peasant bands from various settlements and other partisan-like formations. By the turn of the year however, 1st Army was one of the major forces of a structured, uniform Eastern Front and a Southern Front had been formed copying this model. I shall now examine Tukhachevsky’s 1st Army organisational and formational work carried out before and after the Murav’ev Revolt, with Tukhachevsky, Kuibyshev and Kalnins as 1st Army *RVS*, to assess how this occurred.

The Murav’ev Revolt had positive and negative aspects for Tukhachevsky’s reorganisation. It finally confirmed beyond doubt the severity of the eastern situation. One man with a small force had completely destroyed the gains made by Eastern Front in June and July, showing starkly the precarious Red position and the threat to the very heart of the Soviet Republic this presented. In the longer term, Bolshevik diplomatic efforts, enforced by the Left SR assassination of Mirbach, to avoid further

German advances and almost certain destruction of the Soviet State, led in August to a Supplementary Treaty to Brest-Litovsk. This settled the Western situation, allowing the release of resources to reinforce Eastern Front to the levels required to defeat the Czechoslovaks and White officer battalions.²²⁸ However, before this, survival had to be eked out with local resources amid the rapidly deteriorating conditions of the post-Murav'ev Eastern Front. The fact that he inherited temporary control of Red forces on 11th July, until Vacietis arrived eleven days later, provided Tukhachevsky with information on troop numbers and resources. However, reorganising these disparate forces was complicated by Eastern Front conditions both before and after the Murav'ev Revolt, with mass defections by commanders and men sympathetic to the Left SRs and other anti-Bolshevik groups. Fear of mistrust and betrayal seized the majority of the Red forces.

This was exacerbated by the mid-July *Komuch* offensive, with accompanying anti-Bolshevik agitation further convincing commander and rank-and-file alike that treachery was in the air and wholesale defections imminent. Tukhachevsky recalled,

This all made a colossal impression on the still incompletely-formed units. A panicky fear of treachery arose, developing into mistrust between units, Red Army men and command staff and so on. SRs, Mensheviks and other White-guardists further reinforced this feeling. Constant rumours began about envelopments, revolts and so on. Troops began to retreat without battle.²²⁹

On 6th-7th July, the *Komuch* troops captured the Tsarist gold reserve in the important communications town of Kazan' and gradually advanced through Bugul'ma (13th July), Melekes (16th July), Stavropol' and Syzran' (21st July) before occupying Simbirsk, Lenin's birthplace, on 21st-22nd July. These were major gains along the Volga, pushing the Reds to the Western bank and threatening Moscow. These successes were matched in Siberia and the Urals, leaving Eastern Front near collapse.

With no support from Moscow, Tukhachevsky had to reorganise his forces using only local resources. He had provided a blueprint for this in May, but conditions in Riazansk, Tambov, Voronezh and the Don, although bad in May, were nothing compared to the Volga in July. Therefore, did Tukhachevsky's suggestions stand up or was he forced to adapt them?

²²⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 gody", pp. 73-74.

²²⁸ E. Mawdsley, p. 39.

²²⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia Armmia v 1918 gody", p. 80.

To answer this, it is first useful to examine who exactly composed 1st Army in July 1918. Tracing its exact origins is not easy, with Koritskii, 1st Army Chief-of-Staff, himself declaring that the exact numbers of the original partisan detachments which formed 1st Army were unknown.²³⁰ However, a rough picture can be drawn which illustrates Tukhachevsky's task, forming an army whilst surrounded by *Komuch* forces, but also infiltrated by those waiting for the moment to betray him and his small band of loyal staff.

1st Army was officially created on 19th June, although detachments, groups and Fronts had already appeared in reply to the Czechoslovak Revolt. Kalnins listed 6 regiments, 7 detachments, 2 batteries and the Polupanov armoured-train as the first components of 1st Army, with Briansk Armoured-Car Detachment and other infantry detachments raised soon after.²³¹

Tukhachevsky had to reorganise these into a competent force to defeat the Czechoslovaks. The troops he achieved this with were found in Syzran', Simbirsk and Penza areas, but also in these zones by the end of July were forces originating elsewhere, but driven out by the Czechoslovaks.

Red forces in Volga Region had clashed with the Czechoslovaks in late May and early June in Penza and Samara. Penza was taken by 5,000 Czechoslovaks under S. Chehek on 29th May, defeating 2,000 Red fighters. Penza Town Soviet and Province Committee had raised a machine-gun company, workers detachments and several batteries. These were joined by workers detachments from Simbirsk and Ruzaevka, 200 rail guards with 3 machine-guns and 1 gun, 120 men sent by Saransk *Uezd* Soviet, 1st Czechoslovak Revolutionary Regiment, raised from Czechoslovaks who had defected to the Reds, and a Hungarian International Company.²³² This uncoordinated assortment of forces was defeated with heavy casualties and Penza Communist Party Committee evacuated to Ruzaevka. Upon reaching here, it created a Province Military Commissariat (*gubvoenkomat*) with S. I. Ostrovskii and I. N. Polokov as Military Commissars. In early June, this reformed 1st and 3rd Penza Infantry Battalions into 1st Soviet Infantry Regiment.²³³ These joined detachments

²³⁰ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", p. 64.

²³¹ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 36.

²³² E. I. Medvedev, pp. 84-85.

²³³ I. I. Mints, p. 43.

which had retreated to Kuznetsk from Syzran' after the Czechoslovak attack and formed the basis of Penza Division of 1st Army, under the command of Vosdvizhenskii, a *voenspets* mobilised in Penza.²³⁴

Valerian Vladimirovich Kuibyshev and M. S. Kadomtsev, the latter arriving with an Ufa Red Guard detachment, were instrumental in organising the Samara "Military Revolutionary Staff" on 30th May. This instructed the factory workers committees, unions of metalworkers, leatherworkers and others, to organise workers into military detachments. Meetings were held in Samara Communist Club and Communist Party leaders assumed the mantle of military leaders. The Samaro-Simbirsk District Commissariat of Labour and Samara Province Commissariat on Muslim Affairs appealed to Tatar workers, with ten detachments in Samara alone formed by workers of various nationalities. Training of militia in Samara was increased and numbers rose from 400 to 2,000 in early June.²³⁵

These forces were joined by further international detachments, Korsunsk and Buinsk workers detachments and Ivashchenko Red Guard detachment, possibly organised by Chapaev, who had taken over command of Nikolaevsk *uezd* Red forces in April.²³⁶ A 450-man detachment arrived from Simbirsk Province Executive Committee (*gubispolkom*),²³⁷ now energised by Vareikis' arrival and instituting a course of general training for Simbirsk inhabitants.

These efforts were in vain as the Czechoslovaks captured Samara after four days of fighting. Treachery aided the Czechoslovaks, with a Right SR, I. M. Brushvit, defecting and revealing Red positions,²³⁸ whilst a detachment from Syzran', intended for Samara, was led by a D. I. Popov to Moscow, to become the main Left SR armed force in the July coup attempt.²³⁹ The Reds had 5,000 men in 12 detachments between Samara and Syzran',²⁴⁰ but the Red leaders' inexperience was exposed by positioning their main 4,000-strong force at Samara in front of the River Lipiagi, cutting their own path of retreat. Knowing these positions, the Czechoslovaks encircled the Reds at night and attacked on 4th June, killing 1,300 Reds. The other forces fought until 8th

²³⁴ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 55.

²³⁵ E. I. Medvedev, pp. 88-89

²³⁶ Ibid. p. 91, Ivashchenko was later renamed Chapaevka after Chapaev; I. I. Mints, p. 35. Vasilii Ivanovich Chapaev (1887-1919), a Bolshevik from 1917.

²³⁷ I. I. Mints, pp. 41 & 45.

²³⁸ Ibid. p. 45, Brushvit later became a *Komuch* member.

²³⁹ Ibid, pp. 44-45. Vladimir Oskarovich Kappel' (1883-1920), a former Tsarist Colonel.

²⁴⁰ G. D. Gai, "Pobednyi put'", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 31.

June, led by Gai and Pershin amongst others, but the efficiency and organisation of the Czechoslovaks, combined with their vast superiority in numbers, proved decisive.

From Samara, Gai and Kuibyshev retreated up the Volga to Simbirsk by steamboat with the remainder of their forces. Here, Kuibyshev and Vareikis reformed Samara and Simbirsk detachments into Samaro-Simbirsk Combined Militia Detachment under Gai's command to defend Sengilei area. As Gai recalled,

In the course of June and July 1918 we conducted bitter battles with Czechoslovaks and Kappelists, holding off their offensive to Sengilei and Simbirsk. With these battles, we gave comrades Kuibyshev and Tukhachevsky the possibility to organise 1st Army Staff.²⁴¹

The remnants of the Samara forces combined with Simbirsk detachments to form the nucleus of Simbirsk Iron Division.

As Simbirsk Division evolved around Gai, Inza Division evolved around Ia. Ia. Lacis, a Junior Officer in 4th Vidzem Latvian Rifle Regiment of the Tsarist Army, which he had commanded since the October Revolution.²⁴² The regiment was used by Murav'ev to attack Syzran' on 16th June 1918, but he prevented Lacis and Kalnins sending for reinforcements and the attack was repulsed.²⁴³ However, the regiment remained involved in fighting between Syzran' and Inza into July. The fall of Simbirsk and Syzran' presented the Czechoslovaks with the opportunity to advance up the railway line to capture 1st Army HQ at Inza. At one point the only obstacle preventing this was Lacis and 20 men, predominantly his staff, who had retreated from Syzran' to Bazarnaia Station, and an armoured-train.²⁴⁴ This was the core around which Inza Division was built,²⁴⁵ Latvians and newly-mobilised *voenspetsy*.

These varied forces, which formed the core elements of the three 1st Army divisions, were supplemented by peasant partisan detachments. A *Komuch* mobilisation of 30th June in Kazan', Simbirsk and Samara Provinces, encouraged peasants to leave their villages and form partisan detachments in the forests, to avoid conscription. Detachments in Samara and Kazan' were brought within 4th and 5th Red Armies respectively, whilst those in Simbirsk came under Tukhachevsky's jurisdiction. One such detachment organised by a Bolshevik I. S. Kosmovskii joined

²⁴¹ Ibid. p. 31.

²⁴² V. V. Shtein, p. 30.

²⁴³ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 35.

²⁴⁴ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 55.

²⁴⁵ V. V. Kuibyshev, p. 27.

Alatyr' Group, which Tukhachevsky received for the Simbirsk Operation in early September.

Therefore, the forces Tukhachevsky inherited were predominantly a mixture of armed factory workers and peasants, who perhaps had a few weeks fighting experience against the Czechoslovaks, during which they had been constantly defeated and pushed back. Some would have been Great War veterans, but war-weariness or disinterest meant not many volunteered, with the majority of those joining the Reds doing so through political allegiance as Bolshevik Party members or sympathisers. The detachments they formed were partisan, guerilla-type outfits, with elected commanders who could as quickly lose their men's support, as gain it. No leadership cadre experienced in fighting on conventional terms against an organised force such as the Czechoslovak Legion, existed. A few Red Guards had six months or more fighting experience, some of which was against a conventional force in the Germans, but they had also tasted defeat here. Moreover, the majority of the experienced troops, including the Latvians, were employed on the Western screens against Germany, still perceived as the main threat. This remained the policy within the *VVS* until 26th July. Not until Simbirsk fell did Moscow eventually realise it mattered not how valiantly their forces fought. Without a properly organised army led by capable experienced leaders, they stood little chance of defeating the Czechoslovaks, a situation similar to the West six months previously. Retaining a screen in the East was no longer viable now the Czechoslovaks dominated the entire area and the formation of Eastern Front was the first step to redressing this. However, vehement protests by Vacietis, Tukhachevsky and others were required before the 29th June decree declaring Eastern Front as the main operational theatre was in reality fulfilled.²⁴⁶ Before this, Eastern Front was very much alone in organising forces against the Czechoslovaks with Tukhachevsky recalling, "...1st Army received virtually nothing from the Centre".²⁴⁷ Tukhachevsky, Kuibyshev and Kalnins had to work independently to create 1st Army.

²⁴⁶ I. I. Mints, p. 76.

²⁴⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiiia v 1918 gody", p. 78.

Building a Command Cadre

Tukhachevsky commenced reorganisational work as soon as he assumed command of 1st Army at Inza. Penza, Simbirsk and Inza Divisions already existed on paper, but morale amongst the detachments was generally low, given the constant defeats they had suffered. To transform these from the disorderly amalgam described above into regular divisions required experienced army and divisional staffs to rejuvenate and inspire them. This was the first task in creating a regular 1st Army. In early July, surmising Murav'ev was hindering reorganisation, Tukhachevsky proceeded without authorisation, again displaying his readiness to act independently and risk censure, if he did not agree with his superior officer. Given 1st Army Staff at Inza comprised only five men when Tukhachevsky arrived,²⁴⁸ the urgency and enormity of this task was apparent to him. A firm basis for mobilisation and reorganisation was needed and Tukhachevsky created this on 1st July, establishing Military-Revolutionary Field Tribunals for 1st Army formations.²⁴⁹ These were the first established in the *RKKA* and set the legal basis by which mobilisation on a vast scale could be conducted. Mass mobilisation had never previously been envisaged under voluntary recruitment, meaning tribunals were not required, but the escalation of Eastern Front demanded large numbers of recruits, so Tukhachevsky formed the tribunals with Kuibyshev and Kalnins.

This was consistent with Tukhachevsky's May recommendations when he emphasised the need for strict revolutionary discipline and order in the Red Army. It is no surprise this was his first reorganisational measure, reintroducing the strict disciplinary system he had known in the Tsarist Army, if under the guise of "Revolutionary" Tribunals. The acceptance of this as necessity by Moscow was another significant step away from revolutionary ideals when faced with reality. The masses were not volunteering to fight for socialism as ideological belief had said they would, therefore this belief would have to be coerced. This was another decision taken by Trotsky and Lenin, against the wishes of the core Bolshevik Party, but necessary under Civil War conditions. Tukhachevsky was the man envisaged capable

²⁴⁸ The only positions filled were Chief-of Staff Shimunich, Head of Operational Matters Shabich, Staff Commissar Mazo, Head of Supplies (Quartermaster) Shteingaus and Paymaster Razumov, M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918", p. 73; *BpPRA*, p. 36.

²⁴⁹ A. N. Nenarokov, p. 132.

of introducing the tribunals since he had written of their necessity. Not blinded by revolutionary beliefs, but with the practicality of a soldier, he knew this system was required to swiftly install discipline within 1st Army and the Red Army as a whole.

With tribunals created, Tukhachevsky proceeded with the mobilisations they empowered him to implement. He left for Simbirsk, the Province town, where the Party and Soviet organs to coordinate mobilisation were situated, arriving on 3rd July and meeting with Vareikis and Chistov, a member of the Bolshevik Military Commission.²⁵⁰ This meeting confirmed the lack of staff and line officers at all levels, with only four former officers having volunteered for Simbirsk Army Group.²⁵¹ Vareikis informed Tukhachevsky the Province *Cheka* had discovered an underground White Officer Organisation, but it also contained very few former officers and these were the sons of landowners and merchants. Vareikis felt the majority were waiting to see what happened before committing themselves. Tukhachevsky apparently replied, "I know the officers' mood. There are inveterate White Guards amongst them. But there is a sincere love of their people; their Homeland. It is necessary to help them to go with the people, and not against them..."²⁵²

To do this, Tukhachevsky and Vareikis published their "Order For 1st Eastern Army" the next morning in *Izvestiia simbirskogo soveta* No. 128 demanding,

The Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic is living through difficult days, surrounded from all sides by enemies, who are looking to profit at the expense of Russian citizens. Prepared and supported by them were various mercenary enemies of the counter-revolutionary Czechoslovak uprising.

The duty of each Russian citizen - to take up arms and stand up for the government against enemies, who are bent on its destruction.

For creating an efficient fighting army experienced leaders are essential, and therefore I order all former officers, living in Simbirsk Province, immediately to arise in the name of the Red Banner entrusted to me by the army.

Today, 4th of July, officers, living in the town of Simbirsk are to come at 12.00 to the Cadet Corps building, to me.

Non-appearance will result in a military-field court martial.

Commander of 1st Eastern Army Tukhachevsky.

Comrade Chairman of Simbirsk Province Executive

Committee Iosif Vareikis.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 33.

²⁵¹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 gody", p. 77.

²⁵² B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 34.

²⁵³ 1918 god, p. 324.

The appeal to Russian "patriotism" is apparent. The labelling of the Czechoslovaks as Imperialist mercenaries is also crucial, as is the absence of any mention of the Whites. *Voenspetsy* had joined the Red Army to fight Germany in the West through patriotism, but were against fighting a civil war against fellow Russians. This was the case with *voenspetsy* in the East. As Tukhachevsky noted, they were patriotic, but had no wish for civil war. Therefore, the appeal to patriotism was used alongside intensive political propaganda, evidence that Tukhachevsky and Vareikis appreciated the importance of both methods at this early stage, but also hinting at the intertwining of Bolshevik ideals with Russian nationalism which occurred later. This twin approach was legally underpinned by the newly-formed Revolutionary Military Field Tribunals, allowing Tukhachevsky to adopt an amiable "softly-softly" approach during mobilisation interviews, secure in the knowledge the tribunals were there and more significantly, that the *voenspetsy* knew. The political commissars provided the "hard" element during mobilisation, encouraging *voenspetsy* to turn to Tukhachevsky and enlist. *Voenspetsy* would provide the military knowledge necessary for the new army and communists the political experience and control over *voenspetsy*.

In January 1918, Tukhachevsky had been in a similar position to the majority of the former officers. He had taken the decision to join the Reds and now used this experience and knowledge of *voenspetsy* attitudes to attract them to the Reds. The use of patriotism (which would be repeated by Stalin 23 years later) worked. Pershin, Deputy Province Military Commander conducted the recruitment with Tukhachevsky on 4th July and related to Chistov, "Tukhachevsky used great tact in these talks. The new Commander made a great impression on his interlocutors, and several hundred officers, thanks to him, crossed at that time to the side of the Soviet authorities".²⁵⁴

The recruitment of *voenspetsy* in Simbirsk was as far as Tukhachevsky's reorganisational efforts proceeded before Murav'ev's Revolt, but after this, with sufficient calm restored to Simbirsk, Tukhachevsky took his next step, recruiting officers for Penza Division.

Travelling west from Simbirsk, Tukhachevsky reached Penza on 15th or 16th July. As Vareikis and Kuibyshev played vital roles in the Simbirsk recruitment,

²⁵⁴ B. I. Chistov, "Komandarm-Kommunist", p. 35.

Province Soviet Chairman Minkin and Kalnins did so in Penza. The three men published an appeal in the Penza Province newspaper on 18th July, decreeing,

For the creation of an efficient fighting Red Army all former officer-specialists are summoned in the name of the Banner.

Tomorrow, 19th July, all former artillerymen and artillery technicians, cavalry-officers and engineering officers must appear at the Province Military Commissariat at 16.00 hours.

All former infantry officers must appear at the same place on 20th July at 12.00 hours.

Officers from 20-50 years old are summoned.

Non-appearance will result in a Military-Field Tribunal.²⁵⁵

The similarities to the Simbirsk appeal are apparent, although the development of separating infantry officers from technical officers emerged here, perhaps speeding up the reorganisation process.

The recruitment panel comprised Tukhachevsky, Kalnins, Head of 1st Army Administration Department Ustichev and Solov'ev, Commissar of Penza Military Commissariat Instruction Department, representing the Soviet and Province Party Committee. In the two days between the appeal and the recruitment, the latter had quelled unrest incited by counter-revolutionary elements in Penza, spreading rumours that the mobilisation was designed to capture and execute *voenspetsy*. This incitement was part of the wider agitation disseminated by anti-Soviets before the mid-July *Komuch* offensive, but Penza Party Organisation agitated intensively to dispel these rumours. Solov'ev apparently appealed, "Who are you Russian officers with? With the people or against the people?"²⁵⁶ This patriotic plea again succeeded as *voenspetsy* appeared in great numbers.

M. N. Tolstii, a former *gimnasia* classmate of Tukhachevsky, worked in the Province Military Commissariat Instruction Department. He introduced Koritskii to Tukhachevsky, who recalled Tukhachevsky's actions at the recruitment similarly to Pershin at Simbirsk.²⁵⁷

During the recruitment most *voenspetsy* initially addressed Ustichev, a former Lieutenant-Colonel, who had been in line for a generalship, believing him to be the senior officer. Ustichev "tactfully" referred them to Tukhachevsky, introducing him as

²⁵⁵ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", p. 52.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 52-53.

²⁵⁷ Nikolai Ivanovich Koritskii, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919 and served as 1st Army Chief-of-Staff.

"comrade Commander Tukhachevsky", emphasising the word comrade, reiterating this was a new Bolshevik army, despite the appeal to patriotism.

Tukhachevsky's youth surprised many who appeared for mobilisation, but his reassuring manner encouraged many to enlist. Many officers declared they wished to join the Red Army, but did not feel trusted by the regime. Tukhachevsky referred to his own experiences, apparently stating,

To feel suspicion pointed to oneself is distressing. I experienced it. But the thing is, this trust itself does not spring up. It is necessary to earn it, to achieve it. And how can an officer achieve trust and authority over his soldiers? Firstly, by honesty, secondly, by excellent knowledge of their business, and, thirdly by kindness to the soldiers, earned by respect towards their human dignity.²⁵⁸

Tukhachevsky was possibly comparing the Red and Tsarist Armies. He received respect in both as an officer, but relations between the officer corps and lower ranks differed markedly now.

Growing up in Penza, Tukhachevsky and many of the interviewees knew each other. Many *voenspetsy*, seeing the position a former noble had achieved and hearing that he experienced similar fears to them, would have been reassured and joined the Red Army.

While loyalty was crucial in selecting *voenspetsy* for 1st Army, one *voenspets* recalled Tukhachevsky quizzing him about his background, education and qualifications.²⁵⁹ All *voenspetsy* were interviewed in this manner, allowing candidates to be posted by individual ability, placing recruits in positions in which they had previous experience and speeding up formation, with the separation of officers by branch of service in the Penza decree, possibly part of this.

In 1919, Tukhachevsky recalled conducting the mobilisations and the impact *voenspetsy* had on 1st Army formation. Writing of Penza, Simbirsk and Inza Divisions rapidly gaining discipline and comprising regular troops by mid-July, he asked,

What explains these successes? I consider the main reason - the fortunate selection of command and commissar staff and the great quantity of volunteers, almost from the very moment of forming 1st Army. This successful combination was produced by the fact that those *voenspetsy* mobilised to responsible posts, were selected not by previous length of

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 54.

²⁵⁹ L. Nikulin, *Tukhachevsky, biograficheskii ocherk'*, (Moscow, 1964), p. 54.

service or rank, but by showing the ability for independent action, for self-initiative. A significant part of the responsible workers were appointed from young officers. We had absolutely no qualms about subordinating generals to 2nd Lieutenants or Captains, and in the rear the same was done...

The basis of the work was reciprocal trust. The army staff, which wore a very transient-gloomy outlook immediately after the *voenspetsy* mobilisations, very quickly got used to each other, pooled their resources into a harmonious family, sincerely devoted to the Soviet republic.²⁶⁰

Further to this, in Simbirsk, Klim Ivanov refused to help with recruitment, stating his staff, the Province Military Committee and part of the garrison were already at full complement with *voenspetsy*. However, when Simbirsk fell on 21st-22nd July, almost to a man, Ivanov's *voenspetsy* defected, whilst those recruited by Tukhachevsky and Pershin remained loyal. Amongst these were Ustichev, K. P. Dikov, a former captain who became Head of Operations Department, his assistant I. I. Chernomontsev, and Assistant Head of Intelligence Department B. N. Arsen'ev.²⁶¹

The Simbirsk and Penza mobilisations recruited over 1200 staff and line officers for 1st Army, 250 of these forming 1st Army Staff.²⁶² These and other *voenspetsy*, who were recruited as they were found or volunteered throughout July, allowed Tukhachevsky to organise and bring up to strength 1st Army HQ at Inza and Divisional Staffs for Simbirsk, Inza and Penza Divisions and a fourth Vol'sk Division, created on 19th July, in response to the Czechoslovak occupation of Vol'sk.²⁶³ Koritskii noted Tukhachevsky had already planned 1st Army on a 4-division basis before the Murav'ev Revolt.²⁶⁴ This could only be put into practice after the Penza and Simbirsk mobilisations were completed on 19th July, suggesting if Vol'sk had not fallen, a fourth division would still have been formed, but possibly elsewhere.

²⁶⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "K Iubileiu pervoi armii", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, pp. 23-24.

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 35.

²⁶² L. Nikulin, p. 51.

²⁶³ *DkfKA, Tom II'*, p. 582; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 81.

²⁶⁴ N. I. Koritskii, p. 64.

Reorganisation in the Frontline from *Partizanshchina* to Regular Army

Voenspetsy selected in Penza travelled by train with Tukhachevsky to Inza, arriving at 1st Army HQ on 22nd July.²⁶⁵ With Simbirsk lost, Inza came under threat. A defensive line had to be maintained whilst reorganisational work was carried out, with no breathing-space for Tukhachevsky to organise 1st Army for its forthcoming battles. This occurred simultaneously.

The mobilisations facilitated the reorganisation of the disparate detachments, bands, groups and units into regular regiments and divisions, led by the newly-introduced line and staff officers. This was not easy with vast discrepancies in size and position of the scattered units. As shown already, the earliest formations were not coordinated from Moscow, but had sprung up in the localities to defend against anti-Bolshevik forces. The military commissariats which had the task of mobilising Soviet forces in the localities were undermanned in July 1918 and could only exist in Bolshevik-held areas. Therefore, the task of mobilising recruits for 1st Army also fell directly to the *RVS* of Tukhachevsky, Kuibyshev and Kalnins, aided by local Party Chairmen, Vareikis and Minkin. As numerous and varied Red fighting formations had appeared locally with no input from Moscow, apart from general appeals and addresses, the pulling together of these disparate forces was also directed in the localities, without any Moscow contribution.

The composition of the varied detachments was reported on 21st July by Zakharov, 1st Army Chief-of-Staff,²⁶⁶ giving 1st Army figures for 19th July. Pugachevskii's Simbirsk Group contained 6,975 infantry, 100 cavalry, 133 machine-guns, 130 guns and an armoured-train and Lacis' Inza Group comprised 1,516 infantry, no cavalry, 38 machine-guns, 13 light and 2 heavy guns and an armoured train. Gailit's Penza Group contained 1,525 infantry, no cavalry, 8 machine-guns and 8 guns with 164 crew-members. The latter also contained Mtsenskii, Smolensk, Moscow, Petrograd and Inza Regiments with a total of 2,951 infantry, 38 cavalry, 51 machine-guns, 3 bomb-throwers, 1 mortar and 10 guns with 193 crew, but these regiments were described as unbattleworthy and in need of reformation. Zakharov

²⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 57-58; N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii", p. 52.

²⁶⁶ Zakharov soon after was evacuated to Moscow, suffering from tuberculosis and malaria. His post was taken up by N. I. Koritskii who had deputised for him on several occasions previously during his illness, N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", pp. 59-60.

reported these figures were not exact as 1st Army was in constant combat.²⁶⁷ Indeed, on 25th July, Vacietis submitted a report to the *VVS* on the fall of Simbirsk, in which he estimated Simbirsk Group numbers to have fallen to around 3,000.²⁶⁸ The other Groups probably fared little better.

When these figures are compared to a report Tukhachevsky submitted to Vacietis on 23rd July, the glaring shortage of men and equipment within 1st Army is clear. To match and defeat the Czechoslovaks, Tukhachevsky reported he required 2-3 infantry divisions (of up to 20,000 men each), 2-3 cavalry regiments of 2-3,000 cavalry, 2-3 light artillery divisions of 24-36 guns, a heavy division of 42 guns, 48-72 line guns and 48-72 6-inch howitzers. Required to back these up were 2-3 sapper battalions, 2-3 pontoon detachments, 4-6 cycle/motorcycle companies, 2-3 *broneviki* divisions, 200 transport trucks and 4 fighter-plane squadrons.²⁶⁹

By his reckoning, Tukhachevsky was some 50,000 infantry and 6-9,000 cavalry short of the numbers required to defeat the Czechoslovaks, not to mention the back-up material and technical resources. This was typical of Eastern Front in July, as the Czechoslovaks advanced, amidst the post-Murav'ev chaos, threatening to completely rout Eastern Front. Mekhonoshin of Eastern Front *RVS* and Vacietis, newly-arrived from Moscow, despatched telegrams on 17th and 19th July respectively, requesting Latvian Regiments to reinforce Ekaterinburg and Simbirsk.²⁷⁰ Vacietis identified Simbirsk as the key to the whole Eastern Front position as its fall would result in the loss of the last oilfields held and the entire Central Volga Region.²⁷¹ The transport route provided by the river would also be lost.

Unfortunately for the Bolsheviks in Simbirsk, there was little time to act upon these requests. The Czechoslovaks swept into Simbirsk on 21st-22nd July, taking control of Volga Region up to Sviiashsk, where the Reds stabilised the line. Hundreds of Bolsheviks were captured and deported east to their death. Lenin ordered Zinov'ev on 20th July to send eastwards from Petrograd, "...several dozen "leaders" (á la

²⁶⁷ *BpPRA*, p. 30.

²⁶⁸ *DkfKA*, Vol. 1, p. 408.

²⁶⁹ *BpPRA*, p. 35.

²⁷⁰ *DkfKA*, Vol. 1, pp. 397-98.

²⁷¹ *DGkKA*, p. 102.

Kaiurov) and thousands of “ranks””,²⁷² but Moscow had grossly under-estimated the Czechoslovaks. Trotsky tried to blame the local soviets saying,

We did not receive even from those local Soviets that were closest to the events that had occurred over there, along the Trans-Siberian Railway and up to Cheliabinsk, the response that we had the right to expect. The local Soviets did not appreciate the full scope of the diabolical conspiracy.²⁷³

This was perhaps true in some cases, but in late May-early June, even if local Soviets appreciated the danger, they had no capable military forces. With Moscow treating the Czechoslovak Uprising as a local affair, isolated Bolshevik pockets could do little more than they did, hampered by Left SRs in the Soviets. Tukhachevsky explicitly said as much in his 23rd July report to Vacietis, outlining measures necessary for strengthening 1st Army. He wrote, "We are now making great mistakes which can completely threaten socialism. These mistakes are an under-valuation of the strengths of the enemy, ignorance of their forces and a lack of attention given to what is necessary to save the position". Noting the Czechoslovaks had strengthened since beginning their uprising he continued,

...until we prepare superior forces for its suppression, all forces and resources of the state must be used, even to the detriment of work planned for the state apparatuses. Only such efforts will correspond to the true significance of the Czechoslovak Uprising and only in such a case can the High Command be actively demanded to energetically fulfill the tasks laid down for it.

The basic question in preparing success is the organisation of the armed forces. In this case, what must not be forgotten is that good infantry, after all the losses which have been sustained, cannot quickly be created. Therefore, as was even known already, it is necessary to rely on the technical side. But in this, finally it is essential to refrain from bureaucratic measures. It is necessary, finally, to possess revolutionary genius and create new methods, reacting to circumstances instead of overloading the already-obsolete system in existence.²⁷⁴

The numbers deemed necessary have already been given above. This report was a fulfillment of the work Tukhachevsky was originally despatched from Moscow on 25th June to carry out, with suggestions on how reorganisational work on Eastern

²⁷² V. N. Kaiurov was Secretary of the Vyborg District Soviet in St. Petersburg. He arrived on Eastern Front with a workers' detachment, three days before Kazan' fell and the detachment was drawn into 5th Army. This was typical of recruitment for all Eastern Front Armies, including 1st Army, V. N. Kaiurov, "*Rabochie otriady*", *Simbirskaya guberniya*, pp. 13-22; *DGkKA*, p. 103; V. I. Lenin, *L-Vp*, p. 69.

²⁷³ L. D. Trotsky, *How The Revolution Armed*, Vol. I, p. 291.

²⁷⁴ *BpPRA*, p. 35.

Front should be conducted. It shows Tukhachevsky stressing the need to utilise available technical resources to compensate for the manpower shortfall, possibly a step towards his later theory of huge technically-based armies. All technical means available should be used, allowing civilians to go short if need be. The numbers of men necessary to transform a small technically-based force into a mass mechanised army were available once the Soviets had control in the 1930s to develop his theories. In July 1918 though, Tukhachevsky was already calling for a command economy to furnish the army with all its needs first, as this was the only way to defend Russia, making the army the most important section of the Communist state. This points towards the military-industrial complex Tukhachevsky played a major part in constructing in the 1930s. However, already in 1918, his point about the interests of the civilian state apparatuses being subverted to the armed forces was realised only six weeks later, with the introduction of "War Communism" and the transformation of the Soviet zone into one-armed camp. Did Tukhachevsky's suggestion have anything to do with this?

This report also illustrates the self-confidence Tukhachevsky had, explicitly criticising the *VVS* and Moscow for under-estimating the Czechoslovaks and failing to reinforce Eastern Front. It was also a criticism of Vacietis' demands for an immediate counter-attack to retake Simbirsk. Tukhachevsky was asking for sense to be used in the handling of the Eastern Front situation, with well-laid plans replacing knee-jerk reactions to Czechoslovak gains. He had been forced to act independently as 1st Army Commander, altering Murav'ev's offensive plans, whilst the latter hampered his every move, betrayed Eastern Front and threatened to execute him. Now Tukhachevsky was being ordered by Vacietis to launch a second attack with forces he knew were not ready. The command cadre had been recruited, but the troops were still untrained and untrusting of these commanders. This had to be addressed before a successful attack could be made. Tukhachevsky had to attack Simbirsk, but the rabble, which 1st Army had become post-Murav'ev, was easily repelled. However, Tukhachevsky did not waste opportunities presented by the attack.

Knowing there was little chance of success, Tukhachevsky used the attack to gather intelligence. Telegraph communications had been lost with Simbirsk since 21st July as the Czechoslovaks cut the wire to Inza.²⁷⁵ Therefore, Tukhachevsky ordered

²⁷⁵ *BpPRA*, p. 38.

Lacis to transfer 4th Latvian Rifle Regiment and 6th Mtsensk Infantry Regiment to Chufarovo Station, where Tolstii was ordered to lead these units to reconnoitre the Czechoslovak positions. Koritskii recalls this as the first operation conducted by the Red Army, utilising tactics other than *eshelonnaia voina*, with Tolstii, on orders from Tukhachevsky, despatching patrols on foot towards Simbirsk.²⁷⁶ Tukhachevsky praised Tolstii on 23rd July for this and on 25th July travelled in his command train from Inza to Chufarovo, the station for Veshkaima, to meet with Tolstii, Koritskii and Kuibyshev to assess the situation.²⁷⁷ On 26th July, Tukhachevsky and Koritskii accompanied a reconnaissance patrol of the territory between Veshkaima and Simbirsk, discussing the position with the most advanced reconnaissance patrols. With this information, Tukhachevsky outlined to Tolstii defensive measures to be taken around Veshkaima and Chufarovo, but at the next 1st Army Staff meeting including Kuibyshev, Kalnins, Koritskii, Ustichev, Head of Artillery Gardner and Quartermaster Shevchuk, he began to outline the operation to retake Simbirsk.²⁷⁸ This was an early demonstration of Tukhachevsky utilising temporary defensive measures to pave the way for an offensive operation, which would become a cornerstone of his military theories. 1st Army was in too weak a position to attack, forcing defensive measures, but only until sufficient organisation and numbers allowed an attack. To facilitate maximum speed, offensive plans had to be made immediately. This was typical of Civil War fighting, with small numbers and fluidity of frontage, allowing defence to be transformed into attack very rapidly.

Whilst planning attacks, reorganisation proceeded simultaneously. With the command cadre now formed to mobilise troops for the Simbirsk Operation, Tukhachevsky set up a Mobilisation Department under Ibragimov.²⁷⁹ Since war-weariness affected initial mobilisation, a Political Department was formed under Kuibyshev with 100 staff for agitational-propaganda work, comprising *voenspetsy*, but mainly Bolsheviks. By early August, this contained 200 political workers, who toured the villages mobilising men for the army and helping their families.²⁸⁰ This was the first such political department set up in the Red Army. The Mobilisation

²⁷⁶ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 56.

²⁷⁷ *BpPRA*, p. 38; N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", p. 60.

²⁷⁸ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", pp. 62-63.

²⁷⁹ Iusuf Ikhsanovich Ibragimov (1895-1961), joined the Communist Party in 1919.

Department assumed the role of the absent Military Commissariats and through it Tukhachevsky conducted the first mobilisations carried out in a Red Army operational area, another experimental step for 1st Army.

Before this department could make an impact, 1st Army received a timely boost on 27th July. Tukhachevsky and Kuibyshev, back in Inza, received a call by Hughes Telegraph from Lesnoe Annenkovo,²⁸¹ close to Maina Station. This was *Komuch*-occupied territory and they initially suspected a ruse to locate their position. However, on questioning, the caller was identified as Gai, Commander of Sengilei-Syzran' Group,²⁸² which had been cut off from Simbirsk Army Group during the evacuation of Simbirsk on 22nd July. Gai had collected scattered Red units in Sengilei area, commandeered all local resources he could find and assimilated these into his own group. He successfully led this huge train of carts on a 3-day, 150 *versty* march through the Czechoslovak encirclement, without loss,²⁸³ recruiting more people along the way.²⁸⁴ Tukhachevsky instructed Gai to make for Veshkaima and with Kuibyshev, met Gai at Chufarovo Station on 28th July.²⁸⁵ Gai was entrusted with reorganising the 3,000 men of Sengilei and Stavropol' Groups and Tolstii's 1,000-man detachment to form 1st Simbirsk Combined Rifle Division.²⁸⁶ On 9th August, for their valorous efforts in the battles around Simbirsk and Sengilei, the division was renamed Simbirsk Iron Division. On 18th November it became 24th Infantry Division,²⁸⁷ perhaps the first elite Soviet division.

Gai's appearance was vital for Tukhachevsky. The Czechoslovaks still threatened along Simbirsk-Chufarovo and Syzran'-Inza rail lines and lack of numbers left 1st Army HQ vulnerable. Gai' covered Inza from the Simbirsk direction and as he had earlier provided time for the *voenspetsy* mobilisation to take place, so he held off the Czechoslovaks in July and August to allow 1st Army *RVS* to mobilise and organise the lower ranks. Gai's role in the successes of 1st Army should not be underestimated. Whilst Tukhachevsky, Kuibyshev and Kalnins provided the expertise necessary to reform the disparate Red detachments into organised divisions under

²⁸⁰ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", p. 65; N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii", pp. 53-54.

²⁸¹ K. M. Pavlova-Davydova, "Hezabyvaemoe", *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia*, p. 107.

²⁸² *BpPRA*, pp. 38-40.

²⁸³ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 80.

²⁸⁴ G. D. Gai, p. 31.

²⁸⁵ *BpPRA*, p. 40; K. M. Pavlova-Davydova, p. 107.

²⁸⁶ V. V. Kuibyshev, pp. 28-29.

²⁸⁷ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 566.

political control, Gai supplied gritty, determined leadership necessary to hold together the still disorganised troops in a screen, allowing reorganisation to take place. Tukhachevsky would entrust Gai with the toughest tasks in forthcoming military operations and it is no surprise Gai became 1st Army Commander when Tukhachevsky was transferred in December 1918.²⁸⁸ The other candidate for this post, Lacis, was transferred with Inza Division at the same time.

With the already under-equipped 1st Army increasing in number, the need for clothing, supplies and weapons was critical. Again Tukhachevsky had to solve this locally with the formation of a Department for Procurement of Supplies. This was headed by Shteingaus, who had been 1st Army Chief-of-Supplies since its formation and now received a mandate to intercept and impound any loads or stores found within 1st Army's operational area. Stockpiles of Tsarist Army equipment lay in depots, warehouses and railway sidings, undisturbed since demobilisation. The Procurement Department systematically scoured 1st Army's operational area, uncovering a great wealth of resources. As Koritskii related, "What did our procurers not find in alleys and warehouses! There was everything, from textiles to machine-guns and even cannons."²⁸⁹

Alongside supplies for the men, horses were urgently required, both for the formation of mounted infantry (*korvolanty*) as instructed by Vacietis on 23rd July,²⁹⁰ and for transportation. Vacietis identified the lack of cavalry as a major weakness in 1st Army. In his 25th July report to the VVS and Trotsky about the fall of Simbirsk, he reported of White Cossack cavalry suddenly appearing in the flanks and rear of 1st Army forces retreating from Bugul'ma to Simbirsk. Encirclement and cutting of communications caused panic. The retreat became a rout as Reds "abandoned weapons, an armoured-train, military equipment, despite there being no danger, apart from the appearance of enemy cavalry in our flanks and rear".²⁹¹ The importance of cavalry was apparent from the first clashes in the East, but it was not immediately addressed by the Reds, due to the lack of trained cavalymen and horses. *Korvolanty* were a stopgap measure, but "flankfear" was a major problem at this time which only

²⁸⁸ *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo, 1918-1924*, reel 2, RGVA, f. 4, op. 3, d. 26, p. 311.

²⁸⁹ N. I. Koritskii, p. 65.

²⁹⁰ Each army was instructed to create a *korvolanty* group of 400 horses, *DkfKA, Tom. I*, p. 403.

²⁹¹ O. Iu. Kalnin, p. 41, This had come in the wake of the Murav'ev Revolt and was the beginning of the Czechoslovak general offensive. The Red troops, attacking from Bugul'ma and Melekess, confused

proper training, discipline and organisation could combat. Tukhachevsky, as instructed, began to form three cavalry detachments alongside the infantry divisions, but Red Cavalry did not come of age until the emergence of Budennyi's 1st Cavalry Army on Southern Front and Gai's 3rd *Kavkor* on Eastern Front in 1919, when cossacks sympathetic to the Reds were employed and trained further Red cavalrymen.

In summer 1918, horses were more immediately needed for transport purposes, with the need to "de-train" the troops paramount. Lenin emphasised this on 22nd August, having Vacietis telegram Tukhachevsky to ask him to, "...report why 1st Army troops until now are living in wagons and not crossing to field warfare. Take measures to evict the troops from the trains. Let the troops form strings of carts".²⁹²

However, Tukhachevsky had taken these measures already. Vacietis replied to Lenin, Bonch-Bruevich and Trotsky on 24th August,

Military Director Bonch-Bruevich, by assembling from unknown sources, data on the activities and state of morale of army units, places me in a false position. On the basis of his telegram No. 1255 of 21/8 I issued a strong reprimand to 1st Army Commander and received the following answer:

"First Army troops have long since been detrained and have taken up bivouac quarters. I do not know who it is your end that is putting out provocational reports".

I ask that attention be given to the fact that official communications emanating from the highest organ of the War Department without any adequate check-up are unfounded and upset the army. I am reporting this to you in accordance with your instructions communicated to me by Bonch-Bruevich in his same telegram No. 1255 No. 13.²⁹³

This episode displays several aspects of Tukhachevsky's command perfectly. He was far ahead of Moscow expectations in terms of reorganising 1st Army and Moscow did not know which measures had been enacted, illustrating the true isolation and independence of action Tukhachevsky had on Eastern Front. It also displays his willingness to vehemently defend himself against false accusations, no matter from where they originated.

by the conflicting orders sent out by Murav'ev, were routed and abandoned both towns, retreating to Simbirsk, leaving the railway line to the town unguarded and open; *DkfKA, Tom I*, pp. 405-406.

²⁹² Nikulin dates the telegram as 1st August, but this appears to be the one sent by Bonch-Bruevich on 21st August, which Vacietis relayed to Tukhachevsky on Lenin's instructions, L. Nikulin, p. 57; J. Meijer, ed. *The Trotsky Papers, Vol. I*, pp. 108-111.

²⁹³ J. Meijer, ed. *The Trotsky Papers, Vol. I*, pp. 108-111.

Similarly, Vacietis criticised Tukhachevsky on 21st July, ordering him, "...to stay in the Army HQ and lead the troops and do not bolt around the rear".²⁹⁴ Tukhachevsky strongly replied that he spent most of his time in the front areas, but had to travel to Penza to reform broken units and mobilise artillery and engineers. With no reply to this, Tukhachevsky sent a second telegram with Kuibyshev's backing, asking that restrictions on his movement be lifted. Vacietis replied, confirming this. Such incidents would recur throughout the Civil War.

Despite the above dispute, a major step towards reorganisation and regularisation of 1st Army was ceasing to fight by *eshelonnaia voina* tactics, removing troops from the trains. To defeat a mobile force with cavalry, mobility outwith the restrictions of the railway lines was required. Tukhachevsky had already advocated the use of the Volga, Kama and other waterways as alternative transport routes, more reliable than the wrecked railway system, but overland transport was required if Red forces were to push the Czechoslovaks back behind the Volga.

The use of peasant carts, as suggested above by Lenin, was the solution and Tukhachevsky wrote about this later.²⁹⁵ Carts were seized by 1st Army, but required horses to pull them. Acquiring these was entrusted to a Special Department of the Procurements Department. Tukhachevsky followed Vacietis' instructions to buy further horses and carts from the local population, authorising payment instead of seizures, which would have turned the peasantry further towards *Komuch*.²⁹⁶

However, Tukhachevsky recalled Red forces merely changed from "movement by rail" to "movement by wire" - telegraph communications.²⁹⁷ Hughes Telegraph was the most common form of communication used during the Civil War and difficulties associated with this would be significant in several of Tukhachevsky's operations. This had already been mentioned by Vacietis in his 25th July report. The use of cavalry to encircle and cut telegraph wires to destroy enemy communications was a tactic used by all sides during the Russian Civil War. Tukhachevsky used it to great effect, but was also on the receiving end.

These reorganisational measures were all taken in the final week of July with 1st Army *RVS* envisaging 1st Army being capable of military action by the end of

²⁹⁴ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, p. 12.

²⁹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, Tom I, pp. 45-46.

²⁹⁶ *DkfKA*, Tom. I, pp. 405-406.

August.²⁹⁸ However, before they could take proper effect, events outwith Tukhachevsky's control again hampered his efforts.

The Czechoslovaks, regrouping after taking Simbirsk, captured Kazan' on 6th-7th August, and with it the Tsarist gold reserve, evacuated here from Samara by Kuibyshev and Gai, in June. Vacietis barely escaped when most of the *voenspetsy* in Kazan', whom he had suspected upon assuming command, but not had time to replace, defected to the Czechoslovaks. This left him with 120 of his Latvians to shoot their way out of Eastern Front HQ and flee Kazan'. He desperately despatched orders to Eastern Front Armies, urging a counter-offensive. Tukhachevsky received a flurry of orders from 3rd-11th August to make a second attack on Simbirsk.²⁹⁹ Spahr mistakenly dates the first two attacks on Simbirsk as occurring on 3rd and 9th August, but all orders issued here related to only the second attack. The first attack, as has been demonstrated, occurred immediately after the Czechoslovak occupation, on 22nd July. Tukhachevsky's recollections and the documentary evidence confirm this.³⁰⁰

Moscow, not under-estimating the danger a second time, reacted swiftly. Lenin wrote to Eastern Front *RVS*, declaring, "Now **the whole** fate of the revolution stands on *one* map: swift victory over the Czechoslovaks on the Kazan'-Ural-Samara Front. Everything depends on this".³⁰¹ Trotsky himself left for Eastern Front the day after Kazan' fell, his command train packed with around fifty of the most fervent, effective Communist Party agitators, amongst them S. I. Gusev.³⁰² Trotsky arrived at Sviiashsk Station, met the retreating Vacietis and began work to stabilise the Red line. He appointed Slaven 5th Army Commander and started reorganisational work of the broken Red units into 5th Army.³⁰³

Trotsky's arrival at Sviiashsk, where he remained until 30th August, when he returned to Moscow after the shooting of Lenin,³⁰⁴ was a turning-point for Eastern Front. It witnessed a severe stiffening in methods used to organise and hold together

²⁹⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 gody", p. 82.

²⁹⁸ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armia...", p. 58.

²⁹⁹ *DkfKA*, Tom. I, pp. 419-426; *DGkKA*, pp. 107-108.

³⁰⁰ W. J. Spahr, *Stalin's Lieutenants: A Study of Command Under Duress*, (Novato, CA, 1997), p. 67; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 gody", p. 81.

³⁰¹ *DGkKA*, p. 106.

³⁰² L. D. Trotsky, *My Life, an attempt at an autobiography*, (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp. 398-399.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 398.

³⁰⁴ Lenin was shot and wounded by two bullets fired by a Left SR sympathiser Fania Kaplan whilst leaving the Mikhel'son Factory after giving a speech to workers there, *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo, 1918-1924*, reel 38, *RGVA*, f. 4, op. 3, d. 201, pp. 4-5.

Red units. Tukhachevsky had set up tribunals on 1st July and had used them in his mobilisations and almost certainly after the Murav'ev Revolt, when any collaborators would have been tried and executed. Also as Tukhachevsky himself relates of the fighting in the East, "For a long time prisoners were not taken by either side".³⁰⁵ Civil War fighting was of an especially bitter, savage nature and Tukhachevsky acted no differently in this respect than any other leader during the conflict, a fact glossed over by Soviet sources. Trotsky's arrival in August, however, sparked an even more widespread employment of the tribunals' arbitrary powers, especially with regards to Red Army men. Tukhachevsky did not have the position or clout to carry out repressive discipline towards serving men, especially serving communists, still being regarded partly as a *voenspetsy*, despite his Communist Party membership. However, introducing repressive measures to ensure Red Army men fought,³⁰⁶ Trotsky later recalled,

The situation before Kazan' changed beyond recognition. Heterogeneous detachments became regular units, buttressed by worker-communists from Petrograd, Moscow and other places. The regiments stiffened up. Inside the units, the commissaries acquired the importance of revolutionary leaders, of direct representatives of the dictatorship. The tribunals demonstrated to everyone that revolution, when threatened by mortal danger, demands the highest sacrifice. Propaganda, organisation, revolutionary example and repression produced the necessary change in a few weeks. A vacillating, unreliable and crumbling mass was transformed into a real army. Our artillery had emphatically established its superiority. Our flotilla controlled the river. Our airmen dominated the air. No longer did I doubt that we would take Kazan'.³⁰⁷

Trotsky announced this hardening of method on 8th August, authorising,

...the setting up at Murom, Arzamas and Sviiazhsk, of concentration camps for the imprisonment of suspicious agitators, counter-revolutionary officers, saboteurs, parasites and speculators, other than those who are to be shot at the scene of their crimes or else sentenced by the Military Revolutionary Tribunal to other punishments. I warn Soviet officials in all areas where military operations are in progress, and in the zone of military movements, that we shall be doubly exacting towards them. The Soviet Republic will punish its negligent and criminal servants no less severely than its enemies. The country's terrible situation obliges us to take terrible measures.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "*Pervaia armiia v 1918*", p. 83.

³⁰⁶ This was cast up against him in the 1920s by the Stalin faction during the intra-Party struggles, condemning Trotsky as traitorous in his behaviour, executing innocent and loyal communists.

³⁰⁷ L. D. Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 407-408.

³⁰⁸ L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed, Vol. I*, p. 310.

Trotsky set new standards for revolutionary discipline, but his swift reorganisational work mirrored Tukhachevsky's achievements with 1st Army. Soviet sources do not record Tukhachevsky and Trotsky working closely at this time. However, it would seem likely that Tukhachevsky was at Sviiazhsk almost as soon as Trotsky arrived there, obviously summoned by him to report on the situation, discuss how best to proceed and receive new orders, including introducing repressive measures towards Red Army men. The evidence is not concrete, but centres around 4th Latvian Regiment and the punishment of its Commander and Commissar. This incident turned out to be crucial for Eastern Front, with Trotsky and Tukhachevsky both in mortal danger from mutinous troops.

4th Latvian Division had been fighting around Syzran' for two months with no respite.³⁰⁹ Trotsky described them, "Of all the regiments of the Latvian Division that had been pulled to pieces, this was the worst".³¹⁰ This is confirmed by a series of telegrams sent from 20th-22nd June by Vacietis to 4th Latvian Regiment and Tukhachevsky, urging it to advance from Inza to Simbirsk as part of the first attack on Simbirsk, immediately after the Czechoslovak occupation. 4th Regiment refused to advance after holding a regimental meeting and Tukhachevsky was criticised by Vacietis on 22nd July for altering his order and instructing the Latvians to guard Ruzaevka, which was not under threat. Possibly Tukhachevsky was reluctant to commit the Latvians when he knew 1st Army was not ready to attack. Vacietis threatened 4th Latvian Regiment with Military Tribunals and reiterated the order to attack. However, with the attack on Simbirsk collapsing quickly into a rout, neither of these seems to have occurred, although Kobozev stressed the need to reform the Popov detachment of 4th Latvian Regiment.³¹¹

When the second attack on Simbirsk was launched on 8th-9th August, the Commander and Regimental Committee of 4th Latvian Regiment again demanded exemption from this stating, "unless the regiment is relieved at once "consequences for the revolution would follow"". ³¹² Trotsky summoned the Commander and Chairman of the Regimental Committee to his train and declared them under arrest for

³⁰⁹ B. I. Chistov, *"Komandarm-Kommunist"*, p. 47.

³¹⁰ L. D. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 400.

³¹¹ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, pp. 10-18.

³¹² L. D. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 400.

this mutinous behaviour.³¹³ Chistov relates that the Commander and Commissar were "admonished".³¹⁴ Chairman of the Regimental Committee Ozol' and member of the Regimental Committee Saulut' were in fact sentenced on 20th August 1918 by Revolutionary Field Tribunal to five years exclusion from Soviet organisations and three years imprisonment.³¹⁵ Trotsky recalled that if the two arrestees or their men had resisted, Sviiazhsk and its bridge over the Volga would have had to be surrendered and his command train would have been captured by the enemy, resulting in the possible collapse of Eastern Front and a threat to Moscow. However, he recalled that, "...the arrest came off safely. I announced the commitment of the commander of the regiment to trial before the revolutionary tribunal. The regiment remained at its post. The commander was merely sentenced to prison".³¹⁶

However, Chistov recalled the "admonishment" of the Commander and Commissar did not help the situation,

But here amongst the Latvian Rifles appeared the Army Commander and in all their hearing he explained that if they would not advance, then he would go at the head of their commanders and lead them himself to help 1st Latvian Regiment, fighting in Simbirsk in an enemy encirclement. The Riflemen wavered, began to hold a mass meeting. 170 men together with their commanders and political workers close up around Tukhachevsky. In this way it turned out that the detachment began without delay to load onto their *eshelon*. This decisively changed the mood of the rest. 4th Latvian Regiment again was battleworthy.³¹⁷

Therefore, Tukhachevsky played a critical role in the survival of Eastern Front, preventing a Latvian mutiny which could have resulted in Trotsky's and Tukhachevsky's arrest or death either by the Latvians or Czechoslovaks and Whites. Chistov does not mention Trotsky because the latter was never rehabilitated and a non-person. Why Trotsky does not mention Tukhachevsky is a little less clear. Possibly he did not wish to admit Tukhachevsky saved him as it would detract from the overall sense which Trotsky purveys that he alone turned the tide in the East. To develop this further, it is possible the reorganisational work Trotsky carried out on 5th Army was based on that already achieved by Tukhachevsky with 1st Army. It would have been logical for Trotsky to ask the man he had despatched eastwards how he had

³¹³ Ibid. p. 400.

³¹⁴ B. I. Chistov, "*Komandarm-kommunist*", p. 47.

³¹⁵ *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo, 1918-1924*, reel 39, *RGVA*, f. 33987, op. 1, d. 439, pp. 53 & 82-85.

³¹⁶ L. D. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 401.

achieved success with 1st Army, so this could be duplicated with 5th Army. However, to admit this would take even more from Trotsky's claim to have reorganised 5th Army before it took Kazan'. It is also possible Trotsky did not mention Tukhachevsky because at the time of writing *My Life* (1930), he did not wish to discredit Tukhachevsky by saying they had been so close, as Trotsky hoped Tukhachevsky would lead a coup to overthrow Stalin, with or without Trotsky's knowledge and collaboration. However, if Trotsky did not mention Tukhachevsky later, Gul' suggests that in 1918 Trotsky criticised Eastern Front commanders and commissars such as Lacis, Lashevich and Smilga of inaction but set one example, the "glorious name of Tukhachevsky".³¹⁸ Smirnov produces a personal letter from Trotsky to Tukhachevsky as further evidence of their closeness.³¹⁹ Whether this occurred or not, Tukhachevsky and Trotsky worked closely on Eastern Front. Tukhachevsky took more severe actions with Trotsky to back him up. Trotsky had summoned Tukhachevsky to discuss how they should deal with the worsening Czechoslovak menace. Whilst here, Tukhachevsky had risked his own life and had saved Trotsky's. Trotsky would have expected no less from a loyal communist, but Tukhachevsky was not essentially so. This display of loyalty, coming so soon after the Murav'ev Affair, must have truly cemented Tukhachevsky's position vis-a-vis the top Communist Party leadership.

As a result of the 4th Latvian Regiment episode, Trotsky commanded,

I give warning that if any unit retreats without orders, the first to be shot down will be the commissary of the unit, the next the commander. Brave and gallant soldiers will be appointed in their places. Cowards, dastards and traitors will not escape the bullet. This I solemnly promise in the presence of the entire Red Army.³²⁰

For this, Trotsky introduced *zagraditel'nye otriady* (blocking battalions). Volkogonov claimed Tukhachevsky used these first in August 1918,³²¹ but the archival source he cited does not specifically say this, with Trotsky referring in 1921 to previous use of "blocking detachments", but no more.³²² Volkogonov possibly had another source to back this up, but he did not cite it. However, if this did occur in summer 1918, Tukhachevsky probably first used "blocking detachments" in the

³¹⁷ B. I. Chistov, "*Komandarm-kommunist*", pp. 47-48.

³¹⁸ R. Gul', p. 82.

³¹⁹ G. V. Smirnov, p. 247.

³²⁰ L. D. Trotsky, *My Life*, p.401.

³²¹ D. Volkogonov, *Trotsky, The Eternal Revolutionary*, (London, 1996), p. 179.

³²² RGVA, f. 33987, d. 420(3), op. 1, p. 350.

second or third attack on Simbirsk. Severe measures were now employed with Tukhachevsky again the one to experiment.

Whilst employing these measures, Tukhachevsky still used more conventional methods of persuasion, cajoling troops personally as with 4th Latvian Division. Chistov related a similar incident occurring with Ufa Engineering Detachment, which had retreated from Ufa to Simbirsk and wished to retreat further, with morale at a very low ebb. The detachment commander complained to Tukhachevsky about his men, technical troops, being employed as infantry, and demanded they be sent to Kazan' for re-equipping.³²³

This situation must have struck Tukhachevsky with a certain irony. He had just stressed the need to develop the technical ability of the Red Army to compensate for troop shortages, but here was an engineering unit used as infantry because of this shortage. However, he apparently explained the desperation of the position to the unit declaring,

As Army Commander and communist, I consider that the reasons you give do not free you from your duty to defend Soviet power in Simbirsk at this very critical moment. Until now I have never heard members of our Party refusing to fight for the Soviets.

And so forwards! I shall go together with you!"

This speech worked and the Ufa Engineering Detachment did indeed fight on the approaches to Simbirsk.³²⁴

However, this mixture of persuasive and repressive measures was not enough to overcome 1st Army's lack of preparation and discipline. The second attack on Simbirsk, launched on 8th August, fared little better than the first, collapsing into another chaotic rout, although Velikanov's 2nd Simbirsk Regiment did retain its discipline during the retreat, possibly indicating some reorganisational progress. Tukhachevsky ordered Simbirsk Division to break off the attack and withdraw to its starting positions around Chufarovo Station, which it did by 16th August,³²⁵ but this order produced an extraordinary response from Tukhachevsky's superiors.

Eastern Front *RVS* member Kobozev hurried to Tukhachevsky's command train and, with the support of Kalnins, demanded he launch the attack once more. Upon refusing to do so, Tukhachevsky was threatened with one of the tribunals he had been instrumental in forming. Kobozev accused him of treachery similar to that of

³²³ B. I. Chistov, "V tiazhelyi dni...", p. 46.

³²⁴ Ibid, p. 47.

Murav'ev at Simbirsk, hampering the Red attack and withdrawing units during battle. With Kalnins, he telegraphed Trotsky and Vacietis. The matter was temporarily resolved by Kuibyshev backing Tukhachevsky against the two other commissars and explaining retreat was necessary, with the troops in disarray and no state to fight. Koritskii suggests however, that Trotsky and Vacietis supported Kobozev and Kalnins and again threatened Tukhachevsky with a tribunal if he did not attack. At this point, Kuibyshev contacted Lenin via Aralov of the *RVSR*, explaining the hopeless position of 1st Army and the wisdom of Tukhachevsky's decision. Aralov replied, with Lenin's direct backing, for Tukhachevsky to complete the reorganisational work he had been despatched to do, before committing 1st Army to direct military action again.³²⁶

This extraordinary sequence of events displays vividly the tension, panic and mistrust which gripped the Red military leadership in the East. Tukhachevsky, who had reported Murav'ev for hampering reorganisational efforts, refused to join his revolt and had nearly been executed for it, was now accused of similarly treacherous behaviour. Not only was he accused by Kobozev, who perhaps did not know him that well and Vacietis, with whom Tukhachevsky did not have the best of working relationships,³²⁷ but also by Kalnins, with whom he had worked closely for the past six weeks, and Trotsky, whose life he had just saved. Such were the conditions on Eastern Front in summer 1918. No one was truly trusted and everyone was judged only by their last act. This was a moment of acute danger for Tukhachevsky. Trotsky had Blagonravov removed for merely talking of desertion (although he escaped a tribunal) and had ordered the execution of Red Commanders and Commissars by this time.³²⁸ If Tukhachevsky had not been backed by Kuibyshev and Lenin, he may well have been committed to a tribunal, which could have meant death or imprisonment and an end to his career. The backing Tukhachevsky received from Lenin further supports the suggestion the two had met before Tukhachevsky travelled eastwards. It is doubtful whether Lenin would have intervened on Tukhachevsky's behalf

³²⁵ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voyny...", pp. 59-62 ; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918", p. 81.

³²⁶ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voyny...", pp. 70-71.

³²⁷ See Chapter IV for a fuller treatment of the Tukhachevsky-Vacietis relationship.

³²⁸ On 14th August 1918, Trotsky authorised a commission of inquiry headed by Rozengol'ts into the conduct of the Communist Political Commissar Panteleev during the battle for Kazan' on 6th-7th August and authorised Panteleev's execution. He had stolen a ship and tried to desert with his men down the Volga, J. Meijer, ed. *The Trotsky Papers*, vol. I, pp. 154-157, 252-253 & 362-365; L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, Vol. I, p. 313; Rozengol'ts, *Bor'ba za Ural i Sibir'*, p. 22.

otherwise, overruling staunch Bolshevik commissars Kobozev and Kalnins, Supreme Commander Vacietis and Trotsky. This also illustrates Trotsky's ruthlessness and motivation to make the Red Army succeed, with its progression and success outweighing the life of the man who had just saved him from the Latvian mutiny. The reaction to Tukhachevsky's decision from the political commissars, a purely military decision to pull forces back from Simbirsk, would have certainly contributed to his conviction that unified command was urgently required for the Red forces, replacing collegial command involving one *voenspets* and two political commissars. Tukhachevsky would suggest this in his December 1918 letter to Iurenev and was very vocal on this subject throughout the Civil War, which undoubtedly hampered his acceptance by many hard-line communists such as Voroshilov and Stalin, who viewed such suggestions as reactionary and "Napoleonic".

The tribunal episode was another escape for Tukhachevsky, but like those before, it did have positive results. The way was now clear to complete the reorganisational work required on 1st Army. Whilst being freed from attacking the Czechoslovaks and Whites directly, Tukhachevsky still had to aid 5th Army, which was even less organised than 1st Army, in stalling the Czechoslovak's advance from Kazan'. This was a far more realistic objective for August 1918 and matched the plans he had already laid out for Simbirsk Division at Veshkaima and Chufarovo. It meant that by the following month, 1st Army would be in a position to switch from the defensive and finally attack effectively to retake Simbirsk, supporting the main Red thrust by 5th Army to Kazan', launching Tukhachevsky on his Civil War campaign career. Taking Simbirsk, was only a supplementary operation to the main object of capturing Kazan', but this turned out to be another stroke of luck for Tukhachevsky. Simbirsk was Lenin's birthplace and the prestige Tukhachevsky gained for capturing it added further to the trust he had built up with the Bolshevik leadership, but also enhanced his reputation throughout Russia as a Red Commander of note. Trotsky described it as a "...historic page in the history of the socialist revolution".³²⁹

³²⁹ *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo, 1918-1924*, reel 38, RGVA, f. 4, op. 3, d. 200, pp. 4-5.

Conclusion: Who Was Tukhachevsky by September 1918?

By September 1918, Tukhachevsky was firmly embedded as 1st Army Commander of Eastern Front, or as firmly embedded as one could be in the tense, paranoid atmosphere of the escalating Civil War. He had achieved this position through a variety of reasons, circumstance and luck. The assertion that he achieved his position because he was a rare “commander-communist” and had Trotsky’s backing is only partially true. Joining the Communist Party was a crucial step, but the opportunities this offered had to be maintained by gaining the trust of the Bolshevik Party and Red Army hierarchies. The only way to achieve this was to perform well in the tasks allocated to him.

Tukhachevsky did this as Military Inspector with the Military Department and as Military Commissar on the Western Screens, so much so that the written work he produced was used to help formulate official state military policy. Having proved himself in the administrative background, albeit involving a tour of frontline areas, and personally meeting Trotsky, Lenin and many other Bolshevik and military luminaries, Tukhachevsky was deemed the man to reorganise the ailing Eastern Front in face of the *Komuch* offensives. He was sent to implement his recommendations on the frontline, an extraordinary situation. He would later write “Armies could only be raised in areas where uprisings had already occurred.”³³⁰ This was exactly what Tukhachevsky had to do on the Eastern Front in 1918. No help was received from Moscow and he had to reorganise completely disparate partisan, guerilla detachments into a regular army. Tukhachevsky readily acknowledged the help he received from his Eastern Front colleagues - Kuibyshev, Kalnins, Gai and Vareikis - and emphasised the pivotal role played by Communists in creating the disciplined 1st Revolutionary Army. However, these were local efforts, not coordinated from Moscow. Once Red Army organisers were despatched to Eastern Front, they were isolated, having to build a team to survive and create Red armed forces using only local men and resources. The military commissariats did not exist in practical terms and no apparatus for mobilisation was in place. Tukhachevsky had to create Revolutionary Military Field Tribunals, mobilisation panels and departments for gathering supplies, horses and resources for his army within their operational area. Creation of the Red

³³⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, “Strategiia Natsional’naia i Klassovaia”, pp. 33-34.

Army was not actually directed from Moscow by Trotsky as previous accounts claim. The Bolshevik Party and military leadership had vacillated and argued over how to build a new army and where to do so, in the rear or at the front. The point was eventually reached where the Czechoslovak Revolt led to people like Tukhachevsky having to do this on-the-spot, whilst waging the Civil War simultaneously, a situation of extreme danger and isolation. Trotsky's biggest contribution was also made as a local organiser at Sviiazhsk in August 1918, but although intensifying discipline, the organisational methods he used were probably those Tukhachevsky had experimented with in July.

Tukhachevsky's contribution with the other original organisers of 1st Army, to the overall formation of the Red Army was immense. Personally he produced his May recommendations, and with his 1st Army colleagues, showed these to be correct evaluations of how the Red Army should be set up in frontline areas. The structure which emerged for Eastern Front was copied for Southern Front and indeed for the whole Civil War arena. Tukhachevsky played a crucial role in this from the beginning, laying the foundations upon which the Red Army was built. This was the reason for his joining the Bolshevik Party in April, to play a major role in building a powerful new army to defend Russia and take on the world. He had achieved this in the most dangerous of areas on the 1918 Eastern Front and had proved himself amongst the most capable commanders the Red Army possessed. He had successfully shown the way in organisational terms, but had only limited combat opportunities to date. To prove himself a capable Red Army Commander, a better candidate for promotion than the other Eastern Front Army Commanders, he would have to be successful in combat.

In chapters III and IV, I shall examine Tukhachevsky's command performance in the Russian Civil War from September 1918-April 1920 and assess his and others' evaluations to see if patterns of command emerged and if he displayed further evidence, as he had already in summer 1918, of his military career and theories to come.

Chapter III: Conventional Commander in the Class War - I: Analysis and Early Command Experience: August 1918-March 1919

The Seeds of "Deep Battle"

On 26th January 1926, Tukhachevsky, as Red Army Chief-of-Staff, commissioned members of the Red Army Staff to compile a work to which he contributed and edited, *Budushchaia voina*, (Future War). This was completed by the Staff's Intelligence Directorate and assessed the Soviet Union's position in the late 1920s viv-à-vis the capitalist world. Possible threats and likely scenarios of how a future conflict might begin and develop were outlined in detail.¹

In the preface, citations from Tukhachevsky's 1926 commissioning directive were included. He wrote,

From the time of the Civil War many statements have arisen about a future revolutionary war, how that is fashionable, based on revolutionary spirit etc. Of course, not many now indulge in such sins. In essence, on such positions of manifested revolutionary idealism, nothing general in Marxism exists. However, some preconditions for such conclusions all the same existed in the period of ruined industry during the civil war, but now, as the growth and reestablishment of our economy reaches pre-war levels in productive forces, we stand before another task.

Industrial development meant the Soviets would have to fight a "cultured war" with "massed artillery, asphyxiating gas etc - with all the ensuing strategic, organisational and mobilisation consequences".²

From this it could appear Tukhachevsky believed any lessons learned during the Civil War were obsolete next to the industrially-based total warfare of the Great War. In their studies on Tukhachevsky's involvement in the build-up of the Soviet Union military-industrial complex from the late 1920s to his execution in 1937, Lennart Samuelson and Sally Stoecker suggest Tukhachevsky looked to the Great War, rather than the Russian Civil War for the answers.³ Samuelson emphasises the final years,

¹ *Budushchaia voina* was printed in only 80 copies, which were restricted to the military and Party hierarchy, but these were destroyed after Tukhachevsky's execution, the only surviving copy held by *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv* (hereafter *RGVA*), M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Budushchaia voina*, (Moscow, 1928), (from publishers note).

² M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Budushchaia voina*, pp. 12-13.

³ L. Samuelson, *Plans For Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and military-economic planning, 1925-1941*. (London, 2000), p. 24; S. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Innovation*. (Oxford, 1998), pp. 18-19 & 168-169.

stressing the line suggested by Tukhachevsky in the above quote, whilst Stoecker points to Tukhachevsky writing in *Budushchaia voina* that the early years of the Great War were more important than the Civil War for manoeuvre warfare.

In a secret *Doklad ob oborone SSSR* (Report about the defence of the USSR), completed in August 1926, Tukhachevsky echoed an *RVS*R suggestion to begin a Four-Year Plan of military construction, as he felt "At the present time neither the USSR, nor Red Army are ready for war".⁴ However, he emphasised that this weakness came not only from the need to modernise the army technically, but also because the majority of the Red Army had not fought in the Civil War and 90-95% of soldiers were peasants, excepting the fleet and specialists, of whom 20-40% were workers. He insisted,

With discipline ensured - it is possible to consider the mass of troops as wholly Soviet. However, under present conditions, there is a serious danger that in the occurrence of war, as a whole the common masses are not instilled from the political side. The basis for this is as follows:

...Need for strict discipline in the army/correct internal interrelations, successful political training and absence of any kind of negative phenomena.

Presence of strong politically-conscious Red Army activists... Most committed Party members should compose 25-30% of all Red Army staff.⁵

Tukhachevsky based this on his Civil War experiences of how the army had functioned well under battle and probably how its political core had deteriorated under the New Economic Policy years, without the activist drive of the war years.⁶ He felt the Civil War mentality of politically-driven discipline should be restored by reintroducing the idea of a politically-inculcated activist core. I would argue that Tukhachevsky combined this and other aspects of his Civil War experience with knowledge of the Great War, military history, industrialisation and weapons development, to formulate his theories during the 1920s which led to *Glubokoi boi* ("Deep Battle").

"Deep Battle" was developed to provide the answer to creating and exploiting a breakthrough in depth of enemy defensive lines, thereby avoiding another static

⁴ *RGVA*, f. 33988, op. 2, d. 671, pp. 58 & 140. This report did not go down well with Stalin and was restricted. For more on the evolution of the Four Year Plan, see D. R. Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926-1933*. (Kansas, 2000).

⁵ *RGVA*, f. 33988, op. 2, d. 671, p. 132.

⁶ The Soviet Union operated under the New Economic Policy from 1921-1928.

positional war like the Great War. Tactics and weaponry utilised during the Great War such as machine-gun and artillery use were studied, as were developments to combat these in the closing years of the War, especially tanks. These were intertwined with later developments in aviation and innovation, such as the use of paratroopers, to produce "Deep Battle". However, Tukhachevsky's Civil War experiences were also important and played a crucial part in his operational formulation for "Deep Battle". The importance he attached to these and the value of the lessons learned are evident by the frequent reference to them in his writings during the 1920s. His involvement in the manoeuvre warfare of the Great War Eastern Front in 1914-15 was crucial, but he was only a 2nd Lieutenant at that time. The command experience of the Civil War, when he was able to put his theoretical ideas of warfare into practice, was possibly *the* vital link in his military development, and it would be rash to discount these years.

In 1926, the same year he commissioned *Budushchaia voina*, Tukhachevsky published an essay entitled *Voprosy sovremennoi strategii* (Questions of Contemporary Strategy). In this he explained,

Campaigns have lost the characteristic appearance they formerly had. They may characterise the entire period of the war, a part of it, or they may coincide with a series of successive operations.

Special attention must be directed to operations. Whereas contemporary wars are waged with large numbers of troops and are dragged out over long periods of time, it does not in the least signify... that we must disregard the art of destroying the enemy's armed forces.

This is one of the basic skills to which our military art and our strategy must direct attention... It must be repeated that the imperialist war with its catastrophic consequences to capitalism has brought great instability to the question. Now we often meet with uncertainties: Is it possible at the present time to annihilate an armed force, is it necessary to concern ourselves with such tasks, is this essential, isn't this frivolous? Of course not. War would be senseless, it would be impossible to wage war if there were no armed forces... prepared to crush the enemy. These armed forces are essential for defending every state even in that case when war is waged by all the people. The absence of determined armed forces may prove fatal for any state. The more skilled troops are in the business of annihilating enemy armed forces, the more economical it will be to wage war. This is the basic principle of military training. And we should train our Red Army and nurture it on these principles and impregnate it thoroughly with these ideas. *From the experience of the Civil War we grew accustomed to active operations, but we must continue the work, deepen it, perfect ourselves in the art of annihilating the enemy. And this art, I repeat, is embodied in the operation or in a series of successive operations.* [My italics]

Operations must not be conducted anarchically without ideological ideals. We must all be imbued with a single general method. Our assertion is not a fruitless cry about the necessity of creating a unified military doctrine. Such a doctrine from year to year percolates more and more to the depth of our Red Army. We have service regulations, in which are presented in black and white the completely defined methods of both operational and tactical art. However, we are preparing ourselves, we are perfecting ourselves and must continue in this work and further.

It is necessary to bear in mind that under contemporary conditions of waging war it may not be possible to annihilate the enemy in a single operation. The enemy frequently will slip away from an attack. Therefore, it will be necessary to conduct operations one after the other, until the enemy is destroyed, even if it is at his last line of resistance. And this line is located where areas providing direct support to the war begin. We must perfect ourselves in this art of conducting operations, continuously practice and learn the process of conducting them sequentially... [My italics]

We must recognise that we are confronted with difficult, prolonged wars; we must be able to distinguish the different periods of a war, to be able to successively, systematically liquidate a capitalist coalition...

It must be remembered that the art of annihilating enemy armed forces is the basic condition of the economical and successful conduct of war, and we must constantly perfect ourselves both in this art, and in all the arts of strategy.⁷

Tukhachevsky, whilst stressing the need to develop and deepen a unified military theory in light of the evolution of total warfare, still emphasised the overriding need to annihilate enemy armies. He wrote of this in another 1926 article *Voina* (War) in which he compared contemporary tactics with those of Napoleon's, writing that these had extended from the "tactics of the theatre of operations". He continued,

The contemporary operation consists in concentrating the necessary manpower for delivering an attack and launching continuous, uninterrupted attacks by these forces in great depth. The nature of contemporary weapons, modern battles is such that it is impossible to destroy an enemy force by a single blow in a single day's encounter. The engagement in a modern operation is expanded into a series of battles not only frontally, but also in depth until the enemy is dealt a final, destructive blow or the advancing troops have exhausted themselves.⁸

This was Tukhachevsky's advocacy of the strategy of annihilation as compared to the strategy of attrition. This debate waged within the Soviet military hierarchy throughout the 1920s and only by the end of the decade did Tukhachevsky gain the

⁷ M. N. Tukhachesvkiy, "Voprosy sovremennoi strategii", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I, 1919-1927*. (Moscow, 1964), pp. 260-261.

upper hand in promoting the goal of the complete destruction of the enemy force. Tukhachevsky, Triandafillov, Uborevich and others developed "Deep Battle" to do so. Therefore, whilst commissioning *Budushchaia voina* to appraise the most likely war scenarios and ways to emerge victorious from a war on the scale of the Great War, Tukhachevsky was striving to develop the operational side of "Deep Battle" and specifically the use of successive operations, to enable this victory to be accomplished. This would not be by an "attrition" strategy similar to the Great War. In *Voprosy sovremennoi strategii*, he stated the operational roots were to be found in the Civil War, during which the Red Army had grown "...accustomed to active operations", but this had to be developed and "deepened" in light of technological advances. The Civil War contained the roots of his military thinking and was clearly still important to him in 1926.

Also published in 1926 was *Armeiskaia operatsiia: Rabota komandovaniia i polevogo upravleniia* (Army Operations: Work of Command and Field Control), which Tukhachevsky edited and wrote with Varfolomeev and Shilovskii.⁹ This was compiled from work conducted within the Red Army Military Academy in 1924-25 on a course entitled *Vedenie operatsii* (Conduct of operations). Tukhachevsky lectured on this course and contributed his work *Voprosy vysshego komandovaniia* (Questions of Higher Command).¹⁰ This covered tasks on the strategical and tactical level, but also included operational art, which was evolving to link the two. Tukhachevsky wrote of the need to develop successive operations over distances of 180-350 kms to fully rout enemy armies. However, he warned of the dangers of strategic overstretch and the need to fully develop the rear to avoid the transport and supply problems experienced by Napoleon in 1812 at Moscow and the Red Army in 1920 at Warsaw. Tactically, he mentioned *glubokie reidy* (deep raids) by cavalry, referring to actions of 3rd Cavalry Corps during the Polish-Soviet War of 1920 and

⁸ Mikhail Tukhachevsky: *A Collection of Articles by the Red Army's Leading Military Theoretician*. (May, 1983), p. 64.

⁹ Evgenii Aleksandrovich Shilovskii (1889-1952) served on Western Front with Tukhachevsky during the Polish-Soviet War.

¹⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Armeiskaia operatsiia: Rabota komandovaniia i polevogo upravleniia*. (Moscow, 1926), pp. 7-12. *Voprosy vysshego komandovaniia* was published in 1924 and is included in M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I*, pp. 185-197; A translation is provided in R. Simpkin & Erickson, J., *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii*. (London; Washington, 1987), pp. 88-101; The 1926 publication was the series of lectures Tukhachevsky delivered at the Academy, V. O. Daines, "Istoricheskie portrety: Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky", *Voprosy Istorii*. No. 10, (Oct. 1989), p. 53.

the use of concentric offensives, as employed by Germany in 1914 to surround and defeat Samsonov's and Rennenkampf's Russian Armies.¹¹ Although the lectures and book were prepared in 1924, before the Soviet economy had reached sufficient levels to allow expansive military development, Tukhachevsky believed the ideas in them were still important to study and learn from in 1926 and beyond, as the military-industrial complex emerged. Technology and industry may have evolved to alter the face of warfare, but the ideas behind the operational side of "Deep Battle" originated from past military campaigns including, prominently, the Civil War.

The continuities from the Civil War to "Deep Battle" are apparent in Tukhachevsky's 1929 article on the new Red Army Field Regulations, which outlined for the first time the objects of "Deep Battle". This also demonstrated further that he still looked back to the revolutionary fervour engendered in the Red Army during the Civil War in some respects, despite his 1926 directive. In 1929 he wrote,

The class nature of the Red Army is reflected in its structure and content. The tactical art of our troop units is developed around a lofty moral and political core, and is based on mobility, boldness, and constant pressure. The force inherent in the class nature of the training conducted by our party is all-powerful and is the strength of the Red Army: "Teamwork in action and political stability in our units, disorganisation (demoralisation) of the enemy's fighting power, and calling upon his army and working population in the theatre of operations to join the proletarian revolution of the workers and peasants - all these are very important conditions for beating the enemy.

The spiritual strength of the Red Army is a very powerful weapon in organising a modern battle. The complexity, high degree of mechanisation and intensity of the action demand the highest degree of initiative and the manifestation of heroism on the part of individual troopers and the smallest units. Unless these elements prevail even the most carefully prepared attack can fail.¹²

Later in the article Tukhachevsky echoed Lenin, saying that in a future war against capitalism, "the imperialist war will develop into a civil war", although continuity from his Tsarist Army days is evident when he wrote of the infantry following up artillery preparation to "...destroy the enemy quickly with bayonet and grenade attacks...".¹³

These could be dismissed as mere window dressing for the military regulations, applying the necessary Marxism-Leninism, as we have already seen Tukhachevsky do

¹¹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Armeiskaia operatsiia*. pp. 68-70 & 79-92.

¹² *Mikhail Tukhachevsky: A Collection of Articles*. p. 65.

in 1918. However, in chapters III and IV, I shall examine his Civil War commands to show that by the end of the conflict, he was convinced of the efficacy of a revolutionary doctrine to create and bind a strong internationalist Red Army. He retained this belief, as shown in the above quote, throughout the 1920s, during his "Deep Battle" formulations.

In chapters III and IV, I shall examine Tukhachevsky's Civil War career on several levels. The chronology in Appendix A provides an outline of Tukhachevsky's life and a detailed list of operations he conducted during the Civil War. With reference to this, I shall provide a biographical account of Tukhachevsky's progression during the conflict. To examine his commands I shall use his works, especially *Voina klassov* (War of the Classes), a collection of essays, lectures, letters and polemics published in 1921, but written sporadically from 1919-21 during breathing-spaces in the fighting. *Voina klassov* launched Tukhachevsky's career as a prodigious and much-read military writer. It was an on-the-spot evaluation by the raw, but developing soldier, attempting to understand and evaluate his Civil War experiences in order to improve his own abilities and influence the Red Army as a whole. The fact that it was written at different stages of the Civil War is significant. When a piece was written influenced the subject matter addressed and views expressed. Tukhachevsky analysed various parts of army operations within the Civil War as they emerged during his commands and suggested ways of coping with conditions prevalent to the conflict. In examining Tukhachevsky's Civil War commands chronologically from September 1918-April 1920, a period in which he rose from 1st Army Commander to Acting Caucasian Front Commander, I shall analyse components of *Voina klassov*, when they were written, alongside archival, documentary and memoir sources, to illustrate why he wrote about certain topics at a given time and how accurately he did so. In this way mitigating factors which influenced his performance will be examined: troop numbers; weaponry and resources available; supply and reinforcement; geography and topography; opponents faced; relations with Red Army personnel.

By examining Tukhachevsky's postings in different ways I shall demonstrate the strands which came together to form his overall outlook by the end of the conflict.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 66 & 68.

Initially, I shall concentrate on two operations he conducted whilst Eastern Front 1st Army Commander in autumn 1918. This detailed study of civil warfare at the tactical battlefield level will provide an insight into the type of fighting involved in the Russian Civil War, show Tukhachevsky's adaptability and suitability to command and the early lessons he learned. It will also serve as a template for a broader study of his 1919 5th Army Eastern Front command in chapter IV, when I shall demonstrate how the overall strategy employed to defeat Kolchak, and Tukhachevsky's role in it, was vital in shaping his operational theory. Between these postings, I shall examine intra-Red Army and Bolshevik Party relations and how these affected Tukhachevsky's career in late 1918-early 1919, when he was posted to Southern Front. Events before and after his 8th Army Command posting are more important than the actual combat itself, as disagreements with other personnel predominated, but these are as crucial in determining the evolution of Tukhachevsky's military belief, as the operational experience of 1918 and 1919. The final section of chapter IV will study Tukhachevsky as Acting Caucasian Front Commander in 1920 when he defeated Denikin and directed probably *the* archetypal Civil War operation.

A natural break between chapters III and IV is provided by Tukhachevsky moving from 8th to 5th Army command in March 1919. His command experiences before this were formative and introduced him to the varied strands involved in fighting the Russian Civil War. After March 1919, Tukhachevsky's command career accelerated and witnessed his rise and development into perhaps the prime example of a former *voenspetsy* Red Commander. Although this natural chapter break occurs, conclusions on Tukhachevsky's frontline command career are reserved until the end of chapter IV, analysing this period of his life as a whole.

In studying Tukhachevsky's Civil War commands in such a manner, I shall assess the evolution of his operational command on a tactical and strategical level, how his earlier commands prepared him for the North Caucasus, and formed the operational basis for his Western Front Command during the Soviet-Polish War and the development of "Deep Battle" later.

In doing so, I shall demonstrate how Tukhachevsky's postings matched Moscow's strategy of threat-identification and resource allocation, which saw the best commanders and majority of resources sent to the front prioritised. To set the scene, I shall outline Tukhachevsky's earliest assessments of the Civil War, formulated

throughout 1919 into a cogent argument by December. Whilst examining his commands, Tukhachevsky's observations will be compared to his experiences before December to discuss the roots of his analysis and to decide whether these played a role in his conduct of the 1920 Caucasus campaign.

Tukhachevsky's analysis of the Civil War

On 17th November 1919, Efraim Sklianskii commissioned Tukhachevsky to prepare a report for Lenin and the Communist Party Central Committee, evaluating *voenspetsy* in the Red Army and the likelihood in the near future of raising a Communist Command Staff. Tukhachevsky had just been relieved as 5th Army Commander and the report, which he submitted on 19th November, was based on this command.¹⁴ It contains conclusions drawn from Civil War combat experience, but also hints at clashes with Red Army personnel. These will be examined later, but the report displays how these had become intertwined for Tukhachevsky and how he was prepared to further his views on Red Army organisation through political argument.

Referring to the employment of Tsarist *voenspetsy* at the inception of the Red Army, he wrote that it would be correct to continue this policy if *voenspetsy* were military experts. However, Tukhachevsky dismissed the majority as receiving a limited military education and possessing the cowed lack of initiative typical of Tsarist officers. The only capable *voenspetsy* were those educated after the reshaping of military academies after the Russo-Japanese War and specifically after 1908-10, when foreign (especially German) works were translated and taught. However, most of these young officers had perished in the Imperialist War and the majority of survivors now served Denikin. Some officers had completed shorter command courses during the Great War and although this provided a limited education, Tukhachevsky noted that more good commanders were emerging from this group than older *voenspetsy*. He continued his attack on the latter, noting, "Our old officers are completely ignorant of the bases of Marxism and in no way can or want to understand the class struggle and the need and inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat". This ignorance of Marxism prevented older *voenspetsy* understanding the

concepts underpinning the new class-based army and new forms of warfare involved in the Civil War, necessitating their replacement. However, "Amongst military commissars and junior command staff, many suitable for commanders and other posts exist". Promotion opportunities had to be created for them with only short theoretical courses needed to create unified commanders. The proof of this was provided by 5th Army where,

...already for a long time this slogan was raised [unified Red Commander] and the command staff are all communists, and the military conditions demonstrate its superiority over the generals and old officers.

The great number of untalented *voenspetsy* must be pushed aside. Young and talented revolutionary commanders must occupy their places.¹⁵

Attacking older *voenspetsy*, but recommending younger ex-Tsarist officers such as himself, most of whom had perished during the Great War, could appear to be an attempt to solidify his own position. Promoting young military commissars and NCOs who had proved themselves in Civil War combat at the expense of former senior Tsarist officers would also help Tukhachevsky move to the top of the pile. Therefore, was this a ploy to ensure further personal promotion? Citing ignorance of Marxism against older *voenspetsy* suggests this, distancing himself, a Communist Party member, from them. However, Tukhachevsky was also now beginning to relate the idea of strategic concepts existing specific to Civil War, which would be applicable in the wider class struggle to come. In this way, his use of Marxism now intertwined with his assessment of how military doctrine had developed during the Civil War. He wrote,

In short, in civil war, not only ours, but in other countries, because of the circumstances accompanying the struggle of the classes, there will inevitably be one and the same characteristics to the strategic forms, which are: huge extension of frontage, small-numbered armies, conditions of reinforcement, organisation of defence and securing the flanks and rear by way of using the allied classes, lowering of technology, and this will all result in... distinct operational forms. All these distinctions are proposed in comparison with forms of national and imperial war.¹⁶

With belief in the impending class struggle growing in late 1919 as revolutionary movements appeared in Europe and uprisings had occurred in some countries, the

¹⁴ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Doklad, napisannyi porucheniiu V. I. Lenina, ob ispol'zovanii voennykh spetsialistov i vydvizhenii kommunisticheskogo komandnogo sostava (po opytu 5-i armii)", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, Tom. I, pp. 27-30.

¹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Doklad, napisannyi porucheniiu V. I. Lenina", pp. 27-28 & 30.

possibility of spreading Civil War abroad was growing. With post-War East and Central Europe in a similarly ravaged state as Russia, conditions experienced during the Russian Civil War would be prevalent there. Therefore, an army trained and ready to fight under these conditions was vital. Tukhachevsky did not criticise senior *voenspetsy* to get ahead, but suggested they were incapable of adapting to the new conditions of the class struggle in civil war. Therefore, a new command staff composed of younger people who could assimilate new methods was needed. This vision of youth echoed Lenin's earlier calls and moves to set up the Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*) and indeed Trotsky's speech to the 1st All-Russian Congress of Military Commissars in June 1918.¹⁷ The young were to be educated and inculcated as the future of the Soviet regime. Using the naivety and radicalism of youth as opposed to the conservatism which often comes with age was viewed as the way forward and was successful in the early years of the Soviet Union. Tukhachevsky was making a similar argument because younger, more zealous military commanders were more likely to adapt to new forms of warfare, whilst the older generation would look back to methods in which they had been educated and, not being Marxists, would not want to change.

Tukhachevsky wanted the Red Army to develop on the basis of his ideals with unified command prominent. In July 1919, he wrote that the use of dual command with political commissars watching over Tsarist *voenspetsy* was,

...harmful to the quality of the army and the uprising proletariat must immediately look to create its own command cadre and in the shortest time possible produce unified command.

It is possible to boldly emphasise that a completely built and disciplined army will only be created by introducing the principle of unified command.¹⁸

The suggestion that he had employed this within 5th Army was a bid to show that he was at the forefront of Red Army development, as he had been with 1st Army previously. In late 1919 he did appear to be, because at Lenin's request, and possibly because of his report, Tukhachevsky delivered a lecture to the Red General Staff

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁷ See pp 81-82.

¹⁸ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 1, p. 59.

Academy on 24th December entitled *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia* (National and Class Strategy),¹⁹ assessing the Civil War and comparing it with the Great War.

It appears that this may have been delivered at a conference of some kind and he probably met the man with whom he would work most closely on "Deep Battle" on this day, Vladimir Kiriakovich Triandafillov. The latter also delivered a paper to the General Staff on 24th December on Southern Front offensive operations against Denikin.²⁰ Tukhachevsky and Triandafillov had not fought together before this date, but would against Denikin in 1920 and in Tambov in 1921. As two speakers at this conference, it seems likely they would have exchanged ideas and their collaboration could possibly be dated from this point.

Tukhachevsky had outlined the basis of his lecture and the military doctrinal side of his report in two works completed on 4th and 11th July 1919, *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voiny* (Rise of civil war) and *Sootnoshenie sil v grazhdanskoi voine* (Correlation of forces in civil war), the former of which was included in *Voina klassov* in a slightly altered form.²¹

The differences Tukhachevsky outlined between "national" (The Great War) and "class" (Russian Civil War) strategy were taken from his command experience. Whilst this could be taken as an early display of his belief in and support for the development of a "new, unique" Soviet Revolutionary Military Doctrine, with which he is often associated, an early paragraph in his lecture is significant. Speaking of the peculiarities of waging civil war he said, "To research these peculiarities is our task. Old strategy has not died out, it is not unnecessary for us, but simply does not contain several essential chapters about civil war. To write these chapters is the task of the moment".²² Tukhachevsky was not advocating a new revolutionary doctrine. He appreciated the importance of military history and the difference conditions make to warfare. This was the point of his lecture - to show that civil war had these peculiarities, but that other forms still existed. He would do this later in "Deep Battle", using methods he had successfully utilised in the Civil War to answer

¹⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia", *Voina klassov. Stat'i 1919-1920gg.* (Moscow, 1921), pp. 5-31; *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom. I*, (Moscow, 1964) pp. 31-51.

²⁰ V. K. Triandafillov, *Kharakter operatsii sovremennykh armii*. (trans. W. A. Burhans; ed. and foreword J. W. Kipp; intro. J. J. Schneider), (Portland, Or., 1994), p. 11.

²¹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, d. 1, op. 1, pp. 54-68 & 100-101. M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voiny* and *Sootnoshenie sil v grazhdanskoi voine*; M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Voina klassov*. pp. 37-49.

²² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia", p. 32.

problems brought to military questions by industrialisation and technology, to avoid a repetition of the Great War. Tukhachevsky existed somewhere between the two poles in the military debates of the early 1920s Soviet Union, about the efficacy of a new revolutionary doctrine, against the use of eternally lasting strategic truths. Tukhachevsky accepted that some methods from the past remained valid, but tried to answer evolving questions with what he had found in the Civil War. This led to his continued advocacy of "annihilation" strategy over "attrition", retaining the destruction of the enemy force as the primary aim in warfare.

The first difference between national and class war was the build-up. Before a national war, preparations could be made and armies created and trained in readiness, but in class war, it could not be predicted where conflict would arise. Armies could only be created once an uprising had occurred and it was known where population supportive of the uprising was situated. As an example, Tukhachevsky noted,

...we were not able to predict the Czechoslovak uprising... in Penza... that they would advance to Samara, create the Constituent Assembly there, that they would move further into Siberia and create an uprising in Cheliabinsk. We were not able to predict the counter-revolutionary Centre would subsequently unite and eventually the Constituent Assembly would convert to Kolchak's Imperialism, which would stretch from the Great Ocean to the Volga.²³

It was only after the Czechoslovak uprising occurred that Tukhachevsky had been able to create 1st Army. Earlier, there was no need for an army in the Volga, leading to a point he made elsewhere that civil war operational theatres appeared in areas in which fighting normally would not occur.²⁴ Initially armies would be formed along partisan lines, but reorganisation and regularisation was essential to form a uniform capable army.

Another distinction between national and class war was the absence of recognised borders in the latter. These appeared between rival groups only when fighting broke out and formed front lines in the conflict. Where these occurred depended on population spread with "living centres" occurring in areas sympathetic to the revolution (Moscow, Petrograd, the industrialised Donbass Region) and "dying centres" where anti-revolutionary elements existed (the Don). Crucial to operational

²³ Ibid. pp. 33-34.

²⁴ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Statistika v grazhdanskoi voine", p. 84.

success was routing actions through "living centres" to provide a secure rear and operational area.

Instability of borders combined with lower troop numbers and lower military technology in class war than in "national wars of mass armies", to lead to extreme fluidity in civil war fighting, with entrenchments replaced by manoeuvre and mobility. Low troop numbers meant large fronts could not be defended, with troops too loosely strung along the line, ruling out a defensive strategy. However, the retention of territory was essential in civil war because if it was lost, troops to be raised were also lost. Therefore, defence sometimes had to be used, but only to prepare for attack. Screens were required in some front sections to hold these, whilst concentrating troops in sectors allocated for offensive action, striking at the enemy's weak point to achieve a breakthrough and win more territory. Feigned attacks in other sectors should be used to spread enemy forces and by these methods, victory could be achieved in a front sector, even if an army was outnumbered along the whole line.

This introduced one of the fundamental differences Tukhachevsky saw between national and class war. In the former, reinforcements had to be sent from the rear to replace casualties and maintain offensive momentum. However, in class war, recruits could be mobilised by an attacking army as it advanced because classes sympathetic to the revolution would willingly join the revolutionary army as it liberated them. Therefore, continuous offensives could be conducted, allowing pursuit of the enemy until its final defeat. Continually recruiting liberated class sympathisers would enable this. Swift pursuit was a vital part of operations and smaller troop numbers facilitated this as less supplies were required, allowing "...an extremely quick development of operations and to one operation almost uninterruptedly following another".

Pursuit in civil war was the opposite of that employed in national war. In the latter, tactical pursuit was effective as retreating forces took time to form and turn into marching columns, which had great depth due to vast troop numbers. These troops could be overtaken, encircled and taken prisoner. However, strategical pursuit was ineffective, as a rearguard would be mounted by the retreating force, using few troops, to remove the main body to the rear for reorganisation and reintroduction later. However, in civil war, with sparse numbers, tactical pursuit showed little profit as retreating columns had little depth, organised quickly and could not be surrounded before retreating. Strategic pursuit however, was highly effective. Small troop

numbers meant rearguard actions could not be effectively conducted as the main forces themselves were often smaller than the force necessary for an effective rearguard. With forces scattered over the wide expanses prevalent in civil war, continual strategic pursuit of the whole enemy force was highly effective. This allowed the enemy no time for reorganisation with reconnaissance, a crucial part of operations, on foot and in carts, providing knowledge of enemy positions and allowing pursuit to be maintained. Operations against Ataman Dutov were cited as an example.²⁵

During pursuit actions, utilisation of friendly class elements could secure the flanks and rear of the offensive, if attacking through "living centres". This required organisation and the set-up of military and political organs for coordination.

Another possibility this particular nuance of class warfare introduced was uprisings by sympathisers in the enemy rear, causing disruption and allowing encirclements. Partisan, guerilla activity was a crucial part of class warfare and one which Tukhachevsky criticised many within the Red Army for not understanding, as they dismissed partisan use through fear of the disorganisation of *partizanshchina* of the early Red Army. This was a mistake because partisans, upon linking with the Red Army, provided reinforcements. A difference had to be drawn between class and national partisans, with the former evident within Eastern Front in Siberia in 1919, but the latter disrupting Southern and Ukrainian Fronts.

Connected to this is a small section of *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia* which is omitted from *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*. This points to the use of espionage and organising agents for class warfare, which although highly useful, was not employed in the Civil War. Why this was omitted from the 1964 collection is unclear.

However, problems existed which limited operational speed. With such fluidity of frontage, the use of railways, (as shown in chapter II), lost its effectiveness after the *eshelonnaia voina* of early 1918. Mobility in the field required transport, but a severe shortage of military transport was evident under civil war conditions. As also demonstrated in chapter II, Tukhachevsky's answer was to mobilise local transport resources, peasant carts, and where possible waterways. Tukhachevsky listed cartage necessary for transport. He later produced a detailed plan of cart numbers required

²⁵ General Aleksandr Il'ich Dutov (1879-1921), a former Tsarist colonel, led the Orenburg Cossack host and fought under Kolchak in the Civil War.

and a system of linked depots for supply by division, to enable continuous supply and operations, whilst ensuring that the local population had their carts returned. He emphasised this should be employed to prevent troops commandeering local transport and antagonising the peasantry.²⁶

Communications and control in the field were other problems in mobile operations. Army staff were often restricted to the railways and could not maintain contact with their forces conducting pursuit operations. Field staffs were therefore necessary, but communications were generally bad, (with "movement by wire" as indicated in chapter II, usually the limit).

As to initial operational forms, the use of strategic reserves was not possible, as poor transport and communications prevented them reaching the front in time to influence the battle, effectively wasting troops. Tukhachevsky included an extra section in the *Voina klassov* version of *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voine*, which was not in the original essay of July 1919, and appears to have been a defence of his non-employment of reserve forces during the Civil War. This will be investigated further when examining his commands.

The above conditions meant offensives were often launched along wider frontages than would normally be the case, to allow all troops to participate in battle. Consequently, concentric offensives were viable in that troops could be positioned along an initially wide front, with the flank formations closing in tighter to the centre as the offensive approached the target. In this way, all troops could be utilised and provide the necessary concentration of troops at the vital sector at the same time, allowing an envelopment of one or both flanks and a possible encirclement, leading to the annihilation of the enemy group, the ultimate objective of warfare. This required great coordination and the correct location for success, ensuring all forces arrived at the optimum time and ensured superiority of numbers, but in the Civil War this did not always occur. Speed and surprise were key factors in civil war to enable envelopment and encirclement, with intelligence and reconnaissance crucial in determining enemy location. The possibility of breakthrough operations in civil war was again very high, with troop numbers low, but again this required bold and decisive command which was not always forthcoming during the Civil War.

²⁶ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Marsh-manevr i organizatsiia transporta v grazhdanskoi voine", *Voina klassov*, pp. 101-102.

Offensive was therefore preferable to defensive strategy. Tukhachevsky summarised the conditions under which victory could be achieved in *Sootnoshenie sil v grazhdanskoi voine*,

Thus a correlation of forces advantageous for us is achieved:

1. a) By increasing the number of our troops in the sector of the decisive attack.

b) Distracting enemy forces from this sector.

2. By increasing the quality of troops in the decisive sector.

The first is achieved by:

a) Transfers,

b) Offensive, mobilisation of loyal elements and reinforcement or in permitting a percentage of our units, if only those manning and guarding the rear,

c) Demonstrations [feints - NC],

d) Concentric movement and

e) Organisation of uprisings in the rear of the enemy.

The second is achieved by concentrating in the place of attack our most disciplined troops and concentrating in the appointed sector natives from other fronts. [loyal class elements from elsewhere - NC].²⁷

The role of strict revolutionary discipline - tribunals, *Cheka* and blocking detachments - would have been envisaged in the latter point. This was one role Tukhachevsky saw political agitation playing, but he would also connect his idea of the bold offensive as the primary aim of all military actions to Marxism, with the continuous offensive matching the need to maintain the continuous Marxist offensive against capitalism. The offensive "annihilation" doctrine was an aggressive, revolutionary doctrine and a method to conduct class struggle. Older *voenspetsy* did not understand this and therefore had to be replaced by younger communist-commanders.

This was Tukhachevsky's assessment of civil war, formulated and written during 1919. However, before examining his commands in 1918 and 1919 to identify the origins of his ideas, their accuracy, and his 1920 command, to see if he followed his prescribed methods, it is useful to compare the Red view of Civil War in class terms, with the White Command's assessment of the conflict at the same time.

²⁷ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 1, pp. 100a-101.

A White Analysis

On 7th December 1919, Lieutenant-Colonel Ovchinnikov, Head of Intelligence Department of Main Command Staff of Eastern Front, and Head of 1st Department of Intelligence Department, Lieutenant-Colonel Lovchitskii, prepared a report entitled *Opyt' issledovaniia strategicheskikh i takticheskikh uslovie grazhdanskoi voiny* (Experience of research of strategic and tactical conditions of civil war).²⁸ These were evidently two figures within the Kolchak establishment and possibly prepared this report at his request. It was based on the same battlefields at the same time as Tukhachevsky had recorded his Civil War observations and makes a telling comparison. How did the other side view the conflict?

Some obvious similarities exist between the two accounts, describing the old army disintegrating at the start of the Civil War and the necessity for a new one to be created, initially along voluntary lines, but eventually by mobilisation, preferably in areas containing a sympathetic population. Agitation and espionage, and punitive expeditions conducting raids into enemy areas were necessary to attract recruits and promote unrest respectively.

The main plan of civil war was to hold occupied territory and try to increase influence, whilst thwarting aggressive military and political enemy moves. Internal order should be maintained by punitive detachments and enemy forces annihilated. Towns and rail and road junctions were recognised as the main points of defence with fortified depots necessary. Offensives were carried out mainly along rail lines, highways and waterways.

Small troop numbers and insufficient military equipment and weaponry meant swift, almost partisan actions were required and troops had to be organised in lighter, more mobile formations than a regular army. Lack of troops should be compensated for by swift action and the use of modern military technique, eg. flame-throwers for street-fighting. Offensives must be decisive, with the basic principle of operations, "...to defeat the enemy by sectors and to be always stronger in the decisive moment in

²⁸ *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii* (hereafter *RTsKhIDNI*), f. 71, op. 35, d. 1131, pp. 22-29.

the decisive sector".²⁹ Defence was only to be used to win time and, when attacking, attempts had always to be made to move into the flanks and rear of the enemy. These were precisely the same tactics Tukhachevsky advocated.

Supply could be easily obtained from local populations. Interestingly, no organised mechanism was proposed for this process and a key factor in the collapse of Kolchak's rear in 1919 were his forces' requisitions and depredations. In contrast, Tukhachevsky suggested organised use of local resources to prevent antagonism of the local population.

The report continued that armed forces were organised into fortress troops for garrisoning depots and field troops for fighting along a) railways; b) main and dirt roads. Those acting outwith railways should have automobiles, bicycles, cavalry and horse artillery and all forces could conduct combined actions if necessary.

However, with so few troops, field actions were not always possible, meaning partisan-type warfare was the most common form of engagement, and clashes occurred predominantly along rail lines, roads and in towns. This was an accurate portrayal of Kolchak's forces on the Eastern Front.

Under these conditions, unit commanders had to be able to independently carry out tasks and troop units capable of operating independently, moving swiftly, having flexibility in organisation and operating in the absence of a secure rear, without communications lines. These were all similar assessments to Tukhachevsky's as was the point that, "The link of politics with strategy has never been so close as in the Civil War" and centralisation of Supreme Command was essential to direct operations.³⁰ Tukhachevsky wrote an essay entitled *Politika i strategiiia v grazhdanskoi voine* (Politics and strategy in civil war) in January 1920 in which he made similar conclusions.³¹ However, with the above conditions, only directives could be given from the top and individual commanders had to translate these into action determined by local conditions. This was another point appreciated by Tukhachevsky and reminiscent of his criticism of Murav'ev.

A final similarity is supplied in the statement, "Executions of enemies rendering armed resistance must be mercilessly carried out - sentimentality will destroy

²⁹ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 1131, p. 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 25.

³¹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Politika i strategiiia v grazhdanskoi voine" *Voina klassov*, pp. 31-36.

everything".³² At the same time, non-Party troops were to be attracted to join the White forces. This reflected the idea of recruiting whilst attacking, but also the bitterness and savagery brought to the fighting by both sides. While the *Cheka* arrested, imprisoned and executed anti-Soviets, so anti-Communists executed any Party members, workers or sympathisers captured.

It is interesting to see the similarities in tactics and strategy between the Whites and Reds proposed by these reports. However, differences have been discerned which did make an impact on the outcome and a major one worth stressing is the difference in organisation envisaged as Tukhachevsky urged a regular army on the Reds, while the Whites had to resort to partisan-like actions through lack of numbers. This restricted White action to main transport routes and allowed the Reds greater freedom of action in attempting envelopments through terrain around these. However, White forces did manage several offensives of a wider nature and were successful to an extent. Troop shortages limited the impact of these offensives and was a factor in the outcome of the Civil War. The viability Tukhachevsky saw in Marxism as a tool to attract recruits to the Red Army was based on experience, with Red mobilisations more successful than White, although desertion levels remained as high. The belief in the efficacy of Marxism would affect Tukhachevsky's development as a person and a military commander during the conflict and influenced his theories.

1st Army Commander - Eastern Front: September-December 1918

In the second half of August 1918, Tukhachevsky mobilised new recruits for 1st Army at the front and completed reorganisational work, whilst aiding 5th Army before Kazan'. After the wounding of Lenin and murder of *Cheka* Deputy Head Uritskii in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks introduced the Red Terror coordinated by Feliks Dzierżyński, a figure with whom Tukhachevsky would later work. This drive against anti-Soviet elements resulted in 6-7,000 executions over the next three months and accompanied the launch of an Eastern Front Volga offensive.

Volga Region's communications hub Kazan' was the main target for 5th and 2nd Armies. 3rd Army was to attack in Ekaterinburg sector, whilst 4th Army was to occupy Khvalinsk, close to Syzran' and Samara. 1st Army was to take Simbirsk, a

³² *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 1131, p. 28.

supporting operation for 5th Army, but more important than this for Tukhachevsky, as he became the liberator of the wounded Lenin's hometown.³³

On 8th September, *Komuch* met with the Siberian Regional Government and other anti-Soviet organisations at Ufa, creating a social democrat-conservative coalition, headed by a 5-man Directory. However, the Directory never enjoyed the peasant support of the SR *Komuch* Government. By 10th September, it was on the back foot, abandoning Kazan' to 5th Army and Simbirsk to 1st Army two days later.³⁴ This was Tukhachevsky's first operation as a Red Army Commander with troops sufficiently organised for the task. It provides an example of Civil War combat and illustrates Tukhachevsky's development and ability to lead and coordinate an army in the field. Tukhachevsky wrote about the Simbirsk Operation in early January 1919, probably whilst waiting to be posted on Southern Front. The essay, *Obkhody i kontsentricheskie dvizheniia* (Envelopments and concentric movement), was his earliest written work on the Civil War.³⁵ As can be surmised from the title, Tukhachevsky used a concentric offensive to take Simbirsk, as he did with the Syzran' Operation to follow. From where did the idea for a concentric offensive arise?

Tukhachevsky provides a clue by citing the German General Sigismund von Schlichting, a critic of Schlieffen.³⁶ Koritskii recalls Tukhachevsky having to explain what a concentric offensive was to his staff before the Simbirsk Operation because it was not in Russian Army regulations.³⁷ Therefore, it appears the use of the concentric offensive came from Tukhachevsky's Tsarist military academy days, but from reading he did in his own time. His German language skills had proved worthwhile. However, another Koritskii recollection demonstrates Tukhachevsky was influenced by his Tsarist training. Tukhachevsky apparently said, "In the present-day stage of war... it is necessary to strive to seize bayonet clashes. As long as moral superiority is on our side, success is guaranteed in our hands".³⁸ Tukhachevsky later wrote of the concentric offensive carried out by Hindenburg and Ludendorf to defeat Samsonov

³³ *Direktivny komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii, (1917-1922gg.). Sbornik dokumentov v 4-kh tomakh*, (Moscow, 1971-1978), (hereafter *DkfKA*), *Tom I*, docs. 393-411, pp. 428-436.

³⁴ *DkfKA*, *Tom I*, p. 437, note.

³⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Obkhody i kontsentricheskie dvizheniia" *Voina klassov*, pp. 105-115.

³⁶ H. Strachan, *The First World War, Volume I, To Arms*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 178; For a discussion of Schlichting's theories see D. J. Hughes, "Schlichting, Schlieffen, and the Prussian Theory of War in 1914", *Journal of Military History*, 59, (April 1995), pp. 257-277.

³⁷ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voyny i v dni mira" *Mikhail Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), p. 69.

³⁸ N. I. Koritskii, p. 69.

and Rennenkampf in 1914, so he knew of its effectiveness in 1918.³⁹ How did he employ it at Simbirsk?

Preparatory Operations

The Czechoslovaks had a strong defensive position in Syzran'-Samara-Simbirsk, in terms of communications and transport for transferring troops and reserves, with railway lines linked to their rear and Ufa. The Volga linked the three towns, allowing troop transfers between flanks. Simbirsk was also linked by the Volga to Kazan' further north.

1st Army troop numbers fluctuated greatly, since Zakharov had listed 11,451 on 21st July, as mobilisations were countered by constant combat. Varying figures are available. A figure of 7,072 infantry and 325 cavalry, with 194 machine-guns, 40 guns and 2 armoured-trains for 1st Army on 15th September, roughly matches an archival estimate of 10,000 and Tukhachevsky's figure of 9-10,000 for early September, allowing for casualties and mobilisations.⁴⁰ During the main attack from 9th-12th September, the Czechoslovaks in Simbirsk were outnumbered roughly 2:1, but Tukhachevsky only achieved this numerical superiority, a vital prerequisite for a concentric offensive, by carrying out preliminary operations from 25th-28th August, and regrouping to improve 1st Army's starting positions.

On the right flank, Inza Division had been pressed back by a slightly larger Czechoslovak force (1,000:1,200), but counter-attacked at Kuzovatovo Station, whilst Vitebsk Regiment of Simbirsk Division swept into the Czechoslovaks' rear, forcing them to retreat. On 20th August, Vareikis informed Tukhachevsky that reconnaissance had detected Czechoslovak movement from Buinsk towards Alatyr'-Ibresi Station.⁴¹ The latter two were stations on the Saransk-Kazan' Railway, whilst Buinsk lay on the Kazan'-Simbirsk road. This threatened 1st Army's left flank for the Simbirsk Operation. Subordinated to Tukhachevsky for his offensive, Alatyr' Group screened Alatyr' then attacked from Ibresi to outflank the Czechoslovaks at Belyi

³⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, ed., *Armeiskaia operatsiia*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 36-37; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 godu", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I*, p. 87; *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 24, p. 6.

⁴¹ *1918 god na rodine Lenina*, (Kuibyshev, 1936), appendix of documents, p. 334.

Batyrevo and drive them back to Buinsk. This cleared the way for the Simbirsk Operation.⁴²

In early September, Vacietis informed Tukhachevsky that reinforcements, promised on 25th August, had been delayed. This prevented Tukhachevsky using Simbirsk and Inza Divisions in a two-pronged attack as he had planned, with the former now given the central attacking role and the latter guarding the right flank with Penza Division. Regiments from Penza and Inza Divisions were transferred to Simbirsk Division, giving it around 8,000 men for the main attack and the other two 1,000 apiece. The left flank was screened by Alatyr' Group with 367 men and 1,237 troops further north at Shikransk screened the juncture between 1st and 5th Armies.⁴³ Therefore, Tukhachevsky concentrated the bulk of his troops in the main sector attack force, which would become typical of Civil War operations. Barely-covered screens on the flanks shielded the majority of troops in the decisive central sector, but the former advanced under the concentric offensive, feigning offensive action to pull some of the defenders away from Simbirsk.

Tukhachevsky appears to have decided on a concentric attack only after discovering that the reinforcements were not coming. He could maximise the troops he had by this tactic, but it required the employment of all troops to extend 1st Army's front wide enough to enable the double envelopment. Only the small International Regiment was retained in reserve, but even it was flung into the final assault on Simbirsk. To coordinate, Tukhachevsky moved 1st Army HQ forward from Inza to Paigarm Monastery and formed a field staff, including Kalnins, to advance with Simbirsk Division from Chufarovo Station.⁴⁴ Therefore, no strategic reserves were retained and a field staff was used to alleviate communications difficulties.

On 5th September, 5th Army attacked towards Kazan'. The following day, Vacietis ordered Tukhachevsky,

... It is essential to draw off enemy reserves, so they cannot be transferred to Kazan'.

⁴² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 godu", p. 86.

⁴³ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 24, p. 6; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armia v 1918 godu", pp. 86-87.

⁴⁴ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie 1st armii i osvobozhdenie Simbirsk", *Simbirskaiia guberniia v 1918-1920 gg. Sbornik vospominanii*. (Ul'ianovsk, 1958), (hereafter *Simbirskaiia guberniia*) p. 65.

...7th September, at dawn... launch a decisive offensive to Simbirsk and take this town. 5th Army's success is much dependent on the decisiveness of your offensive.⁴⁵

Tukhachevsky discussed final preparations with Eastern Front *RVS* on 7th September, apparently concluding, "I think the attack on Simbirsk will take three days... from the morning of 8th September."⁴⁶

Main Concentric Offensive

On 8th September, 1st Army was positioned along an arc 100 *versty* in length, with Simbirsk Division in the centre, spread out from Prislönika on its left flank through Chufarovo Station-Annenkovo to Popovka on its right. Gai moved his forces to their starting positions at 20.00 hours and advanced the next morning, a day later than planned, along the Prislönika-Iushansk-Tetiushkoe-Barataevka highway on the left flank, the Chufarovo-Simbirsk Railway in the centre and the Popovka-Elshanka-Kliuchishche-Belyi Kliuch dirt-road on the right. To maintain an equal momentum along the whole front and enable envelopment of the Czechoslovak right flank to occur simultaneously to the central railway group arriving, 5th Kursk Regiment advanced up the left flank main road in motorised trucks. A cavalry group under Borevich, kept pace with the motorised columns, advancing along the dirt road on the right flank.⁴⁷ 1st Brigade of Simbirsk Division (1st and 2nd Simbirsk Regiments) under Pavlovskii, formed the main body of the central and right flank groups, with the central group advancing behind armoured-trains.⁴⁸ Reconnaissance detected the first enemy defensive line at Iushansk-Kliuchishche, the latter on Simbirsk Division's right flank. Advancing as outlined above, Alatyr' Group reached Nagatkino on the left flank and Inza and Penza Divisions reached Belyi-Gremiachi-Kliuch on the right, to tighten the arc to 60 *versty* by the end of the first day, without any fighting.

The advance continued the next day amid bitter fighting with the well-fortified Czechoslovaks. Tukhachevsky had attached an artillery battery to each infantry regiment. The artillery division's political commissar Samoilov recalled this as the

⁴⁵ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 409, pp. 435-6.

⁴⁶ I. I. Mints, *Grazhdanskaia voina v povolzh'e*, (Kazan', 1974), p. 93.

⁴⁷ Petr Mikhailovich Borevich (1890-1921) was Polish and a former Tsarist staff-captain.

⁴⁸ N. G. Samoilov, "Kak my uchilis' voevat'", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 237, Tukhachevsky had reorganised 2nd Ukrainian Artillery Division which had arrived in early August.

first occasion combined operations between artillery and infantry had been applied correctly on Eastern Front.⁴⁹ The combination proved very effective in the battles before Simbirsk.

The heaviest fighting on 10th September was in the centre around Okhotnich'ia Station-Ivanovka, where the Czechoslovaks moved up reserves overnight and were entrenched behind three rows of barbed wire entanglements. With 2nd Simbirsk Regiment pinned down by machine-gun and artillery fire, 3rd Artillery Battery was moved forward and directly bombarded the entrenchments. Simultaneously, Gai ordered 3rd Moscow and International Regiments to envelop the Czechoslovaks left flank, leaving only 1st and 2nd Simbirsk Regiments holding the railway. The envelopment was successful with grenade and bayonet attacks wiping out most of the Czechoslovaks and forcing a retreat. Gai employed similar tactics on the right at Kubshinovka, as direct artillery fire on Czechoslovak entrenchments forced them back to Simbirsk. This was also successful on the left flank at the second heaviest area of fighting where Orlovskii and 1st Kursk Regiments were pinned down around Tetiushkoe, Pogreba and Otrad. 4th and 6th Artillery Batteries advanced and took out Czechoslovak gun emplacements in turn, allowing 5th Kursk Brigade to break through to Lashaevka by the evening and prepare to attack Simbirsk from the north.⁵⁰

By evening of 10th September, 1st Army had advanced 30-40 *versty* in two days, tightened the arc to under 50 *versty*, occupied the line Laishevka-Kliuchishchi-Kremenka, and was positioned for the final assault on Simbirsk.⁵¹ Tukhachevsky conducted reconnaissance of the Simbirsk approaches on horseback with Kalnins and Gai, selecting artillery positions for supporting the infantry assault the following day.⁵²

The advance continued on 11th September amid steady fighting. In the centre, 1st Simbirsk Regiment again utilised close-range artillery fire, to force a Czechoslovak armoured-train back to the Simbirsk suburbs. Villages were occupied on both flanks to encircle Simbirsk completely from three sides. The only open side was the Volga bank to the east.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 237.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp. 238-239; N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 66.

⁵¹ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 24, p. 8; O. Iu. Kalnin, "Bor'ba na vostochnom fronte" *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 46.

⁵² N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 67.

⁵³ P. A. Shumatov, "V riadakh zheleznoi divizii", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 281.

The final assault was launched at dawn on 12th September. After outflanking the final Czechoslovak trenches beside the River Sviiagi south-west of Simbirsk and a clash with White cavalry, Simbirsk Division advanced into Simbirsk. A short street battle ensued and a Czechoslovak armoured-train positioned on the Volga bridge bombarded the town as the Reds progressed, but by 12.00pm, the west bank of the town had been cleared.⁵⁴ Tukhachevsky informed Lenin by telegram that his hometown had been retaken.⁵⁵ Simbirsk factory workers had prepared an uprising in the Czechoslovak rear, but the swiftness of the Red attack meant it was not necessary.⁵⁶ Indeed, Tukhachevsky informed Kuibyshev on 11th September, "Swift movement of our units and constant envelopments brought them [the Czechoslovaks] to a state of panic, weakening its resistance."⁵⁷

Tukhachevsky later recalled,

This success was so unexpected for the enemy, that when we arrived in Simbirsk, and located Simbirsk Division HQ there, to comrade Gai suddenly appeared an ensign with a dispatch, sent from Sengilei to the Whiteguard Divisional Commander. Arriving in the evening and asking where the divisional HQ was, this ensign was directed straight to the Divisional Commander and completely unexpectedly for him, presented himself before comrade Gai.⁵⁸

Peasants who had been forcibly mobilised by the Czechoslovaks willingly joined 1st Army upon being captured, an early instance of mobilising whilst advancing.⁵⁹

If the operation seemed to have proceeded smoothly, there were signs of problems which would crop up throughout the Civil War. Tukhachevsky informed Kuibyshev on 11th September that 1st Army troops were approaching Simbirsk, but he did not know exact positions because of communications difficulties.⁶⁰ A more pressing concern, but also recurrent throughout the Civil War, was a breakdown in troop discipline upon

⁵⁴ P. F. Ustinov, "Osvobozhdenie Simbirsk", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, pp. 262-264; N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", pp. 67-68.

⁵⁵ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, *kniga* 3, p. 10.

⁵⁶ D. E. Perkin, "Bor'ba za Simbirsk", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 273.

⁵⁷ *Boevoi put' Pervoi Revoliutsionnoi Armii Vostochnogo i Turkestanogo Frontov, Iiun'-fevral' 1921gg.* (hereafter *BpPRA*), doc. 27, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁸ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiiia v 1918 godu", p. 89; Upon taking Simbirsk on 12th September, Gai sent a telegram to Lenin saying, "Dear Vladimir Ilich! Have taken your hometown of Simbirsk - this is the reply to your first wound, and for the second - will be Samara", G. D. Gai, "Pobednyi put'", *Simbirskaiia guberniia*, p. 32; Gai accepted an Order of the Red Banner for Simbirsk Division on 28th September and the division was renamed Iron Division in recognition of its performance, *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, p. 55; *BpPRA*, doc. 40, p. 63.

⁵⁹ N. I. Koritskii, "Sozdanie pervogo armii...", p. 67.

⁶⁰ *BpPRA*, doc. 27, pp. 52-53.

liberating Simbirsk. 1,500 prisoners were released by the Red troops and a great deal of cartage and artillery captured, but instead of pressing on after the retreating Czechoslovaks, episodes of looting and drunkenness broke out.⁶¹ This encouraged the Czechoslovaks, who had rallied, to push Red units back over the Volga bridge, dig in on the left bank of the Volga and begin shelling the right bank side of Simbirsk.

Tukhachevsky saw the need to act swiftly to restore order and retain the initiative. He drew up plans for storming the bridge at 01.00 hours on 14th September. Gai led the attack again. An empty locomotive was released at full steam across the bridge to test its safety and tackle any Czechoslovak armoured-trains. A Red armoured-train and two brigades of Simbirsk Division advanced behind it under an artillery barrage, which had been adjusted during the day, onto the Czechoslovak positions. The bridge measured a *verst* in length and was illuminated by barges of burning oil from the far side, but Simbirsk Division successfully crossed in the face of machine-gun and artillery fire, capturing the bridge intact and forcing the Czechoslovaks to flee Simbirsk.⁶² 1st Army now had an operational rail crossing over the Volga, but this success was short-lived.

Pursuing the retreating Czechoslovaks to Cherdakly, east of Simbirsk, 1st Army ran into a counter-attack on 15th September by Kappel's White Officer Battalion, which was retreating from Kazan' down the Volga left bank. Although only numbering 2-3,000, this was enough to push the 1,500 1st Army pursuit troops back to Simbirsk. The Whites blew up the rail crossing and the intervention of the International Regiment was necessary to prevent Kappel' routing 1st Army from Simbirsk.⁶³ This swinging to and fro of battle was typical in the Civil War, both on this scale of several thousand troops per side and also on a larger scale. With numbers limited and the terrain covered so extensive, forces would breakthrough or envelop the enemy, force it to flee and pursue. However, with no reserves to bolster the attack, a tactical overreach would occur, or in the case of Denikin in his 1919 drive on Moscow, a strategical overreach. The intervention of only a small force at this point would send the erstwhile victorious force back to its starting point and sometimes

⁶¹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 godu", p. 89. *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 24, pp. 10-11.

⁶² *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, pp. 56-57; *BpPRA*, doc. 32, p. 58; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiia v 1918 godu", pp. 89-90.

⁶³ The railway bridge was rebuilt by late October 1918, *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, pp. 11-12 & 58-59.

further, before the same phenomenon would occur to swing the battle again. This pattern continued until both sides were exhausted. Simbirsk, an early clash, sets the pattern and shows the effect such small-numbered formations had on military action. However, strategical pursuit was effective, as Tukhachevsky later noted.⁶⁴

The tide swung in 1st Army's favour again with the arrival from Kazan' of 5th Army elements. Vacietis ordered 5th Army Commander Slaven to move his troops down the Volga banks and in boats to Simbirsk, where they were subordinated to Tukhachevsky.⁶⁵ The latter directed the operation of 5th and 1st Army elements, ordering the right and left bank groups of 5th Army which numbered 10,500 troops in total,⁶⁶ to disembark above and below Simbirsk and outflank Kappel', whilst Simbirsk Division launched a costly frontal attack to pin down the *Komuch* troops in the town. This operation, another double envelopment manoeuvre, succeeded in pushing the *Komuch* forces back and cleared Simbirsk completely, with envelopments at Cherdakly and Briandino, but the intended encirclement was not completed. Tukhachevsky later criticised the commander of the group which landed below Simbirsk for not understanding manoeuvre warfare. The commander had successfully disembarked his troops and occupied Petrovskoe and Krasnyi Iar, but instead of advancing had wanted to dig in. The troops did not receive the order and continued advancing, but the Czechoslovaks escaped on a train waiting three *versty* behind them. Tukhachevsky emphasised speed, decisiveness and initiative as essential for effective manoeuvre.⁶⁷ Another possible reason for failure to complete the encirclements was again shortage of numbers. Enough troops did not exist to carry out deep envelopments and encirclements, but Tukhachevsky still attempted it. He did so in the next Syzran'-Samara Operation.

⁶⁴ See pp. 151-152.

⁶⁵ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 417, p. 442.

⁶⁶ *V boiakh rozhdennia, 1918-1920: boevoi put' 5 armii. Sbornik dokumentov*, (hereafter *Vbr*), (Irkutsk, 1985), p. 386.

⁶⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Obkhody kontsentrisheskie dvizhenie", *Voina klassov*, pp. 112-113.

Continuous Mobile Offensive

On 12th September, Vacietis, evidently not aware of events in Simbirsk, ordered, "1st Army energetically develop its success in direction of Syzran' and on the left bank of the Volga..."⁶⁸

Two days later, he directed Tukhachevsky to assume command of all Red forces in Simbirsk-Syzran'-Samara area and pursue the fleeing *Komuch* forces, occupying Khvalinsk and Syzran'. 4th Army Commander Khvesin was to ensure sufficient troops were transferred to 1st Army for this and attack Samara with his remaining forces. Vacietis emphasised,

...remember the enemy is stunned by our powerful attacks and only quick and combined action of all units will give us complete victory... The flotilla must render its utmost aid, giving continuous energetic pursuit into the depth of the hostile positions and allowing disembarking of loyal troops in the rear of the enemy.⁶⁹

The offensive was to be maintained without respite to knock out the remaining Czechoslovak positions before they could reorganise. Therefore, mobile operations followed by pursuit were used immediately.

Whilst 1st and 5th Armies fought around Simbirsk, 4th Army, including Vol'sk Division, occupied Khvalinsk on 16th September,⁷⁰ enabling Khvesin to split his forces according to Vacietis' plan. Vacietis flooded 1st, 4th and 5th Armies with further orders and directives whilst the struggle for Simbirsk continued, also instructing 2nd and 3rd Armies to prepare offensives on Ufa, Ekaterinburg and Cheliabinsk.⁷¹

While the latter two armies prevented Czechoslovak reinforcements reaching the Volga, on 28th September, immediately after defeating Kappel's group, Tukhachevsky informed Vacietis that he was beginning the Syzran'-Samara offensive. He reported, "In Melekess sector enemy enveloped on both flanks, defeated and

⁶⁸ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 412, p. 438.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* doc. 413, p. 439.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 441.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* docs. 415-429, pp. 441-450.

retreated in panic through Cherdakly. Right-bank Group took its preappointed sector. Simbirsk Division will concentrate in preappointed sector."⁷²

Probably because of the Simbirsk success, Tukhachevsky launched a second concentric offensive for Syzran'. Vol'sk Division, a brigade of Samara Division of 4th Army and the Volga Flotilla occupied the right flank at Khvalinsk-Fedorovka; Simbirsk Division occupied the left flank, facing *Komuch* emplacements at Goriushki-Masa; and Inza and Penza Divisions advanced in the centre from Kuzovatovo and Novospasskoe Stations.⁷³ Therefore, the flanks again advanced by road, although Vol'sk Division's Group advanced up both Volga banks with only dirt roads on the left bank, whilst the centre advanced along and beside the railway behind armoured trains, an initial frontage of 100-120 *verst*y. Simbirsk Division was again given the main task to take the Aleksandrovskii Most Volga bridge behind Syzran', cutting the *Komuch* forces' path of retreat. Tukhachevsky gave command of the other three divisions to Engel'hardt to ease coordination, but also because he was forced by Vacietis' stream of directives, to move on Syzran' with these Divisions on 22nd September. Therefore, a numerical superiority of 2:1 was only gained after Simbirsk Division was freed from the Kappel' battle. This was probably another reason for the concentric offensive as Simbirsk Division could slot into place on the left flank, despite Engel'hardt's group attacking earlier, allowing the continuous offensive to proceed.

From 28th September, the attack group numbered around 20,000 infantry, 1,000 cavalry, 140 guns, 400 machine-guns and 10 armed steamboats against a *Komuch* force of 6,480 infantry, 3,300 cavalry, 25-35 guns, 100-150 machine-guns and 8-12 armed steamboats, defending along internal lines and switching men between flanks.

Tukhachevsky concentrated 9,000 men under Gai for the vital sector, Inza and Penza Divisions numbered 2,000 apiece and the right flank 7,000. Vol'sk Division had just been formed from partisan detachments by Kuibyshev and 4th Army's formations were not much better organised, which was probably a factor in Tukhachevsky retaining larger numbers here, although the twin-bank advance did need more bodies and the rapid offensive development left no time for regrouping.

⁷² *BpPRA*, doc. 41, p. 64.

⁷³ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 77, p. 3; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Obkhody i kontsentricheskie dvizheniia", pp. 108-110.

From 22nd September-1st October, Vol'sk Division's group advanced 60 *versty* northwards, whilst Inza and Penza Divisions battled along the railway lines, with the Czechoslovaks blowing up bridges and burning down railway stations and villages as they retreated, to slow the Reds. Railway engineers worked ahead of the Red forces and local inhabitants were mobilised as the advance continued. After heavy fighting at Balasheika Station, Inza Division captured four armoured-trains and weaponry, but on 27th September, the Czechoslovaks counter-attacked against Vol'sk Division, driving it back to Khvalinsk and threatening to open up Penza Division's right flank. Czechoslovaks advanced into this gap to exploit the breakthrough, but Penza Division's right flank battalion and Smolensk Regiment held firm, almost wholly wiping out the Czechoslovaks. As the advance continued, Kappel's 2nd White Volunteer Division was routed and retreated. At this point, Simbirsk Division joined the fray, crossing the Volga by steamboat to capture Sengilei and Novodevich'e on the right bank on 30th September.⁷⁴

On the same day K. Kozlov, Deputy Head of 1st Army Political Department, reported,

On the front of Simbirsk Division organisational work is continuing. Pursuing enemy very successfully, occupying Sengilei without battle. Have started evacuating... valuable materials, metals etc. Masses of mobilised whiteguards defected to us with weapons in hand. Workers of the cartridge factory passed a grateful resolution, proposing a mobilisation of workers. They sense the need for energetic work...⁷⁵

This illustrates perfectly the methods used not only in 1918, but throughout the Civil War. A breakthrough was followed by swift pursuit, mobilising not only liberated civilians on the way, but also defectors or prisoners from anti-Soviet forces. Supplies were captured or acquired and new recruits meant that the "organisational work" mentioned by Kozlov continued, to retain regular formations and prevent a reversion to *partizanshchina*. Therefore, at this early stage, Tukhachevsky witnessed the possibility of mobilising liberated workers and captured troops alike, allowing offensives to proceed continuously without respite, pursuing the enemy relentlessly and retaining momentum, which he outlined in *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia*. This reinforced the need for a communist hardcore to politicise new recruits and retain discipline, as proper induction and training were not possible under battle

⁷⁴ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 77, pp. 3-7.

conditions. In many respects, this was a continuation of the summer formation period, mobilising recruits and sending them straight into action with virtually no training.

The capture of Sengilei exposed Syzran' and Samara. On 2nd October, Vacietis directed 1st and 4th Armies to attack the two towns,

Received reports that Samara is being evacuated amid panic.

I order all forces to move energetically to Syzran' and Samara, not allowing the enemy the possibility to create a planned evacuation of these towns. The attack must be as decisive as possible.⁷⁶

The pursuit was to continue and gain its ultimate objective, the encirclement and defeat of the enemy forces. However, reports of evacuations were premature as *Komuch* forces still defended Syzran' and Samara.

With Simbirsk Division advancing southwards down the Volga and Vol'sk Division's group moving northwards again, the *Komuch* forces, pinned down frontally by Inza and Penza Divisions, were in danger of encirclement. In bitter defensive battles, *Komuch* lost over 3,000 men. As 1st Army closed the ring, a workers' uprising occurred at Ivashchenko Factory, between Syzran' and Samara, throwing the defenders rear into disarray and forcing retreat to Samara.⁷⁷ Inza and Simbirsk Divisions occupied Syzran' at midday on 3rd October, only a day behind Tukhachevsky's schedule.⁷⁸

Again encirclement had not been completed, but the delay in employing Simbirsk Division counted against this, as did the tenacity of the *Komuch* defending, with two efforts required by Simbirsk Division to take Aleksandrovskii Most under intense artillery and machine-gun fire. Vitebsk Regiment blocked the Czechoslovaks' retreat over the bridge, forcing the latter to cross the river by boat or swimming.⁷⁹ Engel'hardt may also have influenced the failure. After the operation, he defected southwards to Denikin and during the fighting lost contact with his staff and gave contradictory reports to those received from the front. 1st Army staff were forced to communicate directly with divisional staffs to direct the operation.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ *BpPRA*, doc. 43, p. 65.

⁷⁶ *BpPRA*, doc. 44, pp. 65-6; *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 431, p. 451.

⁷⁷ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 77, pp. 8-11.

⁷⁸ *BpPRA*, doc. 45, p. 66; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pervaia armiiia v 1918 godu", p. 92.

⁷⁹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, *kniga* 3, p. 11; *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 77, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁰ N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voyny i dni mira", *Mikhail Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 75-76.

On 6th October, the new Eastern Front Commander S. S. Kamenev, ordered Tukhachevsky and Khvesin to regroup and attack Stavropol' and Samara respectively.⁸¹ However, fierce pursuit battles had been raging for the previous three days and the Samara Czechoslovak Group advanced to reinforce those retreating from Syzran', brutally suppressing the Ivashchenko workers' rising. 4th Army units under Chapaev advanced from the south and Vol'sk Division linked with Inza and Penza Divisions to maintain pursuit. Further armoured-trains, artillery and equipment abandoned by the retreating *Komuch* forces were captured. Simbirsk Division, advancing along the left bank above the Volga's vast curve before Samara, captured Stavropol' on 6th October, exposing Samara from the right for the final assault.⁸²

However, this was not needed as on 8th October, Tukhachevsky telegraphed Vacietis, "7th October workers of Samara expelled the Whiteguards at 14.00 hours. At 17.00 hours units of 4th Army entered, and at 20.00 hours units of my army entered. Samara is in our hands."⁸³

This introduced another vital component of class warfare to Tukhachevsky - uprisings in the enemy rear. It had occurred at Ivashchenko and proved crucial at Samara when *Komuch* troops evacuated the town after the rising. Dependent upon scale, risings could disrupt enemy communications or contribute to an encirclement and would impact further in 1919.

From 10th-17th October, a further 1,000 troops were mobilised to 1st Army from those liberated in Samara, another case of mobilising on the move.⁸⁴

Kappel' later assessed the Syzran'-Samara Operation,

Upon abandoning Syzran' and Samara after a long productive march in difficult conditions from Syzran' to Kinel' (with our left flank and rear constantly threatened with Red units intersecting our path of retreat) 2nd Division had completely fallen apart, both morally and in number. The final result was those mobilised almost to a man fled from the ranks of the units... Almost exclusively volunteers remained...

The condition of the troops was such that military tasks, although of a defensive character, could not be fulfilled successfully, since 2nd Division no longer functioned as a fighting unit....⁸⁵

⁸¹ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 433, pp. 452-453. Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev (1881-1936), a former Tsarist Colonel.

⁸² *BpPRA*, doc. 47, p. 70; *DkfKA, Tom I*, p. 453.

⁸³ *BpPRA*, doc. 48, p. 70.

⁸⁴ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 77, p. 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 17.

Tukhachevsky had proven adaptable to civil war conditions. This was fighting quite different to that encountered during the Great War, which had also involved manoeuvre, but on a larger scale than the Volga battles. Less troops demanded the utilisation of whatever technology or weaponry was available and Tukhachevsky had shown great imagination in his planning of both Simbirsk and Syzran'-Samara Operations, employing motorised vehicles alongside armoured-trains and cavalry to give each of his divisions mobility and coordinate their movement, to enable the application of concentric offensives. He later wrote of the need for speed and initiative in conducting concentric offensives and had shown here that he possessed the latter which enabled him to maintain the former. Launching continuous manoeuvre envelopment operations alongside sustained rapid pursuit battles cleared the Volga within a month, a remarkable feat considering the previous faltering performances of Eastern Front. Tukhachevsky had played the decisive role with 1st Army, spearheading the Simbirsk and Syzran'-Samara Operations, which involved the heaviest fighting of the 1918 Eastern campaign. He had been well-served by his divisional commanders, notably Gai, but also Lacis with Inza Division, and he readily acknowledged their roles and called upon them in later campaigns as trusted comrades.

This detailed look at the Volga battles illustrates the type of warfare involved in the Civil War. Although the numbers of some forces increased in 1919, the tactics utilised above remained valid as the level of weaponry barely increased. Mobility and manoeuvre were the order of the day and although Tukhachevsky did not have great cavalry numbers in his forces, he compensated for their absence by motorising his infantry, giving him an early appreciation of the advantages this proffered and perhaps influencing his preference for the motor over the horse.

Pursuit Operations

1st and 4th Armies had covered 200 kms in nine days, whilst 5th Army had advanced eastwards from Simbirsk along the railway towards Bugul'ma. However, no respite was allowed and on 8th October, Eastern Front *RVS* directed further tasks.

1st Army develop energetic actions for pursuing the retreating enemy to Buguruslan-Belebei sector, having final aim of taking Ufa.

4th Army develop actions with right flank in Ural'sk sector, with main forces - in Buzuluk-Orenburg sector.

5th Army to continue movement in general direction of Bugul'ma, having final aim of taking Ufa.⁸⁶

This was the initial order for the Ufa Operation to capture the Directory HQ. For Tukhachevsky, this involved the Buguruslan, Bugul'ma, Buzuluk and Belebei Operations in October and November and the final combined assault with 4th Army on Orenburg, in support of 5th Army's December attack on Ufa.

The rise in 1st Army numbers during the capture of the Volga areas and the mobilisation of local inhabitants and ex-*Komuch* soldiers is apparent, with the army doubling in size from 7,072 in mid-September to 14,774 infantry and 627 cavalry with 368 machine-guns, 72 guns and 2 armoured-trains on 7th October. Evidently, Tukhachevsky's later theory about increasing the size of the army by attacking during civil war was working in terms of captured military hardware and personnel.⁸⁷

The October-November operations did not involve the bitter fighting of Simbirsk or Syzran', but by the end of the year, 1st Army and Eastern Front as a whole, had been fighting continuously for four months. They had been engaged in battle or pursuit, unable to stop for reorganisation, mobilising on the move, trying to catch, encircle and destroy retreating anti-Soviet forces, whilst holding their own stretched forces together. However, by late 1918, Eastern Front was nearing its strategic reach. This can be surmised by 1st Army containing 14,070 infantry and 600 cavalry with 315 machine-guns and 54 guns by 1st December.⁸⁸ With no great combat ensuing as the remaining *Komuch* forces continued to retreat, inhabitants of areas 1st Army travelled through had little compulsion to join the Reds. They had not been forcibly mobilised by *Komuch* and had experienced no fighting around their home areas. Therefore, the numbers gained on the Volga were not matched further east. Desertion was also a huge problem for all sides during the Civil War as troops left armed service to remain in their home areas. The Russian word *mir* translates as both peace and world. The *mir* system was still strong in the villages and for many their village was their world. Peasants saw no reason to travel anywhere else when they had their land at home, far less fight elsewhere. Therefore, 1st Army figures remained fairly

⁸⁶ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 435, pp. 453-454.

⁸⁷ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 51.

constant for the rest of Tukhachevsky's command, dropping slightly if anything towards the end of the year.

This pattern is clear for Eastern Front as a whole, numbering 52,799 infantry and 3,394 cavalry on 15th September, but ballooning to 106,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry (minus 2nd Army) by 7th October. The potential for problems emerging by the end of the year is demonstrated by numbers plummeting again to 75,820 infantry and 10,030 cavalry by 1st December, as Moscow prioritised Southern Front. Hardware captured and acquired saw machine-guns rise from 916 to 1,717 and guns from 215 to 376 from September to December, but again the biggest rise occurred on the Volga.⁸⁹

During the drive East, Ufa was targeted to the neglect of 2nd, but especially 3rd Army in Perm'. The installation of Kolchak as Supreme Ruler of Russia by an officers' coup in Omsk on 18th November, overthrowing and arresting the Directory, and the appearance of Denikin with the Armed Forces of Russia, meant something had to give. This occurred on 24th December, as Kolchak captured Perm' during his first offensive.

Moscow, believing the Eastern situation was well in hand, had prioritised the new Southern Front forming against Denikin, transferring troops from Eastern Front. Tukhachevsky received a directive on 10th November from Eastern Front *RVS* concerning this. Whilst 4th and 5th Armies were instructed to attack Ural'sk and Ufa respectively, "Supreme Commander has nominated the whole of 1st Army for despatch to the other front".⁹⁰ However, worsening conditions on Eastern Front under Kolchak's offensive led to only Inza Division transferring in early December. Tukhachevsky remained with Penza and Simbirsk Divisions, to act in Orenburg and Ufa sectors, as 4th and 5th Armies had insufficient forces to hold the line without them.⁹¹ This had left the Ufa attack force understrength, far less 3rd Army. 2nd Army was belatedly sent to reinforce the line and stall Kolchak's offensive, whilst Stalin and Dzierżyński were despatched to investigate the "Red Marne".⁹²

⁸⁹ Ibid. pp. 38, 49 & 51. On 7th October, Eastern Front possessed 1,627 machine-guns and 404 guns. From 15th September-7th October, the number of armoured-trains increased from 6 to 8, but no figure is given for December.

⁹⁰ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 664, p. 708.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 782, endnote 167.

⁹² This was the name given to the "Perm' catastrophe".

Despite the loss of Perm', transfer of resources southwards and Ufa falling, the push eastwards continued, aiming for Kolchak further east in Omsk. 1st Army captured Sterlitamak on 29th December and 5th Army occupied Ufa two days later, but were ordered to maintain the offensive the next day, although the need to halt temporarily was acknowledged on 3rd January when Eastern Front *RVS* instructed regrouping to be conducted before moving on Orenburg.⁹³

This signalled the end of campaigning on Eastern Front for Tukhachevsky. On 4th January, he handed over command to Gai and departed for Southern Front.⁹⁴

In 1919, Tukhachevsky recalled 1st Army's contribution to Eastern Front in 1918, writing,

From the start of the Simbirsk offensive until the taking of Buguruslan was six weeks (from 9th September-28th October), and in this time units of 1st Army covered in battles 800 *versty*. This is a rare example in military history.

For these six weeks on Eastern Front the white guards lost around 150,000 square *versty*. Of these the portion of 1st Army alone (of five [Eastern Front Armies]) was around 70,000 square *versty*.

During these six weeks on Eastern Front 19 towns were taken.

Of these: a) alone the troops of 1st Army took nine towns (Buinsk, Tetiushi, Simbirsk, Melekess, Sengilei, Stavropol', Syzran', Buguruslan and Buzuluk) and b) under cooperation 1st Army took three towns (Khvalinsk, Samara, Sergievsk).

It is possible to say without exaggeration that last autumn 1st Army decided the fate of Eastern Front.⁹⁵

Murky Transfers?

If Tukhachevsky's service as 1st Army Commander had been successful, it apparently ended under a cloud. S. P. Medvedev, who had replaced Kuibyshev as political commissar in October 1918, complained to Trotsky about Tukhachevsky ordering provisions to celebrate New Year. Tukhachevsky retaliated by describing Medvedev as "provocational" and undermining his command. Daines suggests

⁹³ *BpPRA*, doc. 63, p. 88; *DkfKA, Tom I*, docs. 687 & 689, pp. 723-724 & 725-726; Orenburg was eventually taken by 1st and 4th Armies on 22nd January, meeting at this point with Turkestan Army, advancing from the south, linking Central Russia with Turkestan. 1st and Turkestan Armies were united under Gai's command and captured Ural'sk on 22nd January, with 4th Army coming under the command of Frunze on 31st January, *DkfKA, Tom. IV*, p. 536; *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 962, pp. 64-64 & 68.

⁹⁴ *BpPRA*, doc. 64, pp. 88-89.

⁹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "K iubileiu pervoi armii", *Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 25.

Trotsky demanded that Tukhachevsky be called to order and posted him away.⁹⁶ Tukhachevsky was appointed Deputy Commander of Southern Front on 26th December 1918, which, although on paper a promotion, could have been punishment for his indiscretion. He apparently languished in this post for three weeks.⁹⁷ Smirnov simply remarks Tukhachevsky and Medvedev had a "serious dispute",⁹⁸ but Sokolov points to deeper issues and to the two men being complete opposites.

Medvedev was part of the "Workers' Opposition" at the 1921 10th Party Congress, a hardline leftist, very likely against the use of *voenspetsy*. (The two men were certainly at opposite poles of the communist spectrum in March 1921 as Tukhachevsky was suppressing Kronstadt at this time, an action condemned by the Bolshevik hard-left). As has already been shown, Tukhachevsky firmly believed in unified command by communist-commanders. Possibly related to the dispute, he wrote to Vacietis on 22nd December, emphasising that he was a loyal communist and did not require political commissars to watch over him.

Sokolov suggests Medvedev's complaint was also related to Tukhachevsky having his wife, family members and others staying in his command train, using army stores for them and amassing a swollen 1st Army staff with no apparent qualitative gain. However, as Sokolov also notes and as has already been shown in chapter II, hardly any Tukhachevsky-appointed staff defected. His two brothers, Nikolai and Aleksandr, apparently worked in his staff on the command train, but they were trained soldiers.⁹⁹ However, Tukhachevsky did invite the female members of his family to stay in his train during the Civil War. His mother was at Inza en route to Simbirsk when the Murav'ev uprising occurred and his sisters visited him - Sonia with 5th Army; Ol'ga and Elizabeth on Western Front; Maria at Tambov, although no mention of visitors to Eastern Front after his mother is made.¹⁰⁰ His wife was a regular visitor, but this was possibly regular practice within the Red Army.¹⁰¹ All this could have antagonised Medvedev. Sokolov refers to Koritskii who described Tukhachevsky as maintaining

⁹⁶ V. O. Daines, p. 44.

⁹⁷ *Voennye bumagi L. D. Trotskogo*, Reel 5, f. 4, op. 3, d. 26, p. 34. Frunze was appointed 4th Army Commander and Novitskii as 4th Army Chief-of-Staff in the same order.

⁹⁸ G. V. Smirnov, *Krovavyyi marshal: Mikahil Tukhachesvsky, 1893-1937*, (St. Petersburg, 1997), pp. 251-252.

⁹⁹ S. T. Minakov, *Sovetskaia voennaia elita 20-kh godov*, (Orel, 2000), p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ *RGIA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 42.

¹⁰¹ See p. 106, Blagonravov's wife is mentioned as being in the train in which Murav'ev's accomplices fled from Simbirsk, indicating she was present at the front.

his command-train in a professional condition for work and studying most nights, barely sleeping. This was echoed by Elizabeth who recalled that Tukhachevsky hardly slept during offensives, sometimes for only half an hour at his desk in two weeks.¹⁰² As has been shown, 1st Army was continuously attacking throughout 1918, giving little time for Tukhachevsky to indulge a large entourage, although "hangers-on" may still have been in the train.

Kalnins, with whom Tukhachevsky had already clashed, backed Medvedev, criticising Tukhachevsky for taking decisions and making alterations with which the commissars did not agree. He urged Moscow to back a loyal Bolshevik over someone who had only joined the Party in August-September 1918. Although Kalnins was inaccurate with his dates, this demonstrated how Tukhachevsky was still viewed by some of his fellow command staff and vividly illustrates the precarious relationships generated within the *RVS* command structure. Samsonovich, Penza Division's political commissar also backed Medvedev. However, Sokolov suggests Tukhachevsky only complained about Medvedev once he had secured the transfer to Southern Front.¹⁰³ This suggests Tukhachevsky's transfer was not a punishment and that Trotsky backed him, transferring Medvedev instead.

A clash over the dual command structure, a common occurrence within the Red Army, is feasible with such diametrically opposed viewpoints within 1st Army *RVS*. It is also likely that Trotsky supported Tukhachevsky against the commissars, given the connections between the two. Trotsky had previously backed *voenspetsy* against political commissars, knowing the conditions they were fighting under and that the *voenspetsy* were the military experts who could get the job done.

Soviet biographies unsurprisingly fail to mention the dispute, but more surprisingly, neither do Western accounts.¹⁰⁴ The latter stick with the formers' version that Tukhachevsky was transferred because *Komuch* was defeated and Kolchak was just emerging, leaving Southern Front as the greatest threat and prioritised by Moscow. Therefore, Tukhachevsky was transferred because he had accomplished his task on Eastern Front so well and was now needed to sort out the next trouble-spot.

¹⁰² N. I. Koritskii, "V dni voiny...", pp. 61 & 65-66; *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, p. 1.

¹⁰³ B. Sokolov, *Mikhail Tukhachevsky: zhizn' i smert' "Krasnogo marshala"*, (Smolensk, 1999), pp. 81-85.

¹⁰⁴ Spahr, Butson and Kaufmann all fail to mention the dispute.

This version is also possible as will become clearer once Tukhachevsky's path through the whole Civil War is shown.

However, the truth perhaps lies somewhere in between. It is very likely that the disputes between Tukhachevsky and the commissars had festered away for weeks or even months and had finally escalated to a level that necessitated change. Possibly Tukhachevsky and Medvedev were *both* transferred to demonstrate that this type of bickering was not acceptable. However, the transfers would not have occurred if Eastern Front was still prioritised. Only the rise of Krasnov and Denikin in the South and the relative calm of the East spurred Trotsky to take action, killing two birds with one stone. He relieved the tension, but in doing so, moved his most successful commander to the trouble-spot. It is very likely Tukhachevsky was appointed Deputy Southern Front Commander and then 8th Army Commander to carry out the reorganisational work he had conducted so adeptly already, initially on a front level, but then with an army which required rebuilding.

Moscow was desperately trying to pull Southern Front together at this time. In January 1919 Vacietis remarked that Southern Front troops fled the field of battle at the slightest reverse. This was a situation comparable to Eastern Front in June 1918, as partisan Red Guard forces were shown to be no match for slightly organised troops. However, following the example of Eastern Front's installation of strict discipline by revolutionary tribunal, initiated by Tukhachevsky, this was carried to new lengths on Southern Front, brutally punishing desertion and refusal to fight. In late 1918, 2,000 8th Army troops had been sentenced to death. However, Vacietis criticised the fact that only 150 of these sentences had been fulfilled, leaving a shortfall of 1,850 which "...does not achieve any kind of military work". He noted, "That discipline which we have to practise on the fronts, will be discernible only by the heroic measures of bringing to heel the military mob we have on the fronts to form regiments, divisions, armies".¹⁰⁵

Who better to carry out this brutal reorganisational work than the man who had inaugurated the practice on Eastern Front. Tukhachevsky had moulded a partisan rabble into the best army on Eastern Front, therefore Trotsky and Vacietis now wanted him to do the same in the South. I would argue that this is the most likely

¹⁰⁵ J. Vacietis, "Grazhdanskaia voina, 1918 god", *Pamiat'. Istoricheskii sbornik*, No. 2, (Moscow, 1977), pp. 72-73.

reason for Tukhachevsky's transfer South and possibly the truth behind the dispute with Medvedev also lies in Tukhachevsky's readiness to utilise these methods, which was entirely contrary to the views of the hard-left Bolsheviks.

However, Tukhachevsky apparently either did not enjoy or did not fit into the post of Deputy Front Commander. An ex-Tsarist Colonel P. A. Slaven was Front Commander and his staff comprised 17 ex-Tsarist *voenspetsy*, six generals, seven colonels and 3 lieutenant-colonels. Ivanov suggests a great enmity emitted from these and other former general staff officers towards former 2nd-Lieutenant Tukhachevsky and the official registering of his new post was delayed by one and a half months.¹⁰⁶

There are also suggestions that Stalin did not like or trust Tukhachevsky either, which would be plausible after the Medvedev episode, and kept him at the rear where he could not interfere. Stalin had already clashed with Trotsky after taking it upon himself to become involved with Southern Front *RVS*. He had initially been posted as Special Plenipotentiary for Grain Requisitioning, but had manoeuvred himself and Sergei Minin into the *RVS* as political commissars and tried to replace an ex-Tsarist Colonel Sytin with Voroshilov as military commissar in October 1918. Trotsky had Stalin and Co. recalled and removed and Stalin did not rejoin Southern Front *RVS* until 3rd October 1919.¹⁰⁷ It is very possible he would have not taken kindly to Tukhachevsky, another ex-*voenspetsy* appointed by Trotsky, arriving, but it is difficult to see what influence he could have had on *RVS* affairs when he was not a member. Whether any of this unsettled Tukhachevsky or he missed commanding in the field, it is suggested he applied for the first frontline command to become available, which was 8th Army.¹⁰⁸

V. M. Gittis had commanded 8th Army since 1st July 1918, but on 15th January Slaven removed him for not fulfilling orders and referred him to a revolutionary tribunal.¹⁰⁹ Evidently appalled at Slaven taking such an unauthorised decision, Trotsky contacted Southern Front *RVS* on 19th January,

I utterly and completely share Supreme Commander's opinion about the intolerable removal of Army Commander Gittis. It is forbidden to throw away people, who conscientiously conduct good work. Regarding

¹⁰⁶ V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, 2nd edition, (Moscow, 1990), p. 87.

¹⁰⁷ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 533; For the "Tsaritsyn Affair" and the beginnings of the Trotsky-Stalin feud see E. Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 88-91.

¹⁰⁸ V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁹ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 538; *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 591, pp. 626-627; Vladimir Mikhailovich Gittis (1881-1938), a former Tsarist colonel.

Iskratsy, he has declared himself ill and there is visibly no hope of his quick return to Southern Front. The question about a temporary replacement becomes more significant. I am afraid Tukhachevsky may not prove to be for this post. Is it not better to appoint Tukhachevsky to 8th Army, and Gittis to the front? I ask for a report on the front position at the present moment.¹¹⁰

Evidently Trotsky had removed Slaven for his actions, but it appears Tukhachevsky was recommended to replace him, which would belie any notion he was treated shoddily by Southern Front staff. However, Trotsky intervened personally to prevent this, suggesting Gittis for the post and Tukhachevsky to replace him. It is possible Trotsky felt Tukhachevsky did not have the experience of Gittis for the Front Command post, which was probably correct. He had only been 1st Army Commander for six months. However, Trotsky also possibly felt Tukhachevsky's talents should be utilised to bring 8th Army back into line. Gittis was perhaps a capable commander, but had obviously not been prepared to conduct mass repression against his own troops to instill iron discipline, with the earlier executions unfulfilled. Tukhachevsky had done this with 1st Army and would do so again with 8th Army. Trotsky's recommendations were confirmed on 20th January and Tukhachevsky served as 8th Army Commander until 15th March.¹¹¹

However, this was not the end of Southern Front squabbling. The actual combat on Southern Front, in which Tukhachevsky successfully led 8th Army for two months against Krasnov, is not as important in assessing him overall as the complete breakdown in working relations he had with Gittis. A suspicion clouds this episode. It is possible that the vehemence with which Tukhachevsky complained about Gittis' command was simply fuelled by a resentment over Trotsky's decision. Tukhachevsky felt he should have been appointed Front Commander and was determined to undermine and destroy Gittis for receiving the post. However, this was not necessarily the case. A brief summary of the conduct of the Southern Front fighting sets the scene and this, combined with Tukhachevsky's evolving theories of civil warfare, set him on the way to his July and December 1919 analysis of the conflict.

¹¹⁰ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 325, op. 1, d. 479, p. 2; translation of document contained in A. B. Murphy, *The Russian Civil War: Primary Sources*, (New York, 2000), p. 69.

¹¹¹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 1, p. 9; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 533 & 538. Khvesin became 8th Army Commander and Gittis retained his post until 13th July 1919.

8th Army Commander - Southern Front: January-March 1919

Combat in the Don

The withdrawal of the Central Powers from November 1918 had opened up European Russia down to the Donbass and Don Regions. In the Don, General Krasnov commanded the Don Cossack Army and used this opportunity to secure his grip on the region, although he had to fight continuously with Red forces to hold onto his home territory. However, further south in the Kuban, Denikin had used the barrier afforded by German occupation during 1918 to secure the region. He built up the Armed Forces of South Russia with capable commanders, Generals Mai-Maevskii and Wrangel, serving under him.¹¹² In early 1919, Denikin launched an offensive against the Red Caucasus-Caspian Front. This was a disorganised mass of around 150,000 troops riddled with typhus and Denikin routed it completely by early February with only 25,000 men.¹¹³ The timing was crucial for the Don theatre as Denikin was able to despatch forces here as Southern Front was attacking, greatly influencing the outcome.

Southern Front comprised from east to west, 10th Army at Tsaritsyn, 9th Army at Balashov, 8th Army at Voronezh and Donets Group under Kozhevnikov, which became 13th Army on 5th March.¹¹⁴ On its right flank operated 1st-3rd Ukrainian Partisan Divisions under Nestor Makhno, fighting for the Reds at this point. Therefore, in Southern Front's offensive, 8th Army acted with 9th Army on its left flank and Donets Group on its right.

On 15th February 1919, midway through Tukhachevsky's command, 8th Army contained 22,700 infantry and 1,250 cavalry with 152 guns and 730 machine-guns.¹¹⁵ He was commanding slightly more troops, but with less weaponry than on Eastern Front. Inza Division under Lacis was within 8th Army's complement and Tukhachevsky apparently appointed it his main operational force, putting his trust in his former Eastern Front colleague.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Vladimir Zenonovich (Zinov'evich) Mai-Maevskii (1867-1920), a former Tsarist Lieutenant-General, Baron Petr Nikolaevich Wrangel (1878-1928), a former Tsarist Major-General.

¹¹³ E. Mawdsley, pp. 161-163.

¹¹⁴ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 542.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 56.

¹¹⁶ V. M. Ivanov, p. 88.

Altogether on 15th February, Southern Front lined up 99,400 infantry, 17,650 cavalry, 460 guns and 2,040 machine-guns, 16 armoured-trains and 68 planes, whilst neighbouring Ukrainian Front fielded 43,600 infantry, 3,520 cavalry, 124 guns and 606 machine-guns, giving around 163,000 men in total. Against this were arrayed 199,800 anti-Soviet troops, 72,800 and 45,000 of whom were in the Don and Kuban Cossack hosts respectively, against Southern Front.¹¹⁷

Heavy snow during January made transport by cartage impossible and skis had to be attached to facilitate movement. February saw heavy rain and the onset of the spring thaw, making roads impassable, muddy morasses. The Rivers Don and Donets flowed in full spate by the end of the month making crossing perilous, if not impossible. Temperatures averaged minus 10 degrees.¹¹⁸

Tukhachevsky assumed command of 8th Army just after Slaven had ordered pursuit of the retreating Don Army. 8th Army was to advance south-east down both banks of the River Don, but with most troops on the left bank, acting with 9th Army to secure the Povorino-Tsaritsyn Railway and aid 10th Army's struggle to hold the latter town. Donets Group was to leave one division at Lugansk Station, but advance towards Kantemirovka Station with a view to attacking Millerovo.¹¹⁹ The latter two were stations on the Voronezh-Novocherkassk-Rostov Railway.

The Don Army at Tsaritsyn continued to fall back under the Red offensive, leading Vacietis to send directives on 1st and 3rd February for Southern Front to take Novocherkassk and Rostov on the Azov Sea coast, with the ultimate aim of pushing the Whites over to the right bank of the Don.¹²⁰ He criticised Gittis in the latter directive for not giving 8th Army correct tasks under pursuit operations, demanding Gittis amend this.

To fulfill the general directives, Gittis proposed 10th Army advance along the lateral Tsaritsyn-Likhaia Railway on the left flank and Kozhevnikov advance further down the radial Voronezh-Novocherkassk-Rostov Railway to take Likhaia Station, the junction of the two lines. 8th and 9th Armies in the centre were to advance across the Don steppes to the line Kashary-Ust'-Medveditskaia-Kremenskaia by 6th

¹¹⁷ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 55-56 & 476-477.

¹¹⁸ M. Brawer, *Atlas of Russia and the Independent Republics*, (New York, 1994), p. 13.

¹¹⁹ *DkfKA, Tom I*, docs. 592-596, pp. 627-633.

¹²⁰ *DGkKA*, docs. 231 & 232, pp. 260-262.

February.¹²¹ Tukhachevsky was to proceed across open grasslands, frozen with midwinter snow and ice, with the transport and climactic difficulties mentioned above. Marching on foot was the only feasible option, but attacking through Don Region's heartland gave Tukhachevsky no secure rear. Constant harassment from cossack bands disrupted communications and supply. Attacking under these conditions, Gittis hoped to encircle the retreating Don Army forces in the Don.

Southern Front initially found some success on the left flank as 10th Army advanced and captured 7,000 prisoners from 23rd January-10th February.¹²² However, with conditions so bad in the centre, Tukhachevsky independently decided to advance towards Millerovo, acting outwith Gittis' demarcation lines.¹²³ This was a more direct route towards the Donbass, cutting the distance 8th Army had to travel in the hostile open grasslands and taking them back to the railway lines of the Donbass area to ease movement.

Possibly because of this, Gittis demanded that Tukhachevsky attack with his right flank to help Kozhevnikov and with his left flank to aid 9th Army's right flank and centre, which were under threat. Gittis complained the Front Staff had not received Inza Division's position for six days.¹²⁴

Kakurin suggests 8th Army's right flank did not advance quickly enough from 5th-10th February, losing the opportunity to encircle Volunteer Army divisions facing Kozhevnikov's Group and failing to prevent the arrival of further reinforcements.¹²⁵ However, the difficult conditions perhaps delayed 8th Army's movement and Vacietis had already criticised Gittis for giving out incorrect pursuit orders to 8th Army, which would have further delayed it.

With Inza Division, Lacis had actually performed a spectacular cavalry raid into the White rear to cut the Tsaritsyn-Likhaia Railway at Morozovsk Station, blowing up the line in five places and cutting the telegraph wires. This prevented 5 White *eshelons*, retreating from Tsaritsyn, reaching Likhaia, 8th Army's target, and probably contributed to 10th Army's prisoner haul. Tukhachevsky sent Lacis a congratulatory telegram on 11th February,

¹²¹ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 604, pp. 639-640.

¹²² N. E. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia, Tom II*, (Moscow, 1926), p. 59.

¹²³ A. S. Bubnov et al, eds., *Grazhdanskaia voina 1918-1921gg., Tom III*, (Moscow, 1931), p. 227.

¹²⁴ *DkfKA, Tom I*, doc. 609, p. 646.

¹²⁵ N. E. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia, Tom II*, pp. 60-61.

Congratulations on your unexpected high successes. By order No. 5 you were given the task which decides the fate of the whole front, - cutting of the railway and telegraph. I recall the rules of cavalry raids: 1) unlimited bravery of commanders and subordinates, 2) mobile and not too big detachments. Fulfill decisively.¹²⁶

The terrain Tukhachevsky had to advance through was completely different from Eastern Front and with a hostile local population, recruitment on the move was not possible. Frontline troops had to be used to secure the rear, weakening offensive strength further. By his independent manoeuvre, he was attempting to utilise the railway more, as 1st Army had successfully done previously. However, whilst 1st Army had also used alternative transport resources to retain speed of movement, this was not possible in the Don, as bitter winter conditions made travel much more difficult. The use of cavalry for reconnaissance and raids was still valid though and Tukhachevsky had used it well again to aid the operation.

With the pursuit stalling, Vacietis intervened on 11th February and instructed Gittis to redirect the attack towards the Donbass sector, demanding a regrouping of Southern Front forces to concentrate its main forces for taking the area.¹²⁷ Gittis envisaged regrouping in eight days, but it took eighteen.¹²⁸ Travel difficulties combined with an inadequate rail network and the Whites' and local population's destruction of six bridges. However, further complications resulted, with General Mai-Maevskii's forces reaching the Donbass at this point, to reinforce Krasnov's faltering army. A White counter-attack in mid-February forced Kozhevnikov back, threatening 8th Army's right flank, but fierce defensive battles, with the aid of 9th Army and Donets Group, prevented this setback becoming a rout.¹²⁹ Southern Front attempted a counter-offensive at the end of February into the Donbass, pitting Tukhachevsky against Mai-Maevskii's forces. However, further White reinforcements arrived from the Caucasus and the onset of the thaw, exacerbated by heavy rain, saw the previously ice-bound River Donets flowing in full spate. Destruction of river crossings by the Whites created a natural barrier to defend, but also prevented any quick counters by them and the fighting became bogged down with neither side making any headway.

¹²⁶ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 1; A. S. Popov, *Trud. Talant. Doblest'*, (Moscow, 1972), p. 35.

¹²⁷ *DGkKA*, doc 234, p. 263.

¹²⁸ A. S. Bubnov et al, *Tom III*, p. 232.

¹²⁹ *DkfKA*, *Tom I*, docs. 615 & 620, pp. 656-658 & 661.

Vacietis complained to Gittis on 12th March that the latter had not correctly followed his directive to pursue the Whites over the River Don and take Novocherkassk and Rostov, and had been unclear in his orders to Front armies. Vacietis also later complained about Gittis' fulfillment of set tasks, accusing him of being "phlegmatic" in his responses to his orders.¹³⁰ Gittis had reported on 4th March that weather conditions and White reinforcements were holding up the offensive and repeated this on 15th March.¹³¹ However, he also reported on 5th March that Southern Front had been attacking continuously, fighting increasingly heavy battles and had suffered heavy losses. These were increasingly difficult to replace as reinforcements had to march up to 250 *versty* to reach the front and transfers and communications were made increasingly difficult under manoeuvre operations because of the river crossings.¹³² Retaining telegraph cable connections would have been increasingly difficult. Southern Front was overstretched by early March as the continuous offensive through extremely harsh territory and weather conditions left its supply bases behind. However, although Gittis used these difficulties to explain the offensive stalling, he was to be blamed for putting Southern Front in the position to suffer them, as well as a Don Cossack uprising which occurred in the Red rear, adding some 30,000 to the White ranks. This erupted on 11th March, but spread and became a major factor in Southern Front's difficulties in the months to come.¹³³

Tukhachevsky and Gittis

It appears that Vacietis' criticism in early March was incited by Tukhachevsky, who apparently applied for another posting away from Gittis, complaining that he could no longer work under him.¹³⁴ Tukhachevsky had appealed directly to Vacietis and the *RVSR* over Gittis' head,

I appeal to you in this report as a communist, sending it not as a commander, events on Southern Front have forced me to speak out not as one of the commanders of the Red Army, as I would usually do, but as a communist, fearful for the whole failure of the revolution...

¹³⁰ *DGkKA*, docs. 367-368 & 370 pp. 407-408 & 409-410. The latter complaint came on 22nd March.

¹³¹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 203 & 208, pp. 212-217 & 224-226.

¹³² *Ibid.* docs. 205, pp. 218-220.

¹³³ *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR. Entsiklopediia*, (Moscow, 1983), p. 91.

¹³⁴ V. M. Ivanov, p. 93.

Being well-acquainted with Gittis' orders, with his understanding of war, I attest completely determinedly that Gittis does not know how to lead by the basic laws of strategy...

From the very beginning, Southern Front Commander comrade Gittis was mistaken in his choice of direction, selecting not Rostov, but Tsaritsyn...

If the main forces had attacked through Donets Basin to Rostov (by the shortest route)... they would have had a secure Soviet rear. But the main forces went through Don Region and the forward line is weakened because of the suppression of the cossack uprising...

To replace Gittis at this dangerous moment would give more than sending three divisions...

Of course amongst the old *spetsy* it is difficult to find good commanders. Already it is time to replace them with communists. For example, Eastern Front Southern Group Commander comrade Frunze is an exceptionally talented man and under his command the position on the front would quickly change.¹³⁵

This report displays the development of Tukhachevsky's intertwining of military practice and theory with class warfare. He was complaining about a strategical error, a military matter, but by relating it to Gittis failing to understand class warfare, Tukhachevsky was casting doubt upon Gittis' ability to command in the Red Army at all. However, although criticising old *voenspetsy* in his telegram and possibly carrying a grudge against Gittis for obtaining the Front Command position, Tukhachevsky was complaining from military necessity and a genuine belief in their inability to do the job. He was in the midst of desperate fighting, trying to prevent a White breakthrough, making it unlikely he was thinking in career terms, trying to get ahead of senior *voenspetsy*. Besides, with clashes with authority still fresh from Eastern Front, he had no reason to court controversy again. The link between the military shortcomings of the old *voenspetsy* and the evolution of class warfare was made in action.

Tukhachevsky had commanded very successfully on Eastern Front, leading a continuous offensive under both Vacietis and Kamenev, because the offensive was carried out in the correct manner. The offensive passed through regions with a sympathetic population, allowing mobilisation whilst advancing, to maintain momentum. This was supplemented by uprisings in the enemy rear, which created disruption and possible encirclements and ensured a secure Red rear, preventing hostile partisan activity or overstretched communication and supply lines. Tukhachevsky

¹³⁵ A. S. Popov, pp. 36-37.

knew this worked and had wanted to employ the same strategy on Southern Front. He apparently assessed the Southern Front situation in January 1919, probably whilst Deputy Front Commander, before Gittis ordered the attack through the Don. Tukhachevsky advised against it, but was overruled.¹³⁶ Having carried out the tour of Don Region the previous year and fought cossacks here, he had an idea of the situation and was proven to be correct the following year in Southern Front's offensive against Denikin. This was routed through the Donbass, following Tukhachevsky's 1919 recommendation. The credit for the original idea of this successful offensive must go to Tukhachevsky, although Stalin would apparently later claim to have planned the strategy.¹³⁷ Perhaps Tukhachevsky even envisaged a workers' rising in Rostov.

However, Gittis directed Southern Front through the hostile Don region instead of the sympathetic Donbass Region which would have secured the rear, provided fresh troops and allowed communications and supply lines to remain open. Gittis' refusal to contemplate the offensive through the Donbass on class warfare grounds convinced Tukhachevsky that the former was not capable of commanding under new conditions of warfare. Tukhachevsky knew old strategic principles still remained valid, but he believed new strategic forms were being created in the Civil War and these had to be utilised immediately to win the conflict. Failure to do so would be catastrophic. Tukhachevsky was not just criticising older *voenspetsy* for career advancement in the Red Army as has been suggested he did in his later career.¹³⁸ He truly believed they could not adapt and do the job. The need therefore arose to rush Red Commanders through the courses.

Tukhachevsky believed in early 1919 that the old *voenspetsy* were inadequately trained and unable to adapt to civil warfare, and he wrote this in his report to Lenin in December. However, his report was not compiled from purely 5th Army experience as stated in the title. He was calling for the replacement of old *voenspetsy* already in February 1919 and probably hoped that those undergoing the training courses he had drawn up in June 1918 would be able to take command soon. Tukhachevsky recorded further criticism of Gittis in July 1919 in *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voiny*, when

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 36.

¹³⁷ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 6, p. 14.

¹³⁸ S. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation*, (Oxford, 1998), pp. 143-148.

first formulating the necessity to utilise "living centres" and avoid "dying centres" in Civil War, routing offensives through friendly regions. He wrote,

...in certain localities with hostile class population it is impossible not only to create an organised rear, but this also distracts troops from the front. Such rears must be avoided.

Our Southern Front scorned these considerations in their offensive and now are severely paying for these errors.¹³⁹

This was a direct reference to the Don Cossack uprising which occurred in the Red rear in February 1919 and helped wreck the offensive. The consequence was that by July 1919, Denikin reached Orel, only 250 miles from Moscow. Tukhachevsky intimated this could have been avoided if the correct strategic planning, his own, had been used in January.

Tukhachevsky returned to this in *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia* in December 1919, noting the Don as a prime example of a "dying centre", where an offensive would have to fight not only the enemy army, but also opposing "enemy centres", (towns), requiring troops to hold the rear in check. He later developed this point by noting lower troop numbers and wider expanses in civil war meant "dying centres" should be avoided as protecting the rear would sap the strength and momentum of offensive action, remarking,

The main reason for our failure on Southern Front in spring of this year consisted of the fact that the main forces of the front were moved not to where we would have had a Soviet living rear in Donets Basin, but to where we had a "dying" rear, which demanded the detailing of large garrisons for holding for us the wide Don steppes. The question of the relation of numbers to spaces was not considered and our army was beaten.¹⁴⁰

Tukhachevsky saw this as a replication of national war conditions, a complete misunderstanding of fighting a class war and another reason for senior *voenspetsy* to be replaced. He mentioned Gittis' shortcomings once more in his lecture, when describing concentric offensives, saying,

This spring, on Southern Front our army launched a concentric offensive, but the tactical strength we had was minimal. It appeared as if the point of concentration appointed for the armies was in the enemy rear. Denikin very easily tore to pieces this intricate wisdom.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 1, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, pp. 37 & 39-40.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 47.

Therefore, Tukhachevsky criticised Gittis for shortcomings in military planning and misunderstanding the different nature of class warfare, introducing cutting sarcasm to the argument. Tukhachevsky evidently derided Gittis, which may have been sparked by jealousy at the latter gaining the Front Command ahead of him. However, this displays the evolution in Tukhachevsky's character and thought process which was taking place during the Civil War. He had witnessed the positive effects Marxism had on capabilities to wage civil warfare: mobilising recruits whilst attacking; agitating to weaken the enemy; and uprisings in the enemy rear to help the frontal attack. These would all be included in "Deep Battle" in altered, but similar forms. Combining military theory with Marxism would also be repeated in further debates against various targets throughout his life as he strove to have his ideas accepted.

This chain of thought would develop during the 1920s as Tukhachevsky advocated his offensive strategy of "annihilation" over "attrition". He saw older *voenspetsy* still advocating the methods and positional warfare of the Great War. Tukhachevsky did not want to fight such a war so he created "Deep Battle" to avoid it and ensure Red Commanders could correctly conduct manoeuvre operations to completely defeat the enemy. Gittis' incorrect application of manoeuvre further convinced Tukhachevsky that people like him must be replaced. This demonstrates how Tukhachevsky's advocacy of manoeuvre warfare in civil war and subsequent calls for new ideas to be adopted brought him into conflict with older *voenspetsy*. Gaining military reform and arguing against those of different views became the same process and would remain so throughout his life. He believed it was a matter of life and death during the Civil War and as Stalin rose to power, the debates over military strategy and which type of army to build, eventually became a matter of life and death for those involved, as imprisonment and ultimately death followed for Tukhachevsky's opponents in the debates of the late 1920s/early 1930s and himself in 1937. These debates were all part of the same process for Tukhachevsky. He had a vision very early in his Civil War career of how the Red Army should develop. He had come to his vision through command experience, knew that the methods envisaged had worked and was determined to push them through. As the 1920s wore on, the military question evolved within the Soviet state, but Tukhachevsky evolved

with it and the need to vehemently argue for his vision of the Red Army remained. This process started in the Civil War and carried on throughout his lifetime, with his belief in the underlying Marxist principles emerging during his Civil War career.

The ultimate evolution of this and an insight into Tukhachevsky's character and how he manipulated the system throughout his career is demonstrated by the account of the 1919 Don Operation given in *Grazhdanskaia voina v 1918-1921gg*, which Tukhachevsky edited with Bubnov, S. S. Kamenev and Eideman in 1930. Eideman also fought in the Don Operation with 9th Army. This was the official history of the Civil War and it related the,

...independent movement of 8th Army to Millerovo sector, instead of movement into the depth of Don *oblast*, without considering demarcation lines, that showed the correct evaluation of the strategic position, in the end exposed to red command the circumstances and they ordered Southern Front Commander comrade Gittis to refrain from his unreal plan of encircling the enemy in Donbass steppes and unfortunately were very late to evaluate the significance of Rostov sector and Donets Basin, as the vital political and economic areas for the proletarian revolution.¹⁴²

Therefore, by 1930 Tukhachevsky's version was "the truth", appearing as it did in the official Civil War history. In the evolution of the Stalinist regime, this was the vital link in making ideas become reality and defeating those who argued against them. Gorelik suggests Tukhachevsky did not want to co-edit *Grazhdanskaia voina* because it was not being objective about Civil War history.¹⁴³ However, he did co-edit the third volume and it does paint a flattering picture of him.

Tukhachevsky's first two commands introduced him to the type of fighting involved in the Russian Civil War and also brought to his attention the need to employ people in the Red Army who could adapt to and utilise the necessary methods. In chapter IV, I shall examine how he used these early experiences to command successfully in the main theatres of the Civil War until April 1920, by which time he had evolved into, perhaps, the archetypal Red Commander.

¹⁴² A. S. Bubnov et al, eds., *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR, 1918-1921gg*, Tom III, pp. 227-228.

¹⁴³ Ia. M. Gorelik, "Odin iz aktivnykh stroitelei sovetskoi armii", *Istoricheskie Zapiski*, 105, (1980), pp. 247-248.

Chapter IV: Conventional Commander in the Class War - II: Development of the Red Commander: April 1919-April 1920.

5th Army Commander - Eastern Front: April-December 1919

Transfer From Southern Front

Whether Tukhachevsky requested a transfer because of irreconcilable differences with Gittis or was summoned to Moscow for reassignment because of the dispute remains unclear. Both alternatives are suggested, but it is most likely that events elsewhere were the major reason behind his move. Whilst Southern Front had reached an impasse, with the thaw ending the Red offensive and both sides jostling for supremacy on an equal footing, Kolchak had launched a general offensive on 4th March against Red Eastern Front, which was falling back in disarray, surrendering the territory won by Tukhachevsky et al in 1918.

Tukhachevsky was the perfect man to command on Eastern Front. He had previously been the most successful commander there and had been fighting in the same theatre of operations only three months previously. The troops knew and respected his leadership and with Red forces disintegrating, his reorganisational abilities were required before any counter-offensive could be envisaged. He had fulfilled Moscow's expectations in the East in 1918 and although courting dispute around the end of the year and again on Southern Front, his assessment of the Don offensive did meet with approval, as its utilisation to win there later in the year proves. He was the best organiser and motivator the Red Army possessed and was needed on the prioritised front.

Eastern Front was officially declared the main operational area on 11th April,¹ but intense work had been conducted from Moscow during the preceding weeks to send all available forces, resources and political workers East. The troubleshooter was needed in the next trouble-spot and even if Tukhachevsky had not criticised Gittis, he would have been transferred.

¹ Lenin announced this in his *Tezisy TsK RKP(b) v svyazi s polozheniem Vostochnogo fronta*, RGVA, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 5, p. 27; *Vbr*, doc. 37, pp. 68.

5th Army was the worst hit Eastern Front force and it is no surprise that Tukhachevsky received this most difficult of postings. He travelled to Moscow on 15th March, received his new post on 23rd March and reached 5th Army HQ at Krotovka Station on 4th April, replacing the beleaguered Zh. K. Blumberg.²

It has been shown that Tukhachevsky had already formulated definite ideas concerning civil warfare and how these compared to previous war, based on his command experience with 1st and 8th Armies. He knew which methods were likely to succeed and had grave doubts about the abilities of older *voenspetsy* to adapt to these and command within the Red Army. What occurred during his 5th Army command to reinforce or develop these early ideas further?

Early Command - Reorientation and Reorganisation

Kolchak launched a two-pronged counter-offensive against Eastern Front, advancing on sledges through the sub-zero snow-covered terrain. The Siberian Army under Gajda, a former Austrian NCO, advanced in the north against 2nd and 3rd Red Armies, the latter holding the left flank of Eastern Front.³ 4th Army under Frunze held Eastern Front's right flank at Orenburg with Tukhachevsky's old 1st Army, still commanded by Gai, on its left flank. 5th Army bore the brunt of Kolchak's offensive, defending the central sector attacked by Western Army under General Khanzhin, Kolchak's most capable and senior commander.⁴ Eastern Front had still been moving eastwards when Kolchak launched his counter-offensive and if not completely strategically overstretched, was weakened by continuous combat and troop transfers south. With just 83,000 men facing the 143,290 of Kolchak's Armies and cossacks, Eastern Front was hopelessly outnumbered and far from its supply bases.⁵

5th Army was attacking in Zlatoust-Cheliabinsk sector in the Ural Mountains when Khanzhin's counter-offensive began. By 10th March, Kamenev reported that it had been forced back by deep envelopments and had to abandon Ufa, withdrawing behind the River Chermasan. 3rd Army was retreating, suffering heavy losses from Kolchak's 1st Siberian and Perm' Divisions, which left 2nd Army threatened on both

² *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 1, p. 9; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 537.

³ Rudolf Geigl Gajda (Radola) (1892-1948).

⁴ E. Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 145.

flanks. Kamenev requested that Vacietis postpone the Tashkent Operation to allow Red forces to turn north into the South Urals and Orenburg area and for 1st Army to attack Verkhneural'sk and Cheliabinsk to relieve the pressure on Eastern Front's centre and left flank.⁶

The Whites captured Ufa on 14th March and 5th Army's 26th and 27th Rifle Divisions retreated along the Volgo-Bugul'ma Railway to Bugul'ma and the Samaro-Zlatoust Railway to Belebei. Receiving reinforcements from 1st Army, 5th Army held these positions for twelve days before Western Army pushed them back once more, capturing Sterlitamak, Belebei, Bugul'ma and Buguruslan between 5th-15th April.⁷

Tukhachevsky inherited a disintegrating force, demoralised by a month's constant retreat. Facing 49,000 Whites, 5th Army had been outnumbered nearly 5:1, suffering horrific casualties, which were augmented by troops taken prisoner and desertions. 5th Army numbers plummeted from 11,000 on 1st March to 6,500 on 19th March and 5,500 by April.⁸ Therefore, reorganisational work under fire was Tukhachevsky's first task upon arriving on Eastern Front, as it had been the year before, attempting to screen the front to allow mobilisations.⁹ With Moscow amassing its best people in the East, he had the help of capable figures.

Influential Figures

On 1st April, Ivan Nikitovich Smirnov was appointed a 5th Army *RVS* member.¹⁰ He became the vital link between 5th Army and Red partisans in Kolchak's rear in the months ahead. On 8th April, at Frunze's request, V. V. Kuibyshev was appointed to Southern Group *RVS* to coordinate the work of local Party and Soviet organisations

⁵ *Direktivny komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii (1917-1922). Sbornik dokumentov v 4-kh tomakh.* (Moscow, 1971-1978). (hereafter *DkfKA*), *Tom IV*, pp. 56 & 477.

⁶ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, docs. 585-586, pp. 623-24.

⁷ *V boiakh rozhdeniia, 1918-1920: boevoi put' 5 armii (1918-1920). Sbornik dokumentov*, (Irkutsk, 1985), (hereafter *Vbr*), p. 8; *M. V. Frunze na Vostochnom Fronte: Sbornik dokumentov*, (Kuibyshev, 1985), (hereafter *FnVf*), doc. 47, pp. 92-95.

⁸ A. S. Bubnov, S.S. Kamenev, M.N. Tukhachevsky and R.P. Eideman, *Grazhdanskaia voina 1918-1921 v 3-kh tomakh. Tom III*, (Leningrad, 1930), p. 173; *Vbr*, doc. 33, pp. 388 & 59-60; A. S. Popov, *Trud. Talant. Doblest'*, (Moscow, 1972), p. 40; Kaufmann quotes a figure given in J. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: a military-political history, 1918-1941*, (London, 1962), p. 60, of "...less than 5,500 men". However, the table provided by Erickson gives troop numbers for the period 25th January-15th February, before Kolchak's offensive, A. F. Kaufmann, *Aristocratic-Communist: the life of M. N. Tukhachevsky and the continuity of imperial army tradition in the Soviet military*, (Kansas, 1991), p. 112.

⁹ *Vbr*, doc. 36, pp. 64-65.

reorganising Eastern Front forces. Therefore, Tukhachevsky worked again with the man who had provided the greatest help and support on Eastern Front in 1918.¹¹

Concentrated within 5th Army were capable divisional command staff, including: 26th Division Commissar V. K. Putna, 27th Division Commander A. V. Pavlov and 26th Division Commander G. K. Eikhe, all *voenspetsy*; 25th Division Commander V. I. Chapaev, a former NCO; and 25th Division Commissar Furmanov, some of whom Tukhachevsky would also work with later. This would have eased the initial reorganisational burden.¹²

However, the most important figure Tukhachevsky encountered, both in terms of how he fought during 1919 on Eastern Front and his post-Civil War career, was Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze. This was the man Tukhachevsky had praised as the prime example of a capable Red Commander whilst complaining about Gittis. A Bolshevik Party member since 1904, Frunze had no professional military training, but proved a natural in command under Civil War conditions. He became the main proponent of a new revolutionary doctrine and replaced Trotsky as *Narkomvoen* in 1925, making Tukhachevsky his deputy, before dying on the operating table amid suspicions of Stalin's involvement. Tukhachevsky is usually associated with Frunze and credited with carrying on his ideas after his death and Soviet biographies relate Frunze as having a major influence on Tukhachevsky's military theory. However, as has already been shown, Tukhachevsky had already identified new conditions of class civil warfare and had conducted his commands under these beliefs before meeting Frunze. I would argue that Tukhachevsky and Frunze saw in each other someone of similar beliefs and this is why they worked so well together. Undoubtedly Frunze did influence Tukhachevsky, but then Tukhachevsky undoubtedly did the same in return. The similarity of opinion regarding military strategy and how to fight the Civil War was reflected in Frunze making Tukhachevsky his main commander on Eastern Front in 1919. For four months they conducted operations, which further developed the conclusions Tukhachevsky had already drawn, to move him closer to the "Deep Battle" theory. This cemented a lasting comradeship on both a professional and personal basis.

¹⁰ *DkfKA*, Tom IV, p. 537.

¹¹ *FnVf*, doc. 27, pp. 70-71.

¹² *Vbr*, pp. 405-406; Furmanov wrote the book *Chapaev* in 1923, upon which the film *Chapaev* was based.

Beyond the Volga: Buguruslan, Bugul'ma and Belebei Operations

Eastern Front's counter-offensive, which began with the Buguruslan Operation, to prevent Kolchak reaching Simbirsk and Samara on the Volga and push him back beyond Ufa, originated with Frunze. It was then discussed on 10th April at Simbirsk with Kamenev, Vacietis and other Eastern Front staff. Eastern Front was divided into Northern and Southern Groups to face Siberian and Western Armies.¹³ Southern Group, comprising 1st, 4th, 5th and Turkestan Armies, was headed by an *RVS* of Frunze, Novitskii and Kuibyshev.¹⁴

Frunze envisaged forming an attack group at Buzuluk on Southern Group's right flank, shielded behind 1st and Turkestan Armies. This was the section of Eastern Front against which Kolchak had not concentrated and therefore an attack group could be deployed safely and secretly there. The attack group would advance from south to north into Western Army's left flank, whilst 5th Army would perform a frontal holding operation in Samara sector, allowing the attack group to punch through at Buguruslan and encircle Western Army. To enable this, whilst reorganising 5th Army, Tukhachevsky was to screen the Buzuluk-Buguruslan-Bugul'ma highway, the main intended route for the attack, and regroup a reserve to screen his left flank from Bugul'ma. Turkestan Army Commander Zinov'ev was given command of the attack group, whilst 4th Army and Gai's 1st Army had to hold screens at Ural'sk, Saratov and Orenburg, reuniting Gai in action with his former commander.¹⁵

Whilst planning the counter-manoeuvre, Eastern Front forces were still trying to halt the White advance. On 13th April, Tukhachevsky reported 5th Army would probably not hold Buguruslan as it was hopelessly outnumbered, but described conditions which did help to stem the tide. Dirt roads were virtually impassable as the thaw occurred, later on the Volga than in the Don, and destroyed bridges were

¹³ *FnVf*, doc. 29, pp. 72-74; *Vbr*, p. 8; *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 616, pp. 648 & 799. Northern Group contained all forces north of the River Kama, 2nd and 3rd Armies, under 2nd Army Commander Shorin, but this only lasted in practice for several days.

¹⁴ *FnVf*, docs. 30-31, pp. 74-75. Lazarevich and Iakhovskii became Southern group Chief-of-Staff and Head of Operational Staff respectively, whilst Avksent'ievskii replaced Frunze as Acting 4th Army Commander.

¹⁵ *FnVf*, docs. 33-34, 37, 50, 56 & 58, pp. 77-81, 83, 97-99, 105-106 & 108; *Direktivy Glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi Armii (1917-1920). Sbornik dokumentov*, (Moscow, 1969), pp. 553-555.

hindering White artillery advancing up the railway.¹⁶ This slowed the White advance, but Frunze delayed his attack and regrouped his forces until the roads had firmed up, by which time he hoped to have stopped Kolchak's offensive.¹⁷

He bombarded Moscow with requests for more political workers and command staff for Southern Group's Armies, to enable local mobilisation of new recruits and political work amongst existing troops.¹⁸ In response, the *Komsomol* Central Committee instructed local organisations to mobilise 20% of their members for military training, posting eastwards and political agitation.¹⁹ This combined with Eastern Front mobilisations, which raised forces including Syzran' Workers Regiment, Samara Internationalist and Volunteer Detachments and 4,000 armed workers from Orenburg.²⁰ Samara area was fortified by workers and volunteers led by *kursanty*,²¹ whilst any troops were sent to the armies.

Tukhachevsky's experience from 1918 undoubtedly helped with this reorganisation. He would have known workers in Party organs (Vareikis still headed the Simbirsk Province Communists) and been known by reputation to many local inhabitants. He carried out the rebuilding and reequipping of 5th Army with Smirnov and by 25th April numbers had risen to 15,073 infantry and 971 cavalry. This included 25th Division, but without it, 26th and 27th Divisions had risen from the 5,500 of early April to 9,500 men.²² By 1st May, 5th Army numbers had risen to 1,615 command staff, 35,002 infantry, and 1,633 cavalry. 2nd Division had also been added for the offensive, but 26th and 27th Divisions had themselves increased to 14,338 in total, a remarkable rise in barely three weeks.²³ Given these conditions, this was perhaps an even greater achievement than 1st Army.

Whilst regrouping proceeded, Siberian Army continued advancing further against 2nd and 3rd Armies, occupying Chistopol' on 25th April and threatening Kazan' and Southern Group's left flank.²⁴ Frunze's counter-manoeuvre had to be brought forward

¹⁶ *FnVf*, doc. 40, pp. 86-88.

¹⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 614, p. 647.

¹⁸ *FnVf*, docs. 38 & 41-42, pp. 84 & 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* doc. 43, p. 90.

²⁰ *Ibid.* docs. 45 & 47, pp. 91 & 93.

²¹ *Ibid.* doc. 39, pp. 85-86.

²² *Vbr*, doc. 39, pp. 69-72.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 388.

²⁴ *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 659.

to 28th April before all reinforcements had arrived, but 5th Army received reinforcements to secure the left flank against Siberian Army's advances. Kakurin suggests that 5th Army's tasks were upgraded, when it received these reinforcements, from a defensive holding operation to attacking towards Bugul'ma, enveloping Western Army's forces there. However, Tukhachevsky had actually suggested this a week earlier. In a Hughes Telegraph conversation with Frunze on 17th April, Tukhachevsky said,

...it seems easier to me to coordinate the attack on Buguruslan from two sides. Under this proposition, it would be necessary for these two groups to guarantee themselves sufficient forces. If the Samaro-Zlatoust road has a very weak group, then the attack from Buzuluk will not achieve the desired results, it is essential to press from two sides.

Frunze replied that he did not agree as the main attack should come from Buzuluk. Tukhachevsky said that he also thought so, but without the second attack, the Buzuluk group would face all enemy forces. However, two days later, Frunze outlined Southern Group's tasks for the Buguruslan Operation,

5th Army, strengthened by 74th and 75th brigades of 25th Division, is not only to hold the enemy and its further movement along Bugul'ma and Buguruslan Railways, but counter-attack to press it back, having the first task of taking Buguruslan area....²⁵

On the same day, Tukhachevsky requested that Frunze inform him of Eastern Front's offensive plan, as he felt the counter-attack to defend Samara (5th Army and Buzuluk attack group) had insufficient troops and did not address the problems of the whole front. He reported that the snow had almost completely melted and the roads were virtually impassable, but might improve in a few days, continuing, "...a very strong concentration is needed, moreover it is necessary to even consider deploying those forces on the Volga". He expressed concern that, although Samara was defended, Simbirsk and Chistopol' sectors were weak and could threaten the whole front, concluding,

In order to prepare earlier for future operations, it is necessary for me to know about Eastern Front plans for launching an offensive, what resources it will have, from where and when these resources and forces will be transferred and where deployed, and also which will be the main operational sector, moreover I personally consider this Bugul'ma Railway. I consider it my duty to report and await your reply.²⁶

²⁵ *FnVf*, docs. 47 & 50, pp. 92-95 & 97-99.

²⁶ *Vbr*, doc. 38, pp. 68-69.

The same day Frunze demanded reinforcements from Kamenev for 5th Army and Zinov'ev's attack group after "...discussions with all army commanders".²⁷ Also, on 23rd April, he reported to Kamenev that 5th Army's right flank was to attack up the strip between the Rivers Kinel' and Kutuluk and its left flank up Bugul'ma Railway.²⁸ When Tukhachevsky issued operational orders to 5th Army on 25th April, he instructed Eikhe's 26th Division to concentrate at Tolkai Station, a location he had also suggested to Frunze on 17th April.²⁹

Several points are apparent here. Tukhachevsky must be credited with having a crucial influence on the Buguruslan Operation and those which followed, which he has not previously been afforded. He suggested the double envelopment of the White Buguruslan group instead of the lone strike from Buzuluk and also the advance up Bugul'ma Railway. It shows that Frunze was willing to listen to suggestions from those under him and his working relationship with Tukhachevsky was two-way. Tukhachevsky was suggesting a variant to his successful concentric offensives and as in 1918, when the double envelopment at Simbirsk allowed a continuous flow into the same at Syzran', in 1919 the Buguruslan Operation led directly into the Bugul'ma Operation, in the sector Tukhachevsky emphasised as the principal one. It is very likely that he considered this when making his recommendations and that he chose the Bugul'ma railway as the main route from his experience of the pursuit operations he carried out in this exact area the previous year. This all helped him to formulate a winning plan. His close involvement in operational planning at this early stage probably played a part in him retaining the major role in Southern Group and Eastern Front offensives during 1919. Frunze regarded him as his main commander, valued his advice and acted upon it.

Frunze had originally planned a regrouping of forces to concentrate 22-26,000 troops in the attack group and 11,000 in 5th Army, with 1st and 4th Armies shielding the right flank with 20,000 troops.³⁰ However, with 5th Army now also attacking, further regrouping gave Tukhachevsky 24,000 men to face the 18,000-22,000 remaining in Khanzhin's group. Khanzhin's left flank had been defeated by Gai from 22nd-25th April, losing three divisions, one of which defected to the Reds, and a

²⁷ *FnVf*, doc. 51, p. 100.

²⁸ *Ibid.* doc. 56, p. 105.

²⁹ *Vbr*, doc. 39, pp. 69-72; *FnVf*, doc. 47, pp. 92-95.

peasant revolt in Khanzhin's rear lessened the effectives he could put in the frontline.³¹ By this point, the overall White offensive was overstretched and no reinforcements were likely to arrive quickly, as a hostile rear disrupted communications and supply lines.

However, Khanzhin still attacked, threatening Kinel' on Southern Group's right flank, which would have cut its rear lines at the same time as Chistopol' fell. The Buguruslan Operation was therefore launched on 28th April to prevent this and seize the offensive initiative. The double-envelopment operation envisaged, although not encircling the Whites, did force them to abandon Buguruslan, which was taken on 4th May.³² On 1st May Tukhachevsky had requested by Hughes Telegraph that Frunze commit his last reserves, 2nd Division, for the final assault, which Frunze did. This conversation, which followed one between Frunze and Kamenev, illustrates the workings of Eastern Front command clearly.

Frunze explained that Kamenev had directed him to continue and develop the Buguruslan offensive by attacking Sergievsk, Bugul'ma and Belebei, outlined the plan and asked for Tukhachevsky's thoughts. Tukhachevsky agreed with the general plan, but suggested 25th Division, which had been operating alongside Turkestan Army, be transferred to 5th Army to move against Bugul'ma and then south-east to take Belebei with Turkestan Army, the latter advancing east to the town. This would allow the offensive to "...not lose any time and develop maximum energy...".³³ Frunze ordered the continuation of the Buguruslan Operation into the Bugul'ma Operation on 4th May, acting on Tukhachevsky's suggestion, and the offensive proceeded. 25th Division reached Bugul'ma on 11th May after a two-day battle with a White counter-attack group massed behind the town, comprising Izhevsk Brigade and 4th Ufa Division, taking 2,000 prisoners, various hardware and securing the town by 13th May.³⁴ By 12th May, Eastern Front had taken over 9,000 prisoners from Western Army, many of whom were inducted into the Red forces. Smirnov reported that the seizing of White carts during the Buguruslan Operation had quickened 5th Army's

³⁰ N. E. Kakurin, *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia. Tom II. 1919-1920*, (Moscow, 1926 & 1990), p. 171; A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, p. 183. Kakurin gives the lower figure.

³¹ A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, pp. 184 & 190.

³² *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 669.

³³ *FnVf*, doc. 64, pp. 119-121; *Vbr*, doc. 40, pp. 73-75.

³⁴ *FnVf*, docs. 65 & 70-71, pp. 122 & 125-127; *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 677.

ability to conduct pursuit.³⁵ Mobilising on the move was again visibly working, strengthening the advancing Reds at the expense of the retreating Whites and illustrating the advantage of offensive over defensive tactics again.

Pressing on for Belebei, Tukhachevsky shielded Turkestan Army's left flank by sending a division up the Bugul'ma-Ufa Railway and transferred 25th Division back to Turkestan Army on 16th May. Belebei was taken the following day.³⁶

This demonstrates how Eastern Front operated and the trust which the command staff had in each other. Kamenev was Eastern Front Commander, Frunze Southern Group Commander and Tukhachevsky 5th Army Commander. However, the lower ranking man was the one on the spot and closest to the action. Giving out general directives, but allowing Tukhachevsky a vital input to the actual operational planning was the type of command Tukhachevsky had wanted when he complained about interference from Murav'ev, Vacietis, Medvedev and Kalnins. It is no wonder Tukhachevsky, Kamenev and Frunze formed lasting working relationships, forged conducting these continuous manoeuvre operations, which they all agreed were the correct way to win civil war battles and were all able to utilise effectively.

The Ufa Operation

The capture of Bugul'ma and Belebei cleared both the Bugul'ma-Ufa and Syzran'-Ufa railway lines for pursuing the Whites to the River Belaia and taking the town of Ufa, which lay on its east bank, the last major town before the Urals. Frunze tried to maintain the momentum of the continuous offensive by sending plans for the Ufa and Orenburg Operations to Samoilo, the new Eastern Front Commander on 19th May. Frunze wished to push on immediately, whilst Western Army was on the backfoot.³⁷ 1st Army was to advance towards Orenburg, whilst Turkestan Army and Chapaev's 25th Division of 5th Army were to take Ufa. Turkestan Army was to cross the Belaia south of Ufa and attack in the White rear, with their cavalry raiding deep to cut the rail lines and prevent a White retreat into the Urals. 25th Division, on Turkestan Army's left flank, again received the toughest task, crossing the Belaia and launching

³⁵ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 325, op. 1, d. 479, p. 19.

³⁶ *FnVf*, docs. 73 & 75, pp. 128-130 & 131; *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 677.

a frontal pinning attack on Ufa. 26th Division was to guard the left flank north of Ufa by moving to the front Bazilevka-Birsk and capturing the crossing at Akhlystina, to prevent a White flotilla attacking the other Red forces, during the river crossing.³⁸

Tukhachevsky had been advancing with 26th and 27th Divisions after capturing Bugul'ma because Siberian Army was still pressing 2nd Army and threatening 5th Army's left flank. Samoilo detached 5th Army from Southern Group and ordered Tukhachevsky to cross the River Kama, using pontoons, to guarantee Bugul'ma-Ufa and Bugul'ma-Birsk sectors.³⁹ When Samoilo ordered Frunze's offensive to proceed, he instructed 5th Army to cross the Kama and Belaia at their confluence and attack Ufa in the rear from the north, subordinating the Volga Flotilla to Tukhachevsky, to block the White flotilla.⁴⁰ Tukhachevsky ordered this on 21st May.⁴¹

Frunze was appointed Turkestan Army Commander on 23rd May and took direct command of the Ufa Operation.⁴² Therefore, he and Tukhachevsky commanded the two armies attacking Ufa. They discussed the operation by Hughes Telegraph on 27th May and Tukhachevsky advised Frunze to direct 31st Division, on Turkestan Army's left flank, further left, as sizeable enemy forces had concentrated before 26th Division on 5th Army's right flank.⁴³ This endangered the juncture between 5th and Turkestan Armies and Frunze agreed to the adjustment. After this discussion, Tukhachevsky ordered 5th Army to attack at dawn the following morning.⁴⁴

The attack was initially to be launched on 25th May, but was put back three days, probably because of reorganisation, as Frunze replaced Zinov'ev as Turkestan Army Commander and the latter replaced Gai as 1st Army Commander.⁴⁵ Machinations were also underway to bring Kamenev back as Eastern Front Commander and relations within Eastern Front *RVS* were not good. This must have effected the pace of operations. It was this delay which allowed Western Army to regroup and concentrate forces before 26th Division and along the whole front, entrenching behind the Belaia

³⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 638, pp. 677-680; *FnVF*, doc. 76, pp. 132-34. Former Tsarist Major-General Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Samoilo (1869-1963) served as Eastern Front Commander from 5th-29th May.

³⁸ *FnVF*, doc. 76, pp. 132-134; *DkfKA, Tom II*, pp. 677-680.

³⁹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 637, p. 677; *DGkKA*, doc. 561, p. 569.

⁴⁰ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 639, pp. 680-681.

⁴¹ *Vbr*, doc. 49, pp. 96-98.

⁴² *FnVF*, docs. 83-85, pp. 142-145 & 258, endnote 30.

⁴³ *Vbr*, doc 52, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* doc. 51, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁵ Gai was apparently demoted.

with artillery and machine-gun emplacements, giving 5th and Turkestan Armies a much harder task.

5th Army numbers for the Ufa Operation were 18,710 infantry, 429 cavalry, 53 guns and 337 machine-guns, whilst Turkestan Army fielded 28,430 infantry, 1,443 cavalry, 39 guns and 408 machine-guns on 1st June. Western Army numbers had dwindled as it retreated with casualties, desertions, defections and men captured taking their toll. Widely varying figures are given, but it probably numbered somewhere between 15,000-28,500, with a lower number more likely.⁴⁶

The operation was launched on 28th May, with Sterlitamak taken by 1st Army en route to Orenburg, on 25th May.⁴⁷ On 29th May, Tukhachevsky reported that 27th and 35th Divisions had routed the Whites on the west bank of the Belaia, taking over 800 prisoners and forcing them over to the east bank. He suggested advancing towards Birsk, since reconnaissance had detected White forces there, which could threaten the Ufa attack force. After consultations with Frunze and Kamenev, he ordered 26th, 27th and 35th Divisions to advance and take up positions along the River Belaia to prepare for crossing on 4th June, a date suggested by Frunze, and prepare to take Birsk, preventing the Whites retreating to Iavgel'din.⁴⁸ Kamenev, restored as Eastern Front Commander, confirmed this in a general directive to Eastern Front on 31st May and on 3rd and 5th June instructed the Volga Flotilla to cooperate with 5th and Turkestan Armies, as they would be attempting crossings of the Belaia on 6th June.⁴⁹

On 3rd June, Tukhachevsky showed that he was thinking ahead again when he suggested to Kamenev that 5th Army, whilst covering Turkestan Army's advance on Ufa by driving back the White group at Birsk, should be looking to attack the White Permsko-Krasnoufimsk Group in the flank and rear, with a view to attacking towards Zlatoust in the Ural Mountains. Zlatoust would become the next target for Tukhachevsky and one of his most imaginative victories and Kamenev suggested this to Vacietis on 6th June.⁵⁰ This was another example of Tukhachevsky taking the lead in operational planning and illustrates how he operated under conditions of

⁴⁶ E. Mawdsley, p. 146, gives the lower figure and N. E. Kakurin, *Tom II*, p. 236 the higher. A figure of 46-47,000 is given in A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, p. 202, but this is almost certainly far too high.

⁴⁷ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, p. 687.

⁴⁸ *Vbr*, docs. 53-56, pp. 107-112.

⁴⁹ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, docs. 646, 648 & 650, pp. 687-688, 690-691.

⁵⁰ *Vbr*, doc. 57, pp. 113 & 378, endnote 24.

continuous offensive, always thinking of the next target and planning current troop movements, to facilitate a smooth transition to the next operation quickly afterwards.

Back on the Belaia, on 5th June, Tukhachevsky ordered 5th Army to cross the next day and 26th Division captured Birsk on 8th June.⁵¹ On 9th June he ordered pursuit of the Whites down the right bank of the river, keeping pace with 2nd Army on the left flank, which Kamenev had ordered to advance on 6th June. Six days later the two men discussed 5th and 2nd Armies cooperating to attack Krasnoufimsk sector, the next operation to maintain the continuous offensive.⁵² 5th Army was engaged in fighting in Iavgeldin and Ufa sectors, cooperating with 2nd and Turkestan Armies for the next week until they were secured, holding the centre of Eastern Front together and having to cooperate with both flanks simultaneously.⁵³ That Tukhachevsky still managed to plan for his next operation a month ahead was quite remarkable and displays the level of work he put in to his command.

26th Division, crossing the Belaia on 6th June, secured Frunze's left flank for the attack towards Ufa and he ordered 2nd, 35th and 31st Divisions to cross the Belaia on the night of 7th-8th June. Crossing proved to be more difficult here however, as the Whites were entrenched along the river bank at the crossings and bridges they had not destroyed. The Red forces were met with machine-gun and artillery fire as they tried to cross and aerial bombardment was used by both sides, a new phenomenon in civil warfare.⁵⁴ Equipment for crossing was scarce and Kamenev asked Tukhachevsky if he had any which could be sent down. Tukhachevsky did not, but suggested Frunze have the local peasantry build ferries.⁵⁵ On 9th June, Frunze telegraphed Tukhachevsky to inform him that 25th Division had crossed the Belaia at dawn on 8th June and, after bitter fighting, had broken through the White trenches and occupied several villages. However, the Whites had moved up artillery and counter-attacked, pinning down 25th Division. Frunze requested that Tukhachevsky swiftly send 26th Division to help. However, the following day he reported 25th Division had taken Ufa after stubborn fighting.⁵⁶ Chapaev had captured two White steamboats and secretly crossed the

⁵¹ Ibid. doc. 59, pp. 10 & 114-116.

⁵² Ibid. docs. 63-64, pp. 119-123.

⁵³ Ibid. docs. 65-66, pp. 123-126.

⁵⁴ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 5, p. 40-41; *FnVf*, docs. 96-98, pp. 156-159.

⁵⁵ *Vbr*, doc. 62, pp. 117-119; Tukhachevsky wrote in early 1920 that it had taken 12 days to construct a workable ferry for transporting rail stock over the River Ufa and River Belaia, M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Inzhenernoe sorazmerenie operatsii", *Voينا klassov*, (Moscow, 1921), p. 120.

⁵⁶ *FnVf*, docs. 99-100, pp. 160-162.

Belaia, conducting a surprise attack on the White left flank. 25th Division suffered 2,000 casualties in this fighting, almost half its number, whilst Western Army suffered 3,000.⁵⁷

The Ufa Operation and associated tasks was another classic manoeuvre operation through difficult terrain dissected by several rivers. Natural obstacles were important lines of defence in the Civil War and engineering work, such as the building of temporary bridges or ferries, to traverse such obstacles, was an area Tukhachevsky emphasised as crucial in conducting successful operations in the Civil War. The swifter engineers could reopen transport routes, the swifter the offensive could proceed.⁵⁸

Tukhachevsky and Frunze had jointly led Eastern Front's main operations and worked well together, both finding in the other someone who understood their thoughts and vision on how to fight. They advanced in slightly different directions for the next month, but would work together again in July.

As already mentioned, Tukhachevsky had already planned ahead for 5th Army's next Zlatoust Operation. Frunze planned a parallel advance to Ural'sk further south, whilst 2nd and 3rd Armies were moving for Ekaterinburg on 5th Army's left flank. However, conflict arose with Vacietis and Trotsky at this point, starting a process of clique-formation within the Red Army, which would stretch into the 1920s and 1930s. Tukhachevsky was involved in the dispute, but the way he approached it was largely determined by the ideas we have witnessed him amass so far on civil war and how it should be fought.

Army Politics: Kamenev Versus Vacietis

The dispute was preceded by another incident centring around Kamenev. After jointly planning the Buguruslan Operation, the Kamenev-Frunze-Tukhachevsky team was broken up. The following Bugul'ma, Belebei and Ufa Operations occurred against the background of bickering amongst the Red Army hierarchy, as Vacietis, backed by Trotsky, replaced Kamenev with Samoilo, after tactical disagreements with the former. However, Samoilo only lasted from 5th-29th May as Gusev, Lashevich and

⁵⁷ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 5, p. 53; N. E. Kakurin, *Tom II*, p. 238.

Iurenev of Eastern Front *RVS* sent a telegram to Lenin, requesting Kamenev's reinstatement and accusing Chief-of-Staff F. V. Kostiaev of groundlessly removing army commanders, and Aralov of counter-signing his orders. In response, Lenin informed Trotsky on 20th May that he was reinstating Kamenev, removing Kostiaev and replacing Aralov with Lashevich. He confirmed this to Eastern Front *RVS* on 29th May,

On your insistence I have reappointed Kamenev. If we do not conquer the Urals by winter, then I consider the revolution will inevitably perish. Exert all forces. Follow these considerations for reinforcements; mobilise to a man the front area population; follow up with political work... Turn deepest attention to mobilising Orenburg cossacks.⁵⁹

This reflected the underlying tactical dispute between Kamenev and Vacietis which had led to Samoilo's appointment. Vacietis was concerned at Siberian Army's advances against 2nd Army and wanted 5th Army to cross the River Kama and move north to help 2nd Army's right flank. However, Kamenev had wanted, along with Frunze and Tukhachevsky, to press on and destroy Western Army in front of Southern Group's forces, then sweep north with a flanking envelopment of Siberian Army. This was a similar tactic to the Buguruslan Operation. When Samoilo replaced Kamenev, he executed Vacietis' tactics and this was the reason he directed 5th Army over the Kama towards Birsk. However, between 11th-19th May, Samoilo gave Tukhachevsky four successive instructions, directing him in different directions and preventing any development of pursuit after the Bugul'ma Operation, with 5th Army effectively turning on the spot. On 21st May, a disillusioned Tukhachevsky sent Samoilo a stinging telegram,

Beginning from 10th May, probably in view of many circumstances unknown to me, five tasks were sent for 5th Army, each one changed from the last. Firstly it was given the task to attack north into the rear of the enemy, acting on the River Viatka, then the direction of attack was deflected 130 degrees to Belebei, followed by a directive which ordered to attack partially to the north, partially to the east, then was allocated a crossing point over the River Kama close to the River Viatka estuary, then I was asked to choose a crossing point and finally, was ordered to cross not the River Kama, but the River Belaia. These changes of order have completely exhausted the divisions and units are completely confused, communications are broken etc.

⁵⁸ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Inzhenernoe sorazmerenie operatsii", pp. 116-133; *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, Tom I, 1919-1927, pp. 59-72.

⁵⁹ *L-vp*, docs. 267 & 284, pp. 145-146, 153-154 & 347, endnote 173.

Tukhachevsky concluded by referring Samoilo to article 19 of the 1918 Field Regulations which stated "...before giving an order, it is necessary to think."⁶⁰

The first two orders had been sent on 11th and 14th May and Tukhachevsky replied to the first on 12th May, saying he could not send his troops north as they were still engaged in the Bugul'ma battle, but that he would direct them there as soon as this was over. On 15th May, Tukhachevsky replied,

Your directive No. 02003, which changed my order No. 920/n, is fulfilled, but I consider it my duty as a conscientious army commander to add that I do not agree with your directive since I consider that your decision is not the most energetic... In taking your decision the enemy will perhaps only be pressed, that will not allow our task to guarantee on the right for an attack to the north. If General Kappel's corps is directed at one point, then it is more necessary to annihilate it, not press it. I considered it my duty to report to you about your view of what is occurring since I considered it intolerable to remain silent about holding a difference in views.⁶¹

Tukhachevsky disagreed with Samoilo's operational plan, but was also infuriated by the constant direction changes. His telegrams to Samoilo have a completely different tone than his communications with Kamenev or Frunze. It displays again the hostility he displayed towards those with whom he disagreed over military matters.

In his memoirs, Samoilo wrote that he had taken the posting against his will and did not know the course of events at the front or the troops, commanders or staff there.⁶² He also wrote of intransigence and deliberate non-cooperation by Eastern Front *RVS*, who invented reasons to complain about him and get Kamenev back. This was very likely the case. As has been shown, a good working relationship had evolved between Eastern Front command, within the *RVS* and between the commanders. They wanted Kamenev back to revert to the original operational plan, but personal loyalty also played a part and Samoilo was doomed to fail from the start, although his indecisive command did not help. He was appointed 6th Army Commander, but did not display any bitterness in a report of 7th June on Eastern Front Operations under his command.⁶³ However, this in-fighting was most likely the main reason for delaying the Ufa Operation.

⁶⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Na Vostochnom Fronte", *Izbrannye proizvedennia, Tom II, 1928-1937*, pp. 224-225.

⁶¹ A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, p. 195; *Vbr*, docs. 47-48, pp. 95-96.

⁶² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Na Vostochnom Fronte", p. 224, editorial footnote.

⁶³ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 654, pp. 697-700.

The Kamenev-Vacietis rift erupted again in June. With the routes to the Urals now open, Eastern Front wanted to pursue Western Army, preventing it reinforcing and rebuilding in the Urals. If the Whites dug in to defend the wooded mountainsides, conducting guerilla tactics to hold the mountain passes against larger forces, Eastern Front could be bogged down indefinitely. However, Denikin had launched an offensive in the South and Iudenich was beginning to threaten at Petrograd. Vacietis wanted Eastern Front to dig in before the Urals and concentrate on Denikin, transferring forces southwards, and gave a directive to this effect on 6th June.⁶⁴ Eastern Front *RVS* again appealed to Lenin on 9th June, complaining bitterly about Vacietis' directive, stating that they wished to continue the offensive, whilst he was advocating defensive tactics.⁶⁵ Tukhachevsky, anxious to press on to Zlatoust, as he had already outlined to Kamenev, would have supported this as he believed the offensive was stronger than the defensive. He also believed the Red Army were incapable of defending static emplacements as it did not have enough men for this and the existing troops were not confident of using them.⁶⁶ Eastern Front's argument was actually an early case of the new revolutionary military doctrine being presented over Great War bourgeois positional defensive doctrine, exactly as Tukhachevsky would outline in *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia*.

Lenin, having already stated his intention to clear the Urals before winter, replied on 9th and 11th June that he understood the difficulty of Eastern Front's position, but the worsening of the position at Petrograd and Denikin's breakthrough in the South necessitated more transfers from the East.⁶⁷ Kamenev complained to Vacietis about the "intolerability" of ending Eastern Front's offensive action, but Lenin sided with Eastern Front, an *RVSR* decree on 17th June ordering Eastern Front's offensive to continue, but with troops transferred to other fronts.⁶⁸ Southern Front was perhaps under threat, but Eastern Front was also crucial, as Moscow looked to knock one of their opponents out of the war. Lenin confirmed this on 9th July in "All Out For the Struggle With Denikin" in which he wrote that all forces were to be mobilised to

⁶⁴ *DGkKA*, doc. 565, pp. 571-572.

⁶⁵ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, doc. 657, pp. 701-702.

⁶⁶ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Ukreplennye raiony", *Voينا klassov*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁷ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, docs. 655 & 658, pp. 700 & 703.

⁶⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 573, p. 584.

defeat Denikin "...whilst not ending the victorious offensive of the Red Army into Ural and Siberia. In this consists the *basic task of the moment*".⁶⁹

Kamenev replaced Vacietis as Supreme Commander on 8th July to bring the dispute to an end.⁷⁰ The latter and other *voenspetsy* such as Kostiaev were in fact arrested in July under dubious circumstances, but later released without charge. This was a blow for Trotsky and he offered his resignation as *Narkomvoen*, but was refused. Stalin became involved, backing Kamenev, and after the Tsaritsyn incident of 1918, his feud with Trotsky was well under way. However, it would be wrong to suggest that Tukhachevsky moved apart from Trotsky at this time. Tukhachevsky became involved in the dispute primarily from the strategical angle, but also perhaps through personal loyalty to Kamenev. Military success was Tukhachevsky's major motivation though and if Vacietis had proposed a continuation into the Urals, Tukhachevsky would have backed him. His relationship with Trotsky remained sound, but his doubts in older *voenspetsy* waging civil war had been reinforced by Samoilo's actions and Vacietis' call for a defensive strategy. Tukhachevsky and Vacietis never seemed to enjoy a good working relationship and military and personality differences combined again, as with Gittis, to become the same problem for Tukhachevsky. He wrote *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voiny* and *Sootnoshenie sil v grazhdanskoi voine* on 4th and 11th July, with these disputes firmly in mind and it is clear the central tenets of his Civil War theories were based directly on his personal command experiences.

Into the Urals: Zlatoust

Frunze served as Eastern Front Commander from 19th July-15th August, when he became Turkestan Front Commander.⁷¹ The latter front was created because Eastern Front had split Kolchak's forces into two groups, under Frunze's direction, but with Tukhachevsky's 5th Army playing the major operational role. Working closely with Kamenev before his departure and again with Frunze after 19th July, Tukhachevsky

⁶⁹ *Vbr*, doc. 77, pp. 139-140.

⁷⁰ *DkfKA*, *Tom IV*, p. 529.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 529 & 532. Pavel Pavlovich Lebedev (1872-1933), served as Acting Eastern Front Commander from 8th-19th July.

planned 5th Army's Urals operations, achieving victories by applying the methods he had seen work so far - manoeuvre, speed, stealth and concentration of forces.

Gaining the go-ahead for the Zlatoust Operation on 6th June, Tukhachevsky set about securing his route. As 2nd Army was still pressed back behind the River Kama on his left flank, he decided to attack the White group at Iavgel'din to secure it. Discussing this with Kamenev on 12th June, Tukhachevsky attacked with 26th and 27th Divisions and 2nd Army's 35th Division, taking Iavgeldin on 14th June.⁷² 2nd Army could now advance to fight its way through Krasnoufimsk and Kungur to join at Ekaterinburg with 3rd Army, which retook Perm' as Tukhachevsky advanced to Zlatoust and Cheliabinsk. These two axes followed the main rail routes through the Urals which then carried on eastwards to Omsk, Kolchak's capital. Kamenev planned pushing the Whites all the way back, capturing territory and troops as they advanced.⁷³

Zlatoust sat on a plateau within the Ural Mountains on the Ufa-Cheliabinsk Railway. Advancing up the rail line would have been a prolonged costly exercise, so Tukhachevsky devised another direction of attack. On 13th June, he suggested moving a division secretly north-east up the ravine of the River Iuriuzan', to reach the Zlatoust plateau and launch a surprise flank attack to envelop the Whites, whilst the remainder of 5th Army attacked frontally.⁷⁴

With Kamenev's final approval, Tukhachevsky planned the operation, giving Eikhe's 26th Division the flanking manoeuvre.⁷⁵ Tukhachevsky communicated the orders in person, not transmitting them, as secrecy was regarded as the key for the flanking movement to succeed. From south to north troop positions for the advance had 1st Army's 24th Division covering the right flank. On its left flank 26th Division's 3rd Brigade and a cavalry division advanced up the narrow defile of the Ufa-Zlatoust Railway. Starting in the centre, the main group of 26th Division secretly advanced swiftly up the Iuriuzan' ravine, which twisted to the south-east and then back up to the north-east, to bring them onto Zlatoust plateau in the left flank and rear of the Whites. 27th Division advanced on the left flank in a 15-regiment attack group north of the impassable Kara-Tau Ridge, skirting round the Birska-Zlatoust highway. 2nd Army's

⁷² *Vbr*, docs. 64-66, pp. 121-126.

⁷³ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 665, pp. 709-716.

⁷⁴ *Vbr*, doc. 65, pp. 123-125.

35th Division guarded 27th Division's left flank and joined the attack after 2nd Army captured Krasnoufimsk on 4th July. Therefore, most troops were grouped on the left of the front to draw the Whites away from 26th Division's flanking manoeuvre. No forces advanced directly along the Birsk-Zlatoust highway, the shortest route to Zlatoust. Most White troops guarded this road, giving a great element of surprise to the Red attack and helping with the envelopment.

After transfers, mobilisations and reorganisation, which all continued whilst taking Iavgel'din and preparing for the operation, 5th Army strength in early July was 16,000-23,000 infantry and 820-1,400 cavalry, 50-70 guns and 328-545 machine-guns.⁷⁶ Whichever figures are most accurate, Tukhachevsky was commanding a similar-sized force as previously. Khanzhin's forces by now numbered around 18,000, but perhaps lower.⁷⁷

Eikhe's flanking group crossed the River Ufa on the night of 25th June and moved undetected into the Iuriuzan' Ravine. 27th Division crossed the Ufa the next night and began its advance. Upon gaining the ravine, Eikhe's group advanced along the 40 cm deep riverbed, dragging their artillery and machine-guns. In three days, they covered 120 kms (110 *verst*), lowering and lifting guns by hand as they climbed through the ravine. The main column of troops stretched 20 kms and engineers worked ahead, building bridges where necessary from logs. On 1st July, 26th Division reached the plateau and advanced north-east towards Zlatoust. Tukhachevsky gave further orders on 7th and 10th July to develop the attack into the foothills and take the Eastern slopes of the Urals. On 13th July, Eikhe's troops launched a surprise attack, capturing the town from Western Army, which was apparently holding a troop inspection when the attack arrived. Over 3,000 prisoners and vast stocks of materiel were taken.⁷⁸

The Zlatoust Operation was a crucial point in Eastern Front's offensive and Tukhachevsky's career. Zlatoust was the key to holding the Urals and its loss flung the renamed 3rd White Army back to Cheliabinsk and opened the way to Siberia.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid. doc. 68, pp. 128-130; G. Kh. Eikhe, "Na glavnom napravlenii" *Razgrom Kolchaka. Vospominaniia*, (Moscow, 1969), p. 151.

⁷⁶ *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 71 gives the lower figures; *Vbr*, pp. 388-389, gives the higher numbers.

⁷⁷ A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, p. 206.

⁷⁸ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 5, p. 12; *Vbr*, docs. 76-79, pp. 138-142; *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 672, pp. 722-723; M. B. Zabolotnyi, "Piataia armia v bor'ba za Iuzhnyi Ural", *Iz Istorii Iuzhnogo Urala i Zaural'ia*, 5, (1971), pp. 114-118; *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR. Entsiklopediia*, (Moscow, 1983), p. 220. 26th Division was named the Zlatoust Division for its role in the operation.

⁷⁹ Siberian Army facing 2nd and 3rd Red Armies was divided into 1st and 2nd White Armies.

The Urals were the final line upon which Kolchak could hope to hold the Reds and, with their loss, ended any hope of another advance towards Moscow. The operation to take Zlatoust had been conceived, planned and conducted by Tukhachevsky and had been a stunning manoeuvre success in terribly difficult terrain. He had been recognised as a capable commander already, but after Zlatoust he must have been rated as one of the top army commanders in the Red Army.

Tukhachevsky had little time to rest on his laurels as Kamenev and Lebedev directed the general offensive to continue.⁸⁰ On 5th Army's right flank, Ural'sk had been captured on 11th July by 1st and 4th Armies, which Frunze immediately directed to advance towards Orenburg. On the left, Lebedev ordered 2nd and 3rd Armies to take Ekaterinburg, which was captured on 14th July by 2nd Army.⁸¹

Tukhachevsky's next task was to take Troitsk and Cheliabinsk sectors. He ordered 5th Army to assume launching positions for the Cheliabinsk Operation, which began on 17th July, two days before Frunze became Eastern Front Commander.⁸² The latter decision was taken after Lenin consulted Lashevich and Iurenev of Eastern Front *RVS* if they thought they could work with Frunze, perhaps showing that Lenin was still mindful of the Samoilo episode.⁸³

Cheliabinsk

On 20th July, Frunze ordered Novitskii to prepare for transferring troops to Southern Front and 3rd and 5th Armies to continue pursuit operations eastwards, with Tukhachevsky to base his advance around the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁸⁴

Tukhachevsky received 5th Division on 22nd July and commanded 24th Division on his right flank, giving 5th Army overall numbers for taking Troitsk and Cheliabinsk of 834 command staff, 29,638 infantry and 1,578 cavalry, with 108 guns and 664 machine-guns.⁸⁵ Kolchak threw his last reserves into the defence of Cheliabinsk, giving 3rd White Army 27,600 men in total, 110 guns and 345 machine-

⁸⁰ *DGkKA*, doc. 581, pp. 592-593; *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, doc. 673, pp. 723-725.

⁸¹ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, doc. 672, pp. 722-723; *FnVf*, p. 261, endnote 56; *FnVf*, doc. 137, pp. 207-208.

⁸² *Vbr*, doc. 80, pp. 142-143. Novitskii became Southern Group Commander.

⁸³ *FnVf*, doc. 141 pp. 214-215; *L-Vp*, doc. 357, p. 188.

⁸⁴ *FnVf*, docs. 142-143, pp. 215-216; *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, doc. 674, pp. 725-726.

⁸⁵ *Vbr*, pp. 388-389.

guns.⁸⁶ Tukhachevsky therefore, had a slightly larger force than previously, but only a small advantage in numbers, and there was no element of surprise this time.

24th Division advanced on the right flank towards Troitsk. On its left flank, 26th Division advanced along the south side of the Trans-Siberian Railway, whilst 27th Division moved along the north side. On its left flank, 35th Division advanced down the Ekaterinburg-Cheliabinsk lateral railway and 5th Division covered the left flank.

As a preliminary task, 24th Division took Verkhneural'sk on 25th July and advanced on Troitsk. 26th Division advanced to 40 *versty* from Troitsk by 26th July and 27th Division moved into Cheliabinsk on 25th July, with no fighting.

3rd White Army pulled out of Cheliabinsk in an effort to trap 5th Army in the town and attack it from three sides, cutting it off from its rear on the other side of the Urals. Therefore, whilst Frunze congratulated Tukhachevsky on 26th July for taking the town, a battle ensued. 27th Division was pinned in the town after the centre 3rd White Army group attacked it frontally, whilst General Voitsekhovskii's right flank 3rd White Army group drove a wedge between 27th and 35th Divisions. 26th Division was attacked frontally by 3rd White Army's left flank group under Kappel'. Tukhachevsky ordered that the White counter-offensive be eliminated on 28th July.⁸⁷ Amid three days fierce fighting, the battle was turned by an 8,500-strong workers' rising in 3rd White Army's rear, combined with Tukhachevsky regrouping 5th Army's troops. The White forces found themselves in the very trap they had laid for 5th Army. By 1st August, the town was secured and on 4th August, 26th Division, aided by partisans, took Troitsk, bringing the Cheliabinsk Operation to a close.⁸⁸ 3rd White Army lost 4,500 killed and 8,000 prisoners at Cheliabinsk, whilst 5th Army suffered 2,900 killed and wounded and 900 missing.⁸⁹

The capture of Cheliabinsk secured the Urals for Eastern Front and importantly secured the lateral Ekaterinburg-Cheliabinsk railway, which linked 3rd and 5th Army's rear areas. The victory broke the back of 3rd White Army, its remnants retreating eastwards and Kolchak's last sizeable reserves being wiped out. On 5th August, the first anniversary of 5th Army's creation, Tukhachevsky was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, as was 5th Army itself. The *RVSR* telegram read,

⁸⁶ *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR. Entsiklopediia*, p. 649.

⁸⁷ *Vbr*, doc. 83, pp. 146-147.

⁸⁸ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, kniga 5, p. 13; *Vbr*, doc. 87, pp. 151-152.

Brave troops of 5th Army under the artful leadership of army commander comrade Tukhachevsky, overcoming stubborn resistance of the enemy and defeating it, has crossed the Urals.

Buguruslan, Bugul'ma, Birska, Zlatoust and the gates of Siberia - Cheliabinsk fell under the blows of the glorious red eagles of 5th Army...

[Eastern] Front *RVS* is confident that the red eagles of 5th Army under the leadership of the heroic army commander comrade Tukhachevsky will cover its weapons with new glories and return the working Siberia to workers'-peasants' Russia.⁹⁰

Tukhachevsky's stock was at great heights.

Siberian Pursuit: Petropavlovsk-Omsk

Again, however, no respite was allowed for Eastern Front. Frunze had pressed Novitskii, Tukhachevsky and 3rd Army Commander Mezheninov on 26th July, the day after Cheliabinsk was reached, to continue the offensive into the Southern Urals and up to the River Tobol, the next natural barrier and possible line of defence for Kolchak's forces. He did so again in early August.⁹¹ With Cheliabinsk secured, on 3rd August Tukhachevsky ordered 5th Army to cut 3rd White Army's route of retreat to Siberia and annihilate it. He then ordered pursuit of the Whites over the River Tobol on 11th August.⁹² The crossing of the Tobol on 20th August began the Petropavlovsk Operation, a prolonged campaign which lasted until 13th October, but set up the final assault on Kolchak's Omsk. However, before the operation was underway, fundamental changes occurred on Eastern Front. As the overall Civil War situation changed, Moscow prioritised Southern Front as Denikin advanced and threatened to link with the Ural'sk Cossacks.

On 14th August, Frunze renamed Southern Group, containing 1st, 4th and 11th Armies, as Turkestan Front. Under his command, it acted against the Ural'sk Cossacks. V. A. Ol'derogge became Eastern Front Commander with only 3rd and 5th

⁸⁹ *FnVf*, doc. 153, pp. 223-224; M. B. Zabolotnyi, pp. 120-123; *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR. Entsiklopediia*, pp. 649-650.

⁹⁰ *Vbr*, doc. 161, pp. 231-232.

⁹¹ *FnVf*, doc. 160, pp. 230-231; *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 681-682, pp. 731-732.

⁹² *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 678, pp. 728-729; *FnVf*, doc. 154, pp. 224-225; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 535. Mezheninov commanded until 26th August when Alafuzo took over temporarily until 6th October when Matiiasevich assumed command; *Vbr*, docs. 85 & 90, pp. 149-150 & 153-154.

Armies.⁹³ Kolchak's forces had been split in two with the capture of Cheliabinsk and Troitsk. Eastern Front pursued Western Army eastwards, whilst Turkestan Front pursued Southern Army south-east to Turkestan.⁹⁴

This was the first time in the Civil War that Tukhachevsky did not fight on the prioritised front. Smirnov reported that 5th Army Communists wanted to fight in the South on the most threatening and dangerous front, but they remained in the East with Tukhachevsky.⁹⁵ Why was he not sent to the prioritised front as he had been throughout the Civil War and why was Frunze chosen ahead of him?

Frunze was the natural choice to lead Turkestan Front, having commanded successfully at Front level on prioritised fronts, with Southern Group and Eastern Front, by July 1919. He was the ideal Red Commander, a Party member since 1904 with no professional military education, who nevertheless had proved to be a natural at leading civil warfare. He also originated from Pishpek, Kirgizia and local knowledge was valuable, as had been evident with Tukhachevsky in 1918. Tukhachevsky was a lower rank, but became a front commander in January 1920 and was not far behind Frunze in terms of Moscow's trust. He had only been a Communist for seventeen months, but had shown his capabilities and continued loyalty to the regime and was making all the right noises in his assessment of class civil warfare. His retention on Eastern Front, despite it losing its prioritised status, was an indication of his high standing. Frunze and Tukhachevsky were the two top men Moscow could rely upon. Therefore, whilst Frunze led Turkestan Front, Tukhachevsky remained in the East to finish off the task to which he had contributed most of all the Eastern Front personnel to achieve. 5th Army had operated virtually independently since June, capturing the main targets in the most-fiercely defended central sector. As indicated in the congratulatory *RVSR* telegram, Moscow needed it to continue east and finish off Kolchak and it was most likely to achieve this with its "heroic" commander still at the helm. There is a possibility that, as in January 1919, Red Command felt Tukhachevsky was still better suited to army command, but this is less likely by now and, once he had led the final rout of Kolchak, he would be awarded with front command.

⁹³ *FnVf*, doc. 165, pp. 235-236; Vladimír Alekseevich Ol'derogge (1873-1931), a former Tsarist Major-General.

⁹⁴ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, pp. 800-801, note 139.

The Petropavlovsk Operation

On 15th August, Kamenev instructed Ol'derogge to advance 3rd and 5th Armies to the line Tobol'sk-Kurgan, to begin the Petropavlovsk Operation.⁹⁶ Ol'derogge relayed this to 3rd and 5th Armies. 5th Army's right flank was to move down the Cheliabinsk-Troitsk-Kustanai branch-line to occupy the latter town, then advance with all forces along the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Troitsk-Petropavlovsk highway to occupy Kurgan, the next main rail station which lay on the east bank of the Tobol. 3rd Army, on its left flank, was to advance along the Ekaterinburg-Omsk Railway, occupying Tiumen and Ialutorovsk as a prelude to capturing Tobol'sk, which lay on the east bank of the Tobol, just north of its confluence with the River Irtysh'. Ialutorovsk was occupied on 17th August and Kustanai, by 35th Division, two days later.⁹⁷

For the Petropavlovsk Operation, 5th Army contained 5th, 26th, 27th and 35th Divisions, having lost 21st Division through transfer to Southern Front. It numbered 1,204 command staff, 22,400 infantry, 1,946 cavalry, with 91 guns and 565 machine-guns against 3rd White Army's 19,640 infantry and 4,130 cavalry, with 122 guns and 356 machine-guns. 3rd Army comprised 29th, 30th, 51st and 10th Divisions, numbering 33,512 infantry, 3,595 cavalry, 107 guns and 612 machine-guns, against 1st and 2nd White Armies' 28,140 infantry and 5,640 cavalry, with 117 guns and 410 machine-guns.⁹⁸

However, on 16th August, 5th Division, numbering 618 command staff, 4,037 infantry and 124 cavalry with 12 guns and 86 machine-guns, was withdrawn into reserve. On 19th August, N. D. Tomin's combined cavalry detachment containing 3,411 cavalymen and 44 machine-guns transferred from 3rd to 5th Army to aid in operations at Kurgan.⁹⁹

5th Army began attempts to cross the Tobol on 18th August. 35th Division on the right flank, advanced via Kustanai along the Zverinologovskaia-Petropavlovsk highway, with 26th Division on its left flank advancing between the highway and

⁹⁶ *DGkKA*, doc. 583, pp. 593-594.

⁹⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 683-684, pp. 732-734; *Vbr*, doc. 91, pp. 154-163.

⁹⁸ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 93 & 490; *Vbr*, pp. 388-389.

⁹⁹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 684 & 686, pp. 733-734, 735-736 & 800, endnote 138.

Trans-Siberian Railway. 27th Division advanced north of the Railway, holding 5th Army's left flank after 5th Division, initially positioned there, was withdrawn into reserve. 3rd Army's right flank 30th Division advanced north of 5th Army.

Conditions along the River Tobol were good for defence. A high east right-bank was lined by shrubbery amongst which 3rd White Army entrenched with machine-gun nests and barbed wire entanglements. Only by 20th August did 5th Army manage to fight its way across, breaking through the White positions and launching immediately into a pursuit operation. By 28th August, 5th Army had covered 180 kms to reach the approaches to Petropavlovsk, which sat on the east bank of the River Ishim. 3rd White Army had suffered 15,000 casualties.¹⁰⁰ Garf and Ol'derogge ordered Tukhachevsky to force the river on 1st September.¹⁰¹ However, 3rd White Army had withdrawn behind the river, regrouped and reinforced, and launched a counter-offensive on 2nd September.

5th Army's rapid advance had not been matched by Turkestan Front's 1st Army on its right flank, leaving the former exposed to the open steppeland southwards. 3rd White Army and Siberian Cossacks launched infantry and cavalry flanking manoeuvres, with artillery support, in a surprise attack and 5th Army, overstretched and far from its supply bases, had to retreat to avoid encirclement. 5th Division was rushed forward from front reserve to plug the gaps. Ol'derogge repeatedly ordered Tukhachevsky and 3rd Army Commander Alafuzo to stop the White offensive and counter-attack and Tukhachevsky launched 26th and 27th Divisions into fierce meeting battles. However, 5th Army's outnumbered troops were forced to constantly retreat to avoid envelopment. This threatened 3rd Army's right flank and it also had to withdraw.

By 28th September, Ol'derogge was ordering 5th and 3rd Armies to prevent the Whites reaching the River Tobol, the starting point for the Petropavlovsk Operation on 20th August, but the Reds were forced to withdraw behind the river the next day and dug in on the west bank to hold the defensive line. Ol'derogge expressed dismay that 26th and 27th Divisions had destroyed the river crossings and not dug in on the

¹⁰⁰ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, docs. 687-688, pp. 736-737. Garf was Eastern Front Chief-of-Staff, but served as Acting Eastern Front Commander in late August. No indication is given why.

east bank before the river, holding both banks as he had ordered, but this appears to have not been possible.¹⁰²

However, Kolchak's forces were unable to advance any further. Just as 5th Army had been overstretched before Petropavlovsk, 3rd White Army had no reserves to bolster its attack and it petered out at the Tobol. This was another classic instance of Civil War toing and froing, but was also Kolchak's final offensive in the Civil War.

In the first two weeks of October, Tukhachevsky reorganised and rebuilt 5th Army for a renewed offensive to Petropavlovsk, whilst holding defensive positions behind the Tobol. Regrouping was completed on 13th October and 3rd and 5th Armies attacked the next day.¹⁰³

Differing figures are available for troop strength. Tukhachevsky estimated 5th Army to have 30,500 against 3rd White Army's 22,200. Other sources give 5th Army as 2,106 command staff, 17,021 infantry and 4,522 cavalry with 134 guns and 511 machine-guns against 3rd White Army's 21,610 infantry and 11,970 cavalry, with 136 guns and 546 machine-guns. On 10th September, 3rd Army numbered 3,262 command staff, 47,796 infantry and 4,186 cavalry, with 86 guns and 642 machine-guns facing 1st and 2nd White Armies' 26,530 infantry and 5,180 cavalry, with 90 guns and 439 machine-guns.¹⁰⁴ Tukhachevsky noted 5th Army had a superiority of forces, but was perhaps including the Siberian partisan movement, which numbered an estimated 40,000 in Kolchak's rear.¹⁰⁵

5th Army advanced with 35th Rifle Division on the right flank and 5th Division on its left, moving up the Zverinogolovskaia-Petropavlovsk highway. 54th Division joined the right flank group after crossing the Tobol. 26th and 27th Divisions advanced either side of the Trans-Siberian Railway, 27th Division holding 5th Army's left flank, and 3rd Army's 30th Division on its left. The right wing group was the strongest with 16,500 men and 4,600 in reserve. It was to gradually move tighter to the railway group, narrowing the front, as 5th Army approached Petropavlovsk, and envelop the town from the right.

Fighting raged around the Tobol for a week before the Reds finally battled over and broke through. The stronger right-wing group advanced ahead, turning 3rd White

¹⁰² *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 689-697, pp. 738-745; *Vbr*, doc. 91, pp. 154-163.

¹⁰³ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 698-699, pp. 745-746.

¹⁰⁴ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Kurgan-Omsk", *Izbrannye proizvedennia, Tom I, 1919-1927*, pp. 266-267; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 92-93 & 496; *Vbr*, pp. 390-391.

Army's left flank northwards as it retreated and shortening 5th Army's front as planned. The weaker railway group progressed more slowly, but by 21st October all divisions had crossed the Tobol. 3rd Army captured Tobol'sk on 22nd October.¹⁰⁶

The fierce battles now turned into a continuous pursuit operation as Kolchak's Armies retreated back to Petropavlovsk. The right-wing group pushed on ahead, turning the White left flank inside more as it advanced and by 29th October, 35th Division fought its way over the River Ishim and into Petropavlovsk beyond. With 27th Division approaching to reinforce the right-wing, 3rd White Army pulled out of Petropavlovsk on 30th October. 3rd Army occupied Ishim, further north upriver on 4th November, to maintain the offensive across Eastern Front. Kolchak's forces retreated east towards Omsk.¹⁰⁷

The recently-formed 13th Siberian Cavalry Division failed in two deep enveloping manoeuvres to cut off 3rd White Army's HQ at Lebiazh'a Station behind the Tobol and then to cut the rail line behind Petropavlovsk, allowing 3rd White Army to twice escape encirclements.¹⁰⁸ Tukhachevsky despatched infantry in carts to gather intelligence and this revealed 3rd White Army was planning to regroup in the Isil'kul' area before Omsk. Therefore, the offensive had to continue unabated to catch the Whites before they could regroup and dig in again. However, 5th Army was so exhausted and overstretched, the divisional commanders met in the Field HQ in Petropavlovsk and declared that the troops must recuperate for several days. This was not allowed though, as the day after the capture of Petropavlovsk, Ol'derogge ordered the development of the offensive towards Omsk. Tukhachevsky outlined 5th Army's tasks on 1st November and launched the operation on 4th November.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Kurgan-Omsk", p. 265.

¹⁰⁶ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 702 & 704, pp. 751-752; *Vbr*, docs. 97 & 99, pp. 171-175 & 176-177.

¹⁰⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 705, pp. 753 & 754; *Vbr*, docs. 100-105, pp. 177-188; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Kurgan-Omsk", pp. 266-269; *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia. Entsiklopediia*, pp. 454-455; The future World War II general Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskii (1896-1968) was Commander of 2nd Cavalry Division of 30th Rifle Division and received the Order of the Red Banner for action on 4th November 1919, *RGVA*, f. 37,605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 79; *Vbr*, p. 357.

¹⁰⁸ 13th Siberian Cavalry Division was formed on 21st September and served until 20th November 1919. *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 592.

¹⁰⁹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 796, p. 754; *Vbr*, docs. 107-108, pp. 188-192.

Omsk

5th and 3rd Armies had swollen by 1st November to contain 91,402 infantry and 7,296 cavalry, with 304 guns and 1,211 machine-guns. However, 5th Army's actual frontline strength was probably 2,109 command staff, 24,822 infantry and 3,209 cavalry with 116 guns and 303 machine-guns and 3rd Army was probably around the same size. Kolchak's Armies fielded 36,600 infantry and 17,100 cavalry, with 126 guns and 908 machine-guns.¹¹⁰ Red numbers were supplemented by the vast partisan movement and the White forces conversely disintegrated as they retreated further east, constantly defeated by Eastern Front before them and partisans behind.

5th Army advanced with 26th Division on the right flank moving north-east up the dirt road to take Omsk from the south. 35th Division and 27th Divisions advanced either side of the Trans-Siberian Railway. 5th Division held the left flank, advancing by road, but attempting to manoeuvre north-east to link with 3rd Army's 29th Division and block the retreat of 1st and 2nd White Armies' elements from Ishim, down the Ishim-Omsk Railway.

By 8th November, as Eastern Front advanced, 27th Division occupied Isil'kul' Station and prevented 3rd White Army concentrating there. Tukhachevsky initially sent 13th Cavalry Division towards Omsk, hoping to cut the railway and envelop 3rd White Army. However, 5th Army's advance opened up its right flank to a possible attack from Kokchetav-Akmolinsk area to the south. On 6th November, Ol'derogge ordered 13th Cavalry Division to clear this area, pulling it back from the Omsk attack.¹¹¹ On 9th November, Ol'derogge ordered the final assault on Omsk and Tukhachevsky authorised this two days later. Kokchetav was taken on 12th November, which secured the right flank, and Omsk was captured on 14th November.¹¹²

5th Army had advanced 600 *versty* and crossed three rivers in 30 days from the River Belaia to Omsk. 40,000 prisoners, over 100 guns, 500,000 shells, 5 million

¹¹⁰ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 111 & 501.

¹¹¹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, pp. 754-755.

¹¹² *RGIA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 49; *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 708, pp. 755-757; *Vbr*, doc. 109, pp. 192-193.

cartridges and 3 armoured-trains were captured in the town, finishing Kolchak as a force in the Civil War.¹¹³

Although Kolchak's capital was captured, he escaped, and on 18th November Tukhachevsky ordered pursuit of the scattered remnants of the White forces, with Kolchak the main target. This eventually led to the further capture of Tomsk, Novonikolaevsk and Krasnoiarsk, but this was Tukhachevsky's last instruction to 5th Army before he was recalled to Moscow amid more transfers, as Eastern Front had all but completed its task.¹¹⁴

Tukhachevsky and Ol'derogge

Tukhachevsky's command would not have been complete without an altercation with his superior and this duly occurred. Tukhachevsky recalled the argument in his essay *Na Vostochnom fronte* (On Eastern Front), written in 1935, when the terror process was starting to take hold in the USSR. This probably explains his statement, "It is hard to understand where Trotsky sought out such people!", but the dispute Tukhachevsky had with Ol'derogge was again over military matters.¹¹⁵ It centred around the first attack on Petropavlovsk which led to 3rd White Army's counter-offensive. Tukhachevsky related that he had opposed Ol'derogge's plan for the main attack group to move up the railway, as this left the right flank road open to the Siberian Cossack counter-attack. He noted that he had wanted to conduct the first offensive using the plan of the second, a strong right-wing group, which could have protected against flank attack, but was overruled by Ol'derogge. Ultimately Tukhachevsky was proven correct. He also complained about Ol'derogge pulling back the cavalry from the Omsk Operation, hinting that Kolchak may have been captured if they had been allowed to cut the rail line behind Omsk.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, pp. 49 & 63.

¹¹⁴ *Vbr*, doc. 110, pp. 193-194; 5th Army pursued Kolchak, capturing Novonikolaevsk on 14th December. 5th Steppe Partisan Regiment, which had been active in Kolchak's rear, met up with 227th and 228th Regiments on 12th December and fought alongside them afterwards. Kolchak handed responsibility for the fight in Siberia to Ataman Semenov and made Denikin Supreme Ruler of Russia on 5th January 1920. On the same day, partisans took over the town of Irkutsk. Kolchak arrived here on 15th January and was arrested by the partisans, tried and executed on 7th February. Kappel' also died at Irkutsk, retreating to here and dying in action on 25th January, *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 984, pp. 171 & 413-420.

¹¹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Na Vostochnom fronte", p. 227.

¹¹⁶ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 49.

This essay was written in 1935 amid growing tension and Tukhachevsky possibly had to justify his role in the offensive at this time. Other sources do not reveal arguments over orders or strategy, as with Tukhachevsky's other disputes, and there appears to be no reply by Ol'derogge. There is no guarantee that the cavalry would have encircled and cut off Kolchak as it had failed to complete similar operations twice already. As for the strategic argument, the second offensive was a great manoeuvre success, but there is no way to tell if Tukhachevsky did plan this in September.

However, if this disagreement did occur and Tukhachevsky had suggested the successful strategy and later complained about Ol'derogge's rebuff, it would have benefited Tukhachevsky's reputation in the same manner as the Don incident with Gittis. Also, despite withdrawing 150 kms in September, this was not a rout, but a fairly orderly retreat. It gave Tukhachevsky another chance to display his reorganisational skills and 5th Army attacked successfully afterwards. Tukhachevsky had shown himself to be strategically astute, but also adaptable and able in command, demonstrating initiative to act independently and quickly under great pressure to save the situation. This would have gone in his favour as far as further promotion was concerned. The Ol'derogge episode would again have reinforced his belief that old *voenspetsy* did not understand class warfare, as the tactic Tukhachevsky proposed was based on the presence of hostile class elements on the right flank, but Ol'derogge did not seem to grasp this. When the second offensive worked because of the same tactic, it would have confirmed Tukhachevsky's belief in his class warfare methods.

A definite pattern is evident throughout Tukhachevsky's Civil War army commands of him working well and having good relations with one superior, but not the next. Murav'ev can be discounted as Tukhachevsky did not fight a campaign under his command, but we can begin with Vacietis. Tukhachevsky never worked easily with him, registering complaints about interference, but relations with Kamenev as Eastern Front Commander went very smoothly. Transferred to Southern Front, Tukhachevsky fell out completely with Gittis. Eastern Front in 1919 is slightly different in that Kamenev was Eastern Front Commander, but Frunze commanded Southern Group. In this way, Tukhachevsky served under both, but relations were excellent and operations planned jointly, as has been shown. However, the pattern reemerges with Samoilo's appearance and bitter complaints lodged by Tukhachevsky

again. With Kamenev restored, Tukhachevsky served happily under him and Frunze until August. Only when Frunze was replaced by Ol'derogge did a dispute arise again. What lay behind this pattern?

The basic reason was a clash in military outlook and how operations should be waged. Frunze and Kamenev fought the same way as Tukhachevsky and so they worked well together, discussing tactics and acting upon advice from each other. This comes across in the tenor of their communications. However, Gittis, Samoilo and Ol'derogge were three men who failed to come up to the standards of Kamenev and Frunze in Tukhachevsky's eyes, mainly because they thought differently, but also because they did not appreciate the changes in class warfare that Tukhachevsky saw as crucial to not only winning the Russian Civil War, but also other civil and class wars to come. The Russian Civil War could be turned into a European conflict and perfecting the proper methods to fight it was essential, as they would be replicated in war-torn Europe. Tukhachevsky wrote in cutting and sarcastic terms about those he disagreed with, but the arguments were over military matters and the nastier tone, which is visible in the clipped, efficient communications he had with them, was part of this. No personal vendetta was aimed at these people, but they were old *voenspetsy* who could not adapt to civil warfare and so had to be removed before they did any more damage. Vacietis is slightly different in that Tukhachevsky disagreed with his defensive strategy for Eastern Front in 1919, but in 1918, although they had disagreed and Vacietis forced him to attack before 1st Army was ready, Tukhachevsky did seem to respect him and relations appear warmer in their communications than with Gittis, Samoilo or Ol'derogge. Tukhachevsky retained these types of relationships throughout his life, unable to respect those he disagreed with over fundamental military concepts and having friendships only with those with whom he readily agreed and worked well.

Partisans in Siberia

A central tenet of Tukhachevsky's military concepts emerged in Siberia with 5th Army. The aid given by partisans in Kolchak's rear caused a major evolution in his idea of the possibility of continuous offensives because of the ability to mobilise class-friendly troops along the way. Uprisings in the enemy rear had already played

an important part in Samara in 1918, forcing *Komuch* troops to flee the town to prevent encirclement as 1st Army approached from the front, and adding 1,000 men to 1st Army in addition to those mobilised en route through Simbirsk and Syzran'. This had been replicated in a spectacular manner at Cheliabinsk in August 1919, 5th Army's victory only secured because 8,500 workers rose in the White rear, to ruin the trap laid for the Red troops. However, in the pursuit operations after this, a completely new phenomenon emerged which altered Tukhachevsky's thinking fundamentally.

Whilst conducting the continuous pursuit of Kolchak's forces to Kurgan, Petropavlovsk and Omsk, Tukhachevsky had to constantly give up troops for transfer to Southern and Petrograd Fronts. However, 5th Army numbers remained constant and even rose as he progressed eastwards because of mobilisation carried out on the move. Partisan formations fought alongside 5th Army formations and also secured 5th Army's rear and flanks, allowing Tukhachevsky to keep his regular troops in the front line. He wrote in January 1920 that 5th Army had successfully defended the open steppelands on its flanks and rear by creating fortified areas under the authority of local military commissariats. These contained lines of separate blockhouses garrisoned by small units of platoon or company size, which cooperated with partisan detachments operating in the countryside to defend against White raids, especially by cavalry. In this way, 5th Army's rear was secured, whilst "not expending one regiment of the field army on this matter".¹¹⁷

Such support was available because of the vast Siberian partisan movement which rose against Kolchak during 1919. This was encouraged by Moscow from early in the year. The Siberian *oblast'* Bolshevik Conference, on 20th-21st March 1919, passed a resolution to organise the peasantry for the struggle with Kolchak, but the partisan movement which emerged was far more widespread than they could have anticipated.¹¹⁸ The Siberian partisan composition differed from the earlier workers' risings in Samara and Cheliabinsk, which Tukhachevsky had witnessed and used to his advantage. The Siberian partisans were almost predominantly peasants who were rising against the corruption and violence in the rear of the Kolchak regime. These

¹¹⁷ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Ukreplennye raiony", pp. 89-94.

¹¹⁸ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 984, pp. 429-430.

partisans originated from the section of society not normally supportive of and ambivalent at best towards the Bolsheviks.¹¹⁹

Moscow jumped at this support, coordinating the partisans with the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, formed on 27th August by CEC decree under I. N. Smirnov.¹²⁰ The *Sibrevkom* gained power over all organs of civil administration in Siberia and all resources, bar foodstuffs and played an integral part in 5th Army's success on Eastern Front. The peasant and Red partisan movements had been active in Siberia for much of Kolchak's reign, but at this point in many ways acted as replacements for the regular troops Eastern Front lost to Southern and Petrograd Fronts, crucially reinforcing the depleted Red forces when the Red offensive began to stall in early September. As 5th Army moved further east and came into closer contact with the partisan formations, reorganisation of the irregular troops was conducted. On 9th October, West Siberian Peasant Red Army was created, with a command staff and military revolutionary tribunals. It was commanded by a Siberian partisan leader E. M. Mamontov and grew to 15,000 partisans.¹²¹ This replicated Tukhachevsky's Red Army formation process in summer 1918 and regulated cooperation between 5th Army and partisan forces.

G. V. Smirnov suggests the credit for 5th Army's successful cooperation with Red partisans should go solely to I. N. Smirnov as Tukhachevsky did not know about the secret work undertaken by his fellow-*RVS* member, but this can be discounted.¹²² Tukhachevsky and Smirnov were based together in 5th Army HQ for virtually the whole campaign and worked together on all operational aspects, including the raising of uprisings and partisan activity in Kolchak's rear.

The success of the 40,000-strong partisan forces in helping maintain 5th Army's advance to victory convinced Tukhachevsky of the efficacy of class warfare. These were peasants who had rebelled against the bourgeois Whites and supported the advance of socialism and Tukhachevsky saw it as one of the major factors in his ability to maintain the continuous offensive. He stated clearly in *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia* that the use of partisans in the rear must be researched and

¹¹⁹ For a detailed study of the Kolchak regime see, J. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: the anti-Bolshevik government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920*, (Cambridge, 1996).

¹²⁰ *Sibirskaiia Vandeia: Tom 1, 1919-1920. Dokumenty*. (Moscow, 2000), doc. 1, p. 13.

¹²¹ *RTsKhIDNI*, f. 71, op. 35, d. 984, pp. 166-167 & 444; Efim Mefod'evich Mamontov (1888-1922) became Deputy Inspector of 5th Army infantry in February 1920, *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsiiia. Entsiklopediia*, pp. 340-341.

utilised to the full and he never lost belief in its effectiveness, stressing the point in the 1929 article on the Red Army Field Regulations which introduced "Deep Battle".¹²³ The ability to have sizeable forces in the enemy rear was evident to him in 1919 as a vital method by which to attack the enemy in depth, disrupting communications and the ability to move reserves to the front line. In later years, with technological developments and imagination, he tried to replicate the conditions he had seen work so well in Siberia, by introducing the notion of paratroopers into "Deep Battle".

Tukhachevsky was the first to experiment with dropping sizeable formations of lightly-equipped men behind enemy lines to disrupt the rear and take out vital points to help the attack from the front. The need to reach these troops quickly because of their light armament was paramount to avoid their annihilation and so quick strike tank formations were developed to do so. These ideas all stemmed from what Tukhachevsky had seen work in action against Kolchak. Partisans were crucial for maintaining offensive momentum, disrupting Kolchak's rear, cutting communications and preventing reserves reaching the frontlines with sabotage of transport and transport routes. However, they could also combine with infantry forces attacking from the front travelling quickly by cart, or cavalry conducting deep raids to the enemy's depth, and in this way added troops to the regular formations. The basic operational ideas for "Deep Battle" originated from Tukhachevsky's Civil War commands. He believed these were the true methods to win class war under the changing conditions of socialism against capitalism and he was determined from the outset to achieve a class-based army utilising these methods. This underlay his disagreements with those wishing to follow defensive or "national" warfare methods. It is also possible that he saw the development of paratroopers as either a way to help foment risings in the rear of enemy armies or conversely, with the hopes for uprisings in Western countries perhaps fading by the end of the 1920s, this was an alternative to the help provided by partisans in the rear. Loyal troops dropped into the enemy rear would do the job instead.

¹²² G. V. Smirnov, pp. 254-257.

¹²³ See chapter III, p. 143

From late November, Tukhachevsky had the opportunity to disseminate his ideas as a cogent theory when he was recalled to Moscow and then had the chance to practise them on a front command level in early 1920.

Moscow Interlude

On 25th November, Tukhachevsky was recalled to Moscow.¹²⁴ He was appointed Southern Front 13th Army Commander on 22nd December, but did not leave immediately, delivering his lecture on 24th December. On 4th February, having apparently not taken up 13th Army command, he was appointed Acting Caucasian Front Commander, a post he held until 22nd April. Various stories and suggestions surround this period, the only time during the Civil War Tukhachevsky was not commanding in the field.

Gul' suggests Tukhachevsky was recalled to Moscow for investigation after *Cheka* personnel, tipped off by "enemies", discovered Tukhachevsky had given his wife, Marucia, extra food from his command train to take home to her parents. As this was illegal she shot herself on his train to avoid disgrace for her husband.¹²⁵ Gul' is the only source containing this story. None of the Soviet biographies reproduce it, but this is to be expected, whether it occurred or not. Post-Soviet biographies do not mention it either, not even Smirnov, but of the Western accounts, Spahr does not mention it, Butson again reproduces it as fact without question, whilst Simpkin and Erickson and Kaufmann question its validity.¹²⁶ As previously mentioned, Tukhachevsky's wife and his family visited him on the command train and his brothers worked in his staff. It is possible to tendentiously link this story to the arguments Tukhachevsky had with Medvedev about the former using army supplies for family and friends. However, ultimately Gul's story must be dismissed as more émigré gripes. In Tukhachevsky's personal file in *RGVA*, his sister Elizabeth explains what happened to Marucia. She did commit suicide, but it was nothing to with being caught with contraband foodstuffs. Tukhachevsky had an affair with another woman whom he eventually married and this was the reason his first wife committed suicide. She had taken drugs

¹²⁴ Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, *Krasnyi marshal*, (Moscow, 1990), p. 122.

¹²⁵ R. Gul', *Tukhachevsky: krasnyi marshal*, (Berlin, 1932), pp. 112-113.

to "scare him" previously, but took a large dose of a sleeping draught and died.¹²⁷ This explains the absence of this seedier side to his life in the Soviet biographies. It does not sit well with the image of the Communist hero. However, it is unlikely that Tukhachevsky was recalled in disgrace because this occurred, although perhaps he was given compassionate leave.

Ivanov suggests Tukhachevsky arrived in Moscow at the end of November, and visited the *RVSR* repeatedly, which was based in his old Aleksandrovskii Military Academy building, to receive a new posting. However, he received nothing, probably because of his July statements about older *voenspetsy* and the need to replace them with communist-commanders.¹²⁸ Therefore, did the hierarchy block his appointment?

Daines, in an archivally-based essay, writes the *RVSR* took the decision to appoint Tukhachevsky 13th Army Commander on 6th November, when 13th Army Commander A. I. Gekker fell ill and an urgent replacement was required. However, once recalled (after the fall of Omsk), the ruined transport system prevented Tukhachevsky returning quickly.¹²⁹ Gekker was not replaced until 18th February 1920 by I. Kh. Pauka and Tukhachevsky is not recorded as ever holding this position.¹³⁰

The ruin of the railways was a major obstacle to travel. The situation worsened as the Civil War progressed and also the further from the centre one travelled. Tukhachevsky was hundreds of miles away in Omsk when he was recalled. He handed over command to Eikhe on 25th November, but evidently did not depart for Moscow immediately, signing an order as a member of 5th Army *RVS* on 3rd December.¹³¹ It appears the transport chaos delayed Tukhachevsky in Omsk until at least this date and it is unlikely he arrived in Moscow long before he met Sklianskii. Taking into account time lost because of the ruined Civil War rail network cuts down the period Tukhachevsky was in Moscow, which is variously referred to as "shrouded

¹²⁶ T. Butson, *The Tsar's Lieutenant. The Soviet Marshal*, (New York, 1984), p. 66; A. F. Kaufmann, pp. 127-128; R. Simpkin & Erickson, J., *Deep Battle - The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii*, (London; Washington, 1987), p. 7.

¹²⁷ *RGVA*, f. 37605, op. 1, d. 3, pp. 46-47.

¹²⁸ V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, 2nd Edition, (Moscow, 1990), pp. 131-134.

¹²⁹ V. O. Daines, "Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky", *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 10, (Oct. 1989), pp. 45-46.

¹³⁰ *DkfKA*, Tom IV, p. 542.

¹³¹ Tukhachevsky is listed as 5th Army Commander until 25th November 1919, upon which date Eikhe is listed as taking over. *I'br*, p. 404; *DkfKA*, Tom IV, p. 537; *Vbr*, doc. 182, p. 346.

in mystery" or a period in which he was "cooling his heels". In fact, this was not a long mysterious gap in his Civil War career at all.¹³²

Tukhachevsky was simply recalled to become 13th Army Commander because he had accomplished his task in the East with the capture of Omsk and Kolchak was finished as a force. However, Southern Front was still locked in battle with Denikin and, since Tukhachevsky was no longer needed in the East, Moscow wanted to use its best army commander in the prioritised South. However, with the delays, it appears Lenin and Sklianskii decided to keep Tukhachevsky in Moscow for a few days longer to deliver his lecture and compile his report. G. V. Smirnov suggests Trotsky seized the chance to "...bring his creature into the light" and this was why Tukhachevsky was in Moscow for so long.¹³³ We have already established he was not in Moscow very long and although Trotsky did describe Tukhachevsky as "...one of our best army commanders" on 12th December, it was Lenin who requested Tukhachevsky's report and lecture.¹³⁴ The Red hierarchy no doubt were all anxious to hear what the commander who had chased Kolchak back from the Volga had to say.

I. N. Smirnov had sent a report to the *RVSR*, which Lenin received on 15th November, describing the command courses which Tukhachevsky had formed to recruit and train command staff for 5th Army. 50 battalion and company level officers had been produced and 800 more were currently completing the courses.¹³⁵ This was how Tukhachevsky could claim 5th Army had Red Commanders who were communists and make a case for unified command in his 19th December report. Smirnov's report and Tukhachevsky's assertions in *Vozniknovenie grazhdanskoi voine* in July 1919, about the need to replace old *voenspetsy* with Red Commanders, were probably the catalyst for Lenin requesting Tukhachevsky's report in December.

Lenin's response to Tukhachevsky's report is illustrated by a telegram Tukhachevsky sent on Lenin's request to I. N. Smirnov on 19th December, the same day Tukhachevsky submitted his report to Sklianskii and Lenin. After reading the report and probably discussing Eastern Front with Tukhachevsky, Lenin instructed him to ask Smirnov to prepare the best command staff of 5th Army for transfer to Southern Front "within a month" because of the "severe insufficiency of reliable

¹³² A. F. Kaufmann Jr., pp. 127-128; T. Butson, p. 66.

¹³³ G. V. Smirnov, p. 258.

¹³⁴ L. D. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed, Volume II: The Year 1919*, (London, 1979), p. 113.

¹³⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I*, pp. 6-7.

command staff" there and the fact that "Transfer of units of 5th Army is impossible in a short time because of the state of transport". These were the young commanders from 5th Army's military courses, the people Tukhachevsky praised so highly and recommended for promotion in his report. If 5th Army en masse could not be quickly transferred south, at least its commanders could be, to organise the forces there. After relaying this instruction from Lenin, Tukhachevsky wrote to Smirnov,

I do not know now the circumstances in Siberia, but if Kolchak is already annihilated, then this measure would bring great advantages. I propose this is fulfilled as fully as possible to boldly move for the transfer of the command staff of good military commanders and excellent *kursanty* and to give promotion to the young command staff.¹³⁶

It is interesting to see Tukhachevsky expressing his ignorance of the situation in the East and allowing Smirnov to decide if transfers were possible, a courtesy he probably wished had been shown to himself previously. Whether this transfer en masse from the East to the South would be greeted as well by those already there was another matter and one perhaps influential in the treatment Tukhachevsky initially received when sent southwards.

Transfer to Caucasian Front

Some uncertainty lingers over the early January 1920 period. Tukhachevsky was apparently informed on 22nd December that he was still to become 13th Army Commander as Gekker's health had not improved.¹³⁷ He delivered his lecture on 24th December and four days later was awarded a golden revolver for his command of 5th Army.¹³⁸ He departed for Caucasian Front shortly after this. Two essays in *Voina klassov* are dated 5th and 18th January 1920 at Southern Front HQ in Kursk, and two more were written during this period, so he spent much of this time writing.¹³⁹ However, his patience had evidently ended by 19th January, as he telegraphed Trotsky,

¹³⁶ *I'br*, doc. 122, p. 227.

¹³⁷ V. M. Ivanov, p. 134; V. O. Daines, p. 47.

¹³⁸ V. O. Daines, pp. 46-47.

¹³⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Ukreplennye raiony", "Politika i strategiiia v grazhdanskoi voine", "Revoliutsiia izvne" & "Statistika v grazhdanskoi voine", *Voina klassov*, pp. 31-36, 50-60 & 78-88, 89-93.

I earnestly ask you to release me from having nothing to do. I have been sitting around aimlessly at South-Western Staff HQ for almost three weeks and I have been without work for two months in all. I can neither elucidate the reason for the delay nor obtain a further posting. If I should have any services to my credit over almost two years in command of various armies, I request that I may be given an opportunity of getting down to some active work or, if this cannot be found at the front, I request that I may be given it in the transport field or military commissariats.

Trotsky, upon receiving this, noted at the bottom of the telegram, "Inform Comrades Lenin and Stalin".¹⁴⁰ It is evident from this that Tukhachevsky arrived at Kursk in early January, but did not actively become 13th Army Commander.

Butson relates this telegram to Tukhachevsky being punished for his wife's indiscretion with the contraband foodstuffs, but this has been shown not to be the case. He does also mention Trotsky blaming Stalin for Tukhachevsky's idleness at Kursk. Ivanov also stresses this, suggesting Stalin blocked Tukhachevsky taking up the position, as he looked on him as either a *voenspetsy* or an outsider with whom he did not want to share the defeat of Denikin. This is feasible and could have been exacerbated by the transfer of 5th Army's command staff. Did Stalin feel the success gained in the south was in danger of being undermined and taken over by those transferred from the East who would look to Tukhachevsky for leadership? As Southern Front political commissar, Stalin had the position to block Tukhachevsky. However, if he did so initially, Stalin played a part in Tukhachevsky becoming Acting Caucasian Front Commander on 24th January.

Stalin telegrammed Voroshilov and Budennyi on 3rd February,

Eight days ago, during my visit to Moscow, I achieved the replacement of Shorin and appointment of a new Front Commander Tukhachevsky - the conqueror of Siberia and victor over Kolchak. He arrived in Saratov only today and any day now will join the front command.¹⁴¹

Whether Stalin did originally block Tukhachevsky's appointment as 13th Army Commander, events on Caucasian Front worsened during January, forcing Stalin to demand a replacement for Front Commander Shorin. Therefore, perhaps Tukhachevsky was in the right place at the right time again. However, I would suggest this is an instance in which Stalin has simply been pinned with the blame, as he is for most things which went wrong in the Soviet Union during his time. He sounded delighted in the telegram to have secured Tukhachevsky's posting and by this

¹⁴⁰ J. M. Meijer, ed. *The Trotsky Papers, Volume II*, doc. 439, pp. 10-13.

¹⁴¹ A. S. Popov, p. 52.

point I do not think he doubted Tukhachevsky's credentials. Stalin later described Tukhachevsky as the "Demon of the Civil War" and with Caucasian Front falling apart in January he was glad to have him there.¹⁴² It is also possible Tukhachevsky was kept inactive on Caucasian Front because the *voenspetsy* there did not take kindly to him after his December comments and Shorin blocked his posting. This is probably the most likely scenario.

Lenin sent a telegram to Trotsky asking "...2) Where is Tukhachevsky? 3) How are things on Caucasian Front?".¹⁴³ This has been dated as after 7th February because of a reference to Kolchak which could have been about his execution, but it is possible this was written when he was under arrest and before the execution had occurred. Either way, Lenin was curious as to what Tukhachevsky was doing and the reference to Caucasian Front suggests, if it was sent earlier, Lenin wanted Tukhachevsky to go there. Trotsky had informed Lenin and Stalin of Tukhachevsky's 19th January telegram and Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin evidently met and decided to appoint Tukhachevsky. Tukhachevsky's telegram also negates the suggestion that he was previously under investigation in Moscow, as he would not have written he could not "elucidate" the reasons for the delay in his receiving a posting, if he had been.

For Tukhachevsky to be deemed capable of handling front command, which Trotsky had advised against a year earlier, shows he must have impressed during his time in Moscow. Perhaps an element of luck was still involved, being in right the place at the right time to replace Shorin, but Tukhachevsky again had to prove himself capable of fulfilling this higher role. However, as Stalin recognised, he was the man who infamously led 5th Army to the final rout of Kolchak. Therefore, when Denikin was threatening to regain the initiative in the South, the boost to morale for Caucasian Front of gaining the leadership of a now renowned military commander would have been tangible and was probably considered in Moscow's decision.

Caucasian Front Commander: February-April 1920

Tukhachevsky assumed the post of Caucasian Front Commander on 2nd February 1920 and held it until 24th April, by which time he had completely routed the Armed

¹⁴² *RGVA*, f. 37,605, op. 1, d. 11, p. 9.

Forces of South Russia, and for the second time in six months forced the Supreme Ruler of Russia to flee the oncoming Red Army.¹⁴⁴ Unlike Kolchak however, Denikin managed to escape with his life, leaving Russia for Turkey on an Allied transport on 4th April, handing over command of the remaining White troops in the Crimea to Baron Petr Wrangel. Disagreements between the two Southern White supremos contributed to the disintegration of the White forces. Denikin removed Wrangel from his command after learning of a plot by the latter to replace him as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of South Russia. Also, the Kuban Government refused to help Denikin, not recognising his authority, which led him to threaten the abandonment of the Kuban.¹⁴⁵ This bickering was symptomatic of the White movement and weakened it, easing the path of the Red Caucasian Front, as did the fact that Denikin's rear collapsed rapidly around him amid partisan activity. However, this was encouraged by the major factor in the White defeat, the February-April Red North Caucasus Operation, Tukhachevsky's meticulously planned and executed offensive, which in hindsight was perhaps the apogee of his wartime command career. Its stunning success, kickstarting the Red offensive in the Caucasus which had completely stalled in mid-January, led to Kamenev recommending him as Western Front Commander in March to take on Poland. Was the North Caucasus Operation influenced by Tukhachevsky's earlier campaigns, did it reflect his Moscow analysis and are there any pointers towards why the Polish campaign failed afterwards?

Circumstances on Southern Front had radically changed between November 1919 and January 1920, with Denikin pushed back from whence he came. The rising Polish threat in the West led to the reorganisation of Southern and South-Eastern Fronts into South-Western and Caucasian Fronts, in accordance with the geographical areas in which they now operated. South-Western Front under A. I. Egorov was based at Kharkov and Caucasian Front under V. I. Shorin was based at Rostov.¹⁴⁶

After the reorganisation, Shorin ordered a renewed offensive. The direction of the attack, the Don-Manych' Operation, and his choice of troops for the main sector led to a collapse in Red morale, retreat before a White counter-attack and Shorin's removal.

¹⁴³ V. M. Poniaeva, *Biograficheskaya khronika V. I. Lenina, kak istochnik izucheniia kulturnogo stroitel'stva v SSSR*, Tom 8, (n.p.), p. 194; J. M. Meijer, doc. 450, pp. 30-33.

¹⁴⁴ *DkfKA*, Tom IV, p. 530.

¹⁴⁵ *DkfKA*, Tom II, doc. 465, p. 498.

¹⁴⁶ Aleksandr Il'ich Egorov (1883-1939) and Vasilii Ivanovich Shorin (1870-1938) were both former Tsarist colonels.

By mid-January 1920, the Armed Forces of South Russia had split into three groups. Red South-Western Front formed screens against Polish incursions into Ukraine, whilst pushing on to Odessa and Crimea, pursuing and routing the two smaller White groups retreating here. Caucasian Front faced the largest White group under Denikin, containing Don Army, the remnants of Kuban Army and the Volunteer Corps. Wrangel had reorganised and reduced the Volunteer Army to corps size in early December as losses sustained through battle, disease and desertion were not replaced. Continued retreat through a hostile peasant rear prevented mobilisation of reinforcements.¹⁴⁷ Retreating down the left bank of the River Don, the Whites, numbering around 11,000 cavalry and 13,000 infantry, headed for the North Caucasus. By mid-January the Volunteer Corps occupied Azov Sea-Bataisk area, with the fortified zone of Bataisk on its left flank. The Don Cavalry (3 Cavalry Corps) were positioned around Ol'ginskaia Station area and south of Bataisk were 3 Kuban Cavalry Corps in reserve.

Facing the largest White force, Caucasian Front was prioritised by Moscow and allocated more troops, gaining 8th Army and 1st Cavalry Army from South-Western Front and a further five divisions to complement its 9th, 10th and 11th Armies. This occurred on 9th January, and Shorin continued South-Eastern Front's offensive, concentrating on the Volunteer Corps, to clear Rostov-on-the-Don area.¹⁴⁸ This task was allocated on 14th January to 1st Cavalry Army under Semen Budennyi and 8th Army under G. Ia. Sokol'nikov.¹⁴⁹ On 15th January, the former comprised 9,000 cavalry and 9th and 12th divisions' 5,000 infantry. Positioned along the front Rostov-on-the-Don-Novocherkassk-Aksai', 8th Army comprised 11,000 infantry and 2,022 cavalry, with 1,681 light and heavy guns. 9th, 11th and 10th Armies, the latter of which recaptured Tsaritsyn on 2nd January, were to advance with supporting operations.¹⁵⁰

Therefore, the Reds had numerical superiority and with morale high, especially amongst the unstoppable 1st Cavalry Army, prospects for a further Red victory were favourable. However, Shorin, disregarding Budennyi's request to cross the frozen River Don and envelop the Bataisk stronghold in the rear, ordered a frontal attack by

¹⁴⁷ A. S. Bubnov, et al. *Tom III*, (Moscow, 1930), p. 285.

¹⁴⁸ *DkKA, Tom II*, p. 468.

¹⁴⁹ Semen Mikhailovich Budennyi (1883-1973), a former Tsarist NCO.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 469-470.

1st Cavalry Army over the Don from Rostov to Bataisk, through a low-lying marshy plain intersected by streams and lakes. This prevented rapid advance and forced the Red cavalry together as they attempted to cross the mainly impassable land before Bataisk, allowing the Whites to concentrate fire on the bunched cavalrymen - hardly the ideal offensive situation for a cavalry force requiring freedom of movement and swift manoeuvrability to succeed.

Shorin authorised the operation on 15th January and ordered its continuation on 17th and 19th, despite the failure of 1st Cavalry Army and 8th Army to make any ground on Bataisk.¹⁵¹ The repeated frontal attacks by 1st Cavalry Army cost it almost half its number in casualties and a collapse in morale and provoked stinging rebukes from Budennyi, backed by 10th Army Commissar Voroshilov, a powerful figure in the Red South.

Kamenev tried to salvage the offensive, submitting a report on 22nd January to Trotsky, demanding more troops for Caucasian Front. He reported that 8th and 9th Armies and 1st Cavalry Army had successfully pushed Denikin's forces over the Don, but a crossing was impossible with all bridges destroyed except the rail crossing at Rostov. This was defended by entrenched Whites on the southern bank, who had reinforced and regrouped, rendering a boat crossing impossible. Commenting on Caucasian Front's low quality troops and poorly-trained command staff, the majority of whom were not capable of manoeuvre warfare, Kamenev stressed the need to quickly transfer troops from all over the Soviet Republic - 40,000 initially, then 60,000, even up to 100,000. Quantity rather than quality would break through the entrenched White forces.¹⁵²

Also on 22nd January, Kamenev directed 9th Army to postpone its attack, as 8th Army and 1st Cavalry Army had failed to cross the Don the previous day and would not do so under present conditions. 9th and 10th Armies were to manoeuvre for a breakthrough of the River Manych' line with Dumenko's cavalry, into the rear of Volunteer Army, which was entrenched in front of 8th Army and 1st Cavalry Army.¹⁵³ Changing the direction of the attack hinted at what Tukhachevsky would do the next month. However, Shorin relayed Kamenev's directive, ordering 9th and 10th Armies to manoeuvre across the Manych' into the White rear, but did not alter 1st

¹⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 470-476.

¹⁵² *DGkKA*, doc. 725, pp. 725-727.

Cavalry Army's and 8th Army's tasks.¹⁵⁴ 8th Army, 1st Cavalry Army and Dumenko's Cavalry Corps were pushed back to Rostov by a counter-attack on 29th January by a 20,000 strong cavalry force led by Mamontov.¹⁵⁵ Shorin flung the Red forces into another frontal attack on 31st January, which despite isolated breakthroughs, was pushed back again. This was the last straw for Budennyi who wrote to Lenin on 1st February,

...I have to inform you comrade Lenin that the Cavalry Army is going through a difficult time. Never yet has anyone beaten my cavalry, like the Whites have beaten it now. And they have beaten it because the Front Commander has positioned the Cavalry Army in such conditions, that it might perish altogether. It is shameful for me to speak to you about this, but I love the Cavalry Army, yet I love the Revolution still more. And the cavalry is still very necessary to the Revolution. Front Commander Shorin first positioned the cavalry in the Don swamp and obstructed the crossing of the River Don. The enemy profited by this and nearly wiped out all our cavalry. And when the *RVS* demanded that the line of advance of the Cavalry Army be changed, comrade Shorin deprived me of the army infantry entrusted to me... the Cavalry Army was thrown alone against the enemy and for a second time ended up being severely knocked about. During the whole of my command there were never any tragic events like these. And since only Shorin had the right to decide on the disposition of the army entrusted to me, so calamities poured out. As far back as 26th October 1919 when I was subordinate to comrade Shorin, he gave me a task which damaged our prospects and was beneficial to the enemy. Then I told him about this by telegraph and he, evidently, was hurt and remembered it, and now all that is being reflected in our revolutionary work. Today I got the assignment of beating the enemy and moving on 60 *versty*, but the neighbouring armies are stationed according to Shorin's directive in the place and in such a way they give the enemy the chance of removing his units from the front and throwing them in against the Cavalry Army. That is a patent crime. I beg you to turn your attention to the Cavalry Army and other armies, else they lay down their lives in vain because of such criminal command.¹⁵⁶

The similarity in tone and invective to Tukhachevsky's telegram to Lenin about Gittis is striking. Evidently Budennyi felt little sympathy towards this old *voenspets* either.

Stalin was instructed to travel from South-Western to Caucasian Front, to join its *RVS*, taking political workers and reinforcements with him to restore the situation.

¹⁵³ Ibid. doc. 726, pp. 727-728.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. *Tom II*, docs. 442-446, pp. 475-479.

¹⁵⁵ J. M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers, Volume II*, doc. 446, pp. 24-27; Konstantin Konstantinovich Mamontov (1869-1920) was a former Tsarist lieutenant-general.

¹⁵⁶ J. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, p. 783.

However, he sent a reply to Lenin and Trotsky stating he was unwell and should not travel and did not think one man would make any difference anyway. He continued,

...it is not journeys by individuals that are needed but the transfer of cavalry-reserves, the South-West being without them. Moreover the delay in taking the situation in hand has absorbed precisely as much time as that wasted by us in standing still on the line Rostov-Manych', for which thanks to Shorin. Budennyi and Ordzhonikidze consider the unskilful command exercised by Shorin to be the reason for our failures....¹⁵⁷

On 3rd February Kamenev directed Caucasian Front *RVS*, "Military action of the combined cavalry on the Front's right flank again failed on 1st February because there was no support from 8th and 9th Armies' infantry". He halted all attacks on Bataisk and declared a new plan of attack should be formulated,

regrouping forces to enable attacks with a concentration of forces, well coordinated in terms of time and direction to achieve the generally laid down tasks. Special attention should be paid to newly-arriving divisions and steps quickly taken to restore order to the front and relaunch the offensive.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, when Tukhachevsky relieved Caucasian Front Chief-of-Staff Afanas'ev, who had apparently taken over as Acting Caucasian Front Commander on 24th January, although Shorin still signed the orders, he again had to reorganise crumbling troops, but a front, not just an army.¹⁵⁹ 9th Army *RVS* member Beloborodov telegraphed Moscow on 3rd-4th February after Mamontov's counter-attack, noting,

The situation that has developed so unfavourably for us was brought about by the extreme reduction in strength of our regiments, which have not been made up in numbers since the very beginning of the general advance and have thinned out in the fighting and been devastated by typhus. The enemy, by means of general mobilisation and rounding up all horses, has been able to get his cavalry back into shape, after putting all Cossack deserters into the line; and at present has at his disposal more man-power than us. Absence of reinforcements, which were despatched too late or held up in transit on the railway, threatens to turn our individual failures into a general crisis on the whole Caucasian Front.¹⁶⁰

Reorganisation of Caucasian Front, especially the demoralised 8th Army and 1st Cavalry Army, was essential to bring them back up to fighting strength.

¹⁵⁷ J. M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers, Vol. II*, doc. 447, pp. 26-29.

¹⁵⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 731, pp. 730-731.

¹⁵⁹ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 530; Iu. A. Shchetinov & B. A. Starkov, p. 126.

¹⁶⁰ J. M. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Paper, Vol. II*, doc. 446, pp. 24-27.

Simultaneously, to seize back the initiative in the North Caucasus, a successful offensive was required. Shorin's attempts with the Don-Manych' Operation had wholly failed. Therefore, Tukhachevsky decided on a change of direction and target, as suggested by Kamenev's directive, to achieve the breakthrough.

Tukhachevsky and Kamenev now worked in higher positions than on Eastern Front in 1919, but retained the same working relationship. The plan for the North Caucasus Operation followed Kamenev's general directive, but Tukhachevsky worked it out by local conditions and the two men discussed it. It was a brilliantly-calculated combined arms operation, concentrating the majority of Caucasian Front forces for large enveloping manoeuvres by cavalry and infantry to outflank Denikin's forces on their right and push back their centre. Meanwhile, a frontal infantry screen pinned down the strongpoint of Bataisk on the White left flank, which had previously proved impossible to penetrate with the cavalry. This was the plan to encircle and annihilate Denikin's Armed Forces of South Russia in the Caucasus. It was *the* archetypal Civil War strategic combat operation as formulated by Tukhachevsky in *Voyna klassov*, and its success vindicated at this time his military writings on the conflict.

The operational success was even more remarkable because of several new factors for Tukhachevsky. He had never previously fought in the Northern Caucasus and was not familiar with local conditions for planning his operation. More significantly however, Tukhachevsky commanded a sizeable cavalry force for the first time. 1st Cavalry Army is the Red formation most often mentioned in writings on the Red Army in the Civil War and the role of cavalry, because of its ability to manoeuvre quickly, is often presented as a key factor in Civil War combat. However, Tukhachevsky had achieved his success with virtually no cavalry formations under his command, 3-4,000 at most. He had fought a manoeuvre war with infantry. This had forced him to use any resources available, motorised vehicles and boats when possible, but mainly railways and carts. Caucasian Front was the only time in his command career he commanded a cavalry army.

Therefore, he could be expected to have struggled to employ this correctly. However, a major difference he brought to Caucasian Front was to end Shorin's incorrect employment of 1st Cavalry Army and prove remarkably astute in using cavalry. The result was a combined arms operation which Tukhachevsky planned and coordinated to achieve the type of encirclement he had so often attempted on Eastern

Front. Smirnov criticises Tukhachevsky for consistently failing to execute encirclements successfully on Eastern Front,¹⁶¹ but the bare facts are he did not have enough mobile troops to do so. Infantry in carts were not as mobile or quick as cavalry and were more restricted by rough terrain. Tukhachevsky finally had some cavalry from September 1919, but they were raw and inexperienced and were withdrawn at Omsk when he thought an encirclement was possible. He had employed cavalry successfully for reconnaissance and raiding, to disrupt communications and transport resources in the White rear, but on Caucasian Front he achieved success with 1st Cavalry Army in a full-scale operation.

The fact that Tukhachevsky did not use cavalry in 1919 must have influenced his thought. He mainly had to use carts, but saw the advantage of motorised vehicles to transport infantry and would develop this into tank formations later. Whilst Budennyi and Voroshilov remained loyal to the horse with which they had found victory, Tukhachevsky benefited from his need to improvise and innovate to use the most effective means available. The openness to varied ideas he developed allowed him to broaden his theories to incorporate mechanised formations.

Influential Figures

As with previous commands, Tukhachevsky worked in the Caucasus with figures who were important at the time, but also in later life. Perhaps the most notable of these was Grigorii Konstantinovich (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze, a Communist Party heavyweight and member since 1903 who had become Caucasian Front *RVS* political commissar on 3rd February and held this position until 29th May 1921.¹⁶² Tukhachevsky and Ordzhonikidze formed a lasting working and personal relationship in the Caucasus, remaining close friends and collaborating during the 1930s, when Ordzhonikidze served as Commissar for Heavy Industry, when Tukhachevsky was Deputy Defence Commissar. They cooperated in forming the Military-Industrial Complex which dominated the Soviet Union for its duration. The untimely suicide in 1937 of Ordzhonikidze in an NKVD cell removed the last major Party figure

¹⁶¹ G. V. Smirnov, pp. 253-255.

¹⁶² Sergo Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937) served as political commissar in the Don Soviet Republic and at Tsaritsyn in 1918 and on the *RVS*-y of 16th and 14th Armies through 1919; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 530.

protective of Tukhachevsky and paved the way for Stalin to conduct the military purge in May-June 1937.

The other Caucasian Front *RVS* members, V. A. Trifonov and I. T. Smilga, had comprised South-Eastern Front *RVS*, so provided continuity for the Front. Tukhachevsky had previously met the final *RVS* member, S. I. Gusev, at Sviiashsk with Trotsky in 1918.

Tukhachevsky had Gai under his command again in the Caucasus, leading 2nd Cavalry Corps after Dumenko's arrest.¹⁶³

Reorganisation and Preparation

Tukhachevsky quickly acted upon Kamenev's 3rd February directive and on 6th February ordered Caucasian Front Armies to prepare for an offensive into the North Caucasus. The first step was to stabilise the line in Rostov sector at the juncture of 8th and 9th Armies, where Mamontov had counter-attacked from Bataisk and the Whites were "most active". Therefore, 1st Cavalry Army was instructed initially to remain in position, ready to aid 8th Army's left flank and 9th Army's right flank, with a rifle division to transfer to 1st Cavalry Army and supply the infantry support denied by Shorin. Demarcation lines between the frontline forces were marked out, but also between the rear and front of the armies. Tukhachevsky instructed army commanders to recognise their rear as separate from their front area within a ten-day period, thus allowing them to mobilise reinforcements within their areas and maintain supply and communication lines. All resources were to be used for reinforcing.¹⁶⁴ Tukhachevsky was stressing the importance of the rear in strategic terms for planning offensive operations and impressing this on the army commanders under him, a crucial part of operational art which would be developed after the Civil War.

On 7th February, Tukhachevsky informed 8th Army Commander Sokol'nikov, ...the enemy is regrouping and concentrating cavalry units in Azov-Bataisk area, possibly with the aim of active action in Rostov-Novocherkassk area.

¹⁶³ Boris Mokeevich Dumenko (1888-1920), a former Tsarist cavalry sergeant-major. He was arrested and executed under military tribunal after authorising the execution of his political commissar V. N. Mikeladze, *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsiia v SSSR. Entsiklopediia*, p. 201.

¹⁶⁴ *DkfKA. Tom II*, doc. 447, p. 480.

...take all measures for holding the positions your army now occupies, since enemy success could hinder the proposed operation.¹⁶⁵

From reconnaissance, Tukhachevsky calculated Denikin was planning to breakthrough in Rostov area to prevent a renewed Red Caucasian Front offensive, seize the initiative and throw the Reds back. To prevent this, Tukhachevsky decided to launch a pre-emptive strike, despite Caucasian Front not being reorganised or ready in every sector. He gambled that by creating a strong enough attack-group, a quick breakthrough could be achieved, which would offset any gains made by Denikin in the weaker section of the Red line at Rostov. By instructing 8th Army to hold fast, he played for time to regroup his other forces to bypass and envelop the Bataisk strongpoint and enable an advance across the whole Front and envelopment with the powerful Red left flank. This placed 8th Army in a precarious position, but Tukhachevsky was willing to cede ground here, as it would actually draw the Volunteer Army forward and allow the envelopment to perhaps become an encirclement.

On 9th February, Tukhachevsky ordered Caucasian Front armies to regroup within four days. 8th Army was to increase its frontage to cover from the Sea of Azov to the River Manych', to screen the areas it and 1st Cavalry Army currently occupied, allowing the latter to withdraw from the frontal attack on Bataisk and transfer to the centre of the Red Front between 9th and 10th Armies. The plan was to drive a wedge between Don and Kuban Armies with 1st Cavalry Army, which would also cut off Don Army's path of retreat at Tikhoretskaia Station and form concentrated attack groups with 9th and 10th Army. 9th Army guarded 8th Army's left flank and had 10th Army on its left. 9th Army was to cross the Manych' and press Don Army from the front, whilst 10th Army was advance to Armavir and cut Kuban Army's path of retreat there. 11th Army was to send an Expeditionary Force to clear the western shore of the Caspian Sea. With its main forces, it was to hold Caucasian Front's left flank and sweep down to secure Stavropol', cutting the White path of retreat south-east down the railways from Tikhoretskaia, through Stavropol' and Armavir to Kavkazkaia-Vladikavkaz-Petrovsk.¹⁶⁶ In this way, the White forces were to be split, enveloped on their right-flank and driven south-west towards the Sea of Azov. 8th Army with

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. doc. 448, p. 481.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. doc. 449, pp. 481-482.

16,327 troops was to bear the main White attack, whilst the other four armies numbering 65,171 troops were to envelop and crush. Therefore, a bare frontal screen was to hold the strongest White sector, whilst the majority of Red forces were to bypass the White strongpoint and effect an enveloping and encircling manoeuvre to breakthrough in the weak sector, despite being outnumbered over the whole front.¹⁶⁷

On 12th February, Tukhachevsky ordered the attack to begin in two days time emphasising, "Begin offensive simultaneously with all available forces, not weakening yourselves with excessive reserves. Act with compact attack groups".¹⁶⁸ Strategic reserves were not to be retained, with all troops used in the initial attack, as Tukhachevsky remained loyal to his previous tactics.

This also reflected the limited time and troop numbers Tukhachevsky had at his disposal. The Western Front situation with Poland was deteriorating and Lenin instructed Stalin on 10th February, "...the troops now freed after taking Odessa are not to remain on the Dnestr, but move to Western Front to guarantee it from the Poles".¹⁶⁹ On 19th February, Lenin instructed Trotsky and 5th Army Commander Smirnov that in Siberia there should be,

"...not a step further east, all forces to be exerted for the swift movement of troops and steamships to the west to Russia". We shall be idiots if we distract ourselves with a deep movement into the depths of Siberia, and in this time Denikin revives and the Poles attack. This would be a crime.¹⁷⁰

Tukhachevsky knew the likelihood of an armed conflict with Poland was rising and he would lose resources. With Western Front being strengthened, despite Caucasian Front still being prioritised, he did not necessarily have first refusal on reinforcements. This made a swift victory in the Caucasus essential and illustrates the dual process behind the development of continuous offensives as the Red method in the Civil War. They were used to keep the enemy in constant retreat, disallowing regrouping and reinforcing, but also campaigns had to be conducted as quickly as possible to release resources for the next front. This idea never disappeared from Soviet military thinking as the Soviet Union was permanently surrounded by

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. *Tom IV*, pp. 120-123.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. *Tom II*, doc. 450, pp. 482-483.

¹⁶⁹ *L-Vp*, doc. 450 p. 231. Joseph Stalin (1878/9?-1953) was South-Western Front political commissar.

¹⁷⁰ *L-Vp*, doc. 453, p. 232; *DGkKA*, doc. 592, p. 599; *DkfKA*, *Tom II*, doc. 732, pp. 776-777; Kamenev followed up this order on 24th February, instructing Smirnov to halt further movement after taking Irkutsk, *DGkKA*, doc. 593, p. 600. This was achieved on 7th March.

capitalism and would have to defeat different foes successively to survive, as Tukhachevsky noted in 1926.¹⁷¹

On 15th February, Caucasian Front comprised overall 214,783 and 97,082 men and horses respectively. By 1st April, when the operation was almost over, this had risen to 378,316 and 147,696.¹⁷² Transfers from other fronts, mobilisations within Caucasian Front areas, incorporation of partisans into Red Armies as they advanced, and deserters from the Armed Forces of South Russia, all contributed to the increase, replacing casualties.

On 15th February, frontline Caucasian Front forces numbered 11,876 command staff, 47,560 infantry and 22,759 cavalry, with 591 guns, 2,732 machine-guns and 8 armoured-trains, against the 60,520 infantry and 31,560 cavalry, 451 guns and 1,185 machine-guns of the Armed Forces of South Russia.¹⁷³ Superiority of numbers lay with the Whites early in the campaign and Denikin introduced reinforcements before the Red offensive began. However, by 1st May, the Whites numbered 60,000 infantry in Sochi sector, but had no cavalry and by 1st June White resistance in the Caucasus had disappeared as Wrangel fled into Crimea.¹⁷⁴ Superior Red ability to reinforce, as Denikin's rear crumbled in the same manner as Kolchak's, was crucial to the outcome of the North Caucasus Operation and further reinforced Tukhachevsky's beliefs in the efficacy of class warfare.

Following Tukhachevsky's Front directives, the operation can be divided into phases. Phase 1 started with the pre-emptive strike to launch the offensive on 14th February and lasted until 21st February, when Denikin recaptured Rostov and Nakhichevan'. Phase 2 from 22nd February-2nd March, saw the Red frontline restored, but the offensive still struggling as several of Tukhachevsky's orders were not fulfilled correctly. He rectified this to accelerate the offensive and manoeuvre for the vital breakthrough at Egorlykskaia, throwing the Whites into retreat. Phase 3 from 2nd March-7th April, saw the offensive develop along the whole front with further breakthroughs and Caucasian Front launching a continuous pursuit operation, advancing to the Caspian and Black Seas to rout the Armed Forces of South Russia.

¹⁷¹ See chapter III, pp. 140-141.

¹⁷² *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 120-123 & 140.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 120-123 & 506-507.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 513.

Overall the operation followed a similar pattern to previous offensives. A quick strike was attempted before the Front was ready, which achieved mixed results, before correct organisation set up an envelopment victory followed by strategic pursuit. Speed, surprise, concentration and manoeuvre. These were the keys identified by Tukhachevsky and he used them here.

Phase 1: Pre-Emptive Strike

With timing of the essence, Tukhachevsky pressed home the need for reorganisation, regrouping and starting positions to be achieved by 14th February. However, 1st Cavalry Army, with the furthest to move to reach Shara-Bulutskii-Platovskaia, did not make it by this date. Denikin meanwhile, learning of 1st Cavalry Army's movement, pressed ahead with his Rostov offensive, encouraged by the lone 8th Army occupying the sector. Expecting this, Tukhachevsky launched the Red offensive on 14th February without 1st Cavalry Army. This was a very risky decision since it had the pivotal role in the operation, cutting between Don and Kuban Armies to split the two White forces and allow 8th, 9th and 10th Armies to act against the separated groups. Without 1st Cavalry Army, this was not possible, but with the White offensive imminent, Tukhachevsky took the gamble of attacking, believing 1st Cavalry Army could catch up and make its manoeuvre down to Tikhoretskaia station, to cut the rail line and White retreat route. Therefore, 8th, 9th and 10th Armies advanced at dawn on 14th February to cross the River Manych' and attack Don and Kuban Armies, whilst 11th Army advanced south-east against Kuban Army towards Stavropol' and Armavir railway junction, to cut off retreat into the South-East Caucasus by the Volunteer Corps and Don Army.

By 17th February, the mixed results of the offensive led Lenin to telegram Smilga and Ordzhonikidze,

I am extremely worried about the state of our troops on Caucasian Front, Budennyi's complete demoralisation, the weakness of all our troops, weakness of the general command, spaces between the armies, the strength of the enemy. It is essential to use all efforts and conduct a series of extraordinary measures with revolutionary energy. Telegraph encoded in detail exactly what is being done.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 451, p. 484.

The fluctuating progress of the offensive was echoed by Tukhachevsky in his order of the same day to Caucasian Front. 10th Army had defeated the enemy in its sector, but the Whites had attacked on 16th February along 8th Army's front and was pushing back 9th Army's right flank and centre. This was the White offensive Tukhachevsky had anticipated, but with 1st Cavalry Army not yet fully engaged and behind schedule, 8th and 9th Armies were struggling to hold position. The White left-wing attack group based around 2nd and 4th Don Cavalry Corps, under General A. A. Pavlov, was threatening to break through the Red infantry forces.

Tukhachevsky attempted to restore his right flank, instructing 8th Army to form an attack group to aid the crumbling 9th Army right flank in Tuzulukovskii sector. 10th Army, clearing the defeated Whites in its sector, was to concentrate in zimov'e Popova-zimov'e K. Korol'kova sector, to help 9th Army attack in Gudovskii area, cooperating with Blinov's Cavalry Division, attacking from zimov'e S. Zherebkova to zimov'e K. Korol'kova. 1st Cavalry Army was to "decisively continue the offensive to Kruchenaia Balka-Lopanka-Sredne-Egorlykskoe-Tikhoretskaia", whilst 11th Army was to continue as before.¹⁷⁶

Don Army was pushed back to the left bank of the Manych' in 9th Army's sector by the following day. However, Pavlov's three-division White cavalry group was moving towards Torgovaia to cut off 1st Cavalry Army's delayed advance and now threatened the juncture between 9th Army's left flank and 10th Army's right flank in Platovskaia-Ianov area. Therefore, Tukhachevsky ordered 9th Army to organise a raid by Dumenko's cavalry corps into Pavlov's rear area in Korol'kova-Zherebkova area, supporting this with a left flank infantry attack. Budennyi was ordered to halt the Whites in K. Korol'kova-S. Zherebkova area, cut them off and rout them, whilst 10th Army was to attack Pavlov with its right flank group in a north-westerly direction.¹⁷⁷

However, whilst Tukhachevsky dealt with the centre threat, 8th Army again came under sustained attack on the Red right flank. The Volunteer Corps and 3rd Don Corps broke through the weakened screen to reach Rostov and Nakhichevan' on 21st February, forcing 8th Army to withdraw. The Reds recaptured them two days later, but this threatened Caucasian Front's position.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. doc. 452, pp. 484-485.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. doc. 453, p. 485.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. doc. 456, pp. 487-490.

The danger to Rostov and Novocherkassk prompted Lenin to instruct Stalin on 18th and 20th February to send reinforcements to Caucasian Front. Stalin replied, "It is not clear to me why Caucasian Front's troubles are laid first of all on me... The troubles about reinforcing Caucasian Front lie wholly on the *RVSR*, the members of which, by my information, are fully well, and not on Stalin who is so overloaded with work". Lenin responded, "On you lies the troubles about quickly moving reinforcements from South-Western to Caucasian Front. It is necessary to help in any way possible and not squabble about departments' competency".¹⁷⁹

This provides an excellent insight into Stalin's idea of how a combined war effort worked. If not impacting negatively in the Caucasus, it is a preview of things to come in the Polish-Soviet War, where he had a greater influence.

Tukhachevsky stressed the threat to Novocherkassk on 20th February, ordering 8th and 9th Armies to hold it, 8th Army to regroup and push the Whites back over the Don and 9th Army to send Dumenko's cavalry into the White flank and rear in the Starocherkasskaia-Krasnodorskii area.¹⁸⁰

Tukhachevsky had to justify his actions in a Hughes Telegraph discussion with Kamenev on 21st February, whilst the White advance continued and the loss of Rostov and Nakhichevan' loomed. Discussing the perilous state of the front and stating that regrouping of forces was not near to completion when the offensive began, Tukhachevsky explained to Kamenev about reconnaissance reports and the need to launch the pre-emptive attack. Kamenev had initially commented,

After your explanation I am completely lost as to why you could launch an offensive on 14th February, if by 26th February you will in fact have been able to concentrate two divisions on this front and precisely 18 regiments, not considering five regiments, moving from Voronezh....

However, he conceded after Tukhachevsky's explanation, "I consider that even without preliminary discussions with me you were correct in this matter and now can only say that the circumstances were correctly evaluated by you...".¹⁸¹

Tukhachevsky had evidently launched the offensive without consulting Kamenev, illustrating the need for immediate action that Denikin's attack caused. He had taken a huge risk, but had avoided being forced on the defensive. It makes an interesting comparison with his attitude as 1st Army Commander in 1918, appealing to Moscow

¹⁷⁹ *L-Vp*, docs. 454-456, pp. 232-234 & 362-363, endnote 273.

¹⁸⁰ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 455, p. 486.

for time to completely reorganise 1st Army before attacking, against the wishes of his Front Commander, who demanded he attack immediately and prevent the Czechoslovaks seizing the initiative. One and a half years later, Tukhachevsky was a Front Commander demanding exactly the same from his subordinates. His experience gained between these two dates had shown him the necessity and advantages a pre-emptive attack could offer, but there was also possibly an element of over-confidence in Tukhachevsky's actions. He had previously taken risks on several occasions, indeed gambling was a characteristic of his command and in the North Caucasus, he took the biggest yet. He got away with it here, but his luck could not last forever.

The pre-emptive attack to seize the initiative was another case of utilising offensive rather than defensive tactics whenever possible, with 8th Army defending merely to allow the offensive and even when sufficient troops were not available to ensure success. It had been vital to seize the initiative with both sides weakened and the next victory crucial in deciding the whole campaign. This was a similar method to that employed on Eastern Front, continually pushing to retain the initiative, and was indicative of his later theories, but also tactics in Poland. A definite continuity and development ran through Tukhachevsky's Civil War commands.

By 22nd February, the Red offensive had not progressed as well as Tukhachevsky had planned. He had been forced to begin without the force required to make the vital manoeuvre to split the White forces and as a result the White cavalry under Pavlov had been able to manoeuvre instead, initially cutting between 8th and 9th Armies, then moving swiftly to Torgovaia to prevent the delayed 1st Cavalry Army offensive and 10th Army's advance. This was the same method by which Denikin had foiled the Don-Manych' Operation and was reminiscent of the Czechoslovaks on the Volga in 1918 - utilising a mobile cavalry defence group. It was effective, but only if the Red offensive was not coordinated along the whole front simultaneously. However, by 22nd February, Tukhachevsky ordered the offensive to continue, with 1st Cavalry Army in position and acting alongside the advancing 10th Army, providing the mobility required to create the breach for the infantry to exploit.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. doc. 456, pp. 487-490.

Phase 2: Manoeuvre and Combined Arms Operation for the Breakthrough

The tasks of Tukhachevsky's 12th February directive were still largely unfulfilled by 22nd February. 11th Army advanced towards Stavropol' and Armavir and 10th Army approached Kavkazkaia, but neither had reached its target. To the north-west, 9th and 8th Armies crossed the Rivers Don and Manych', but were pushed back again, with 8th Army abandoning Rostov and barely holding Novocherkassk. 1st Cavalry Army had barely advanced at all, struggling to complete its regrouping manoeuvre. However, Tukhachevsky's aim of preventing a White advance had been achieved and 1st Cavalry Army, using the extra time provided by the other forces, was now in position to attack. It proved its worth in the next phase of the offensive, carrying out the Tikhoretskaia Operation and cooperating with 10th Army in the decisive Egorlykskaia Battle from 25th February-2nd March, defeating Pavlov's Cavalry Group.

The Reds benefited from disaster striking Pavlov on 18th February. After manoeuvring to Torgovaia to block 10th Army and 1st Cavalry Army, but suddenly facing a joint offensive by these two forces, Pavlov retreated towards Sredne-Egorlykskaia. However, caught in a snowstorm on the exposed steppeland, Pavlov lost half his 12,000-strong attack group overnight.¹⁸² This devastated Denikin's most potent force and was a major factor in the Red victory.

On 22nd February, Tukhachevsky ordered Caucasian Front to continue the offensive. Aided by South-Western Front's 13th Army on its right flank, 8th Army recaptured Rostov, pushing the Volunteer Corps back over the Don on 23rd February. 9th Army, guarding 10th Army's right flank, attacked towards Mechetinskaia Station, north-west of Egorlykskaia. 1st Cavalry Army assisted 10th Army's right flank to occupy Egorlykskaia, before continuing to Novoelizavetinskii-Novoleushkovskaia area. 10th Army's main group continued towards Tikhoretskaia, garrisoning villages to guarantee its flanks. 11th Army was to quicken the taking of Armavir-Nevinnomysskaia-Stavropol' sector.¹⁸³

This order resulted in the meeting battle at Egorlykskaia involving 1st Cavalry Army (4th, 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions) and 10th Army attack group (20th, 34th

¹⁸² A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*, p. 300.

¹⁸³ *DkfKA, Tom. II*, doc. 457, p. 491.

and 50th Rifle Divisions), against Pavlov's Group (2nd and 4th Don Cavalry Corps and a small number of infantry). Pavlov was moving towards Belaia Glina, to attack 1st Cavalry Army and 10th Army which he thought were advancing to Tikhoretskaia. However, Tukhachevsky flung his attack group at Egorlykskaia-Sredne Egorlykskoe area, from where 1st Cavalry Army's right flank had been forced to retreat the previous day. This took Pavlov by surprise 10 kms south of Sredne-Egorlykskoe, pushing him back in disarray. 1st Cavalry Army enveloped Pavlov's Group's right flank, whilst 20th and 50th Divisions of 10th Army attacked it head-on.

1st Cavalry Army had been highly successful carrying out deep raids and sweeping manoeuvres characteristic of White and Red Civil War cavalry. However, Egorlykskaia was a well-coordinated combined infantry and cavalry operation, with cooperation between the two different arms the key to victory. Credit goes to Tukhachevsky for directing and to Budennyi and A. V. Pavlov for conducting the operation.¹⁸⁴ Tukhachevsky displayed his experience of civil warfare here, utilising his most effective force, 1st Cavalry Army, to remove the Whites' mobility, allowing the infantry to plough in. This was the vital battle in the North Caucasus Operation and a crushing blow for Denikin, almost wiping out Pavlov's White mobile cavalry formation, which had successfully defended against the first phase of the campaign. Tukhachevsky had finally completed an encirclement operation now that he had the correct troops to do so and it validated the methods he endorsed for fighting the Civil War. 1st Kuban Cavalry Corps was captured with over 1,000 prisoners, 29 guns, 100 machine-guns and three armoured-trains. Budennyi reoccupied Egorlykskaia as Pavlov reeled southwards towards Sredne-Egorlykskoe. Denikin was forced to withdraw the bulk of his troops from Bataisk to reinforce Pavlov with the Volunteer Corps, 3rd Cavalry Corps and part of the Kuban brigades.¹⁸⁵

Tukhachevsky gave further orders on 25th and 28th February to develop the offensive. With Bataisk weakened, 8th and 9th Armies were to break through the White screen left against them and 8th Army was to advance to Kaisur-Khomutovskaia area. 10th Army was to occupy Tikhoretskaia and Kavkazkaia areas, transferring sufficient infantry to 1st Cavalry Army for liquidating the White cavalry

¹⁸⁴ Aleksandr Vasil'evich Pavlov (1880-1937) was Red 10th Army Commander, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 540; A. S. Bubnov et al, *Tom III*, p. 301.

¹⁸⁵ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 458, p. 492; A. S. Bubnov et al, *Tom III*, p. 301; *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR: Entsiklopediia*, pp. 204-205.

regrouping in Sredne-Egorlykskaia area and joining the attack with the rest of its forces afterwards. 11th Army was to move swiftly to Stavropol' and Armavir.¹⁸⁶

Acting on these orders, 8th Army finally took Bataisk on 1st March and crossed the Manych' with 9th Army. Budennyi attempted to take Egorlykskaia, but found himself and Velikanov's 10th Army attack group 70 kms south-east of 8th and 9th Armies and in danger of being encircled by the White troops transferring from Rostov and Bataisk. Tukhachevsky informed Kamenev by Hughes Telegraph that 1st Cavalry Army and 10th Army had let their right flank unravel and become isolated from the main attack sector, but he hoped the 15,000 cavalry and infantry of 1st Cavalry Army would still secure the area, since the Whites at Egorlykskaia had only 10,000, after the reinforcements from Rostov. The attempt to take Egorlykskaia without infantry support from 26th-28th February failed, but once the other Armies caught up with 1st Cavalry Army, the general offensive resumed. 10th Army took Kavkazskaia on 29th February and 11th Army occupied Stavropol' on the same day.¹⁸⁷

Kamenev's views of Budennyi and Gai, the two Red Cavalry leaders, are interestingly shown in the Hughes Telegraph conversation. He criticised Budennyi for not fulfilling Tukhachevsky's directive to move to Egorlykskaia, but moving to Belaia Glina instead. Then, ordered to go directly west, significantly north of Tikhoretskaia, Budennyi advanced straight on Tikhoretskaia, completely against the directive, and greatly increased the risk involved. Kamenev also criticised Gai for "dancing to his own tune". This was typical of cavalry on both sides, acting independently and recklessly, with tales of pillage and looting following them around. However, Tukhachevsky and Ordzhonikidze defended 1st Cavalry Army in a telegram to the *RVSR* on 25th March against "false information" Lebedev had received, through which the "*RVSR* has gained a mistaken impression of Cavalry Army and especially its commander, Budennyi". They described 1st Cavalry Army as "beyond praise" in battle and "Not one of the enemy's cavalry units can withstand a head-on attack by... Cavalry Army". Budennyi was described as having,

¹⁸⁶ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 458 & 461, pp. 492 & 495.

¹⁸⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 460-463, p.493-496; Mikhail Dmitrievich Velikanov (1892/93-1938) was 20th Division Commander from 17.7.19-29.2.20 and 4.5.20-13.10.21, with Divisional Chief-of-Staff Boris Vladimirovich Maistrakh, Acting Commander between these dates, suggesting Velikanov was perhaps wounded in action. Velikanov was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for the Tikhoretskaia Operation, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 565; *Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsia v SSSR: Entsiklopediia*, p. 88. 20th Rifle Division was Penza Division formed by Tukhachevsky in 1918.

...exceptional natural talent both in operational and other respects. None of the other commanders, except comrade Uborevich, can surpass him. Regarding the brilliant manoeuvre and victory, when the enemy moved into our rear in Sredne-Egorlykskoe area, credit must be given to Budennyi rather than 10th Army Commander Pavlov, since the latter was a long way off from the troops and had lost touch with them, so that units of 10th Army were... led by the cavalry commander. Politically Budennyi is an unsophisticated Communist, but he is absolutely devoted to the cause of Soviet power.

They continued that 1st Cavalry Army had received no pay for months and had to fend for itself supply-wise.¹⁸⁸

Tukhachevsky valued 1st Cavalry Army as his main arm and Budennyi personally, despite an apparent coldness between the pair.¹⁸⁹ This also illustrates clearly that the supply system for the Red Armies had not perceptibly improved since 1918. The reference to Uborevich is intriguing as Tukhachevsky would take him to Tambov in 1921 to lead motorised formations against Antonov. Beside Triandafillov, Uborevich was Tukhachevsky's closest collaborator in the mechanisation of the Red Army in the 1920s and 1930s and indeed may have been *the* expert in this field. Friendships with the major figures in the team Tukhachevsky worked closely with for the rest of his life were formed during the Civil War.

Phase 3: Continuous Pursuit Operation

On 1st March, Tukhachevsky ordered the next stage of the North Caucasus Operation, liquidating the White group in Mechetinskaia-Egorlykskaia area and launching the offensive to Ekaterinodar. This was the main town in the south-west of the North Caucasus and the communications hub for Denikin's rear, sitting above the River Kuban and on the railway to Novorossiisk on the Black Sea coast, the point from which the Whites could escape. Tukhachevsky allowed no respite for the Whites, maintaining momentum by launching the familiar continuous pursuit operations he had employed in previous commands. The character of the remainder of the North Caucasus Operation was a sustained pursuit of the routed Armed Forces of South Russia.

¹⁸⁸ A. B. Murphy, *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 203-204.

¹⁸⁹ Ordzhonikidze apparently informed Budennyi that Tukhachevsky was not well-disposed towards 1st Cavalry Army or him especially, S. M. Budennyi, *Proidennyi put'*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 434-436.

9th Army had broken through in Kagal'nitskaia area, taking over 2,000 prisoners, and the remainder were retreating to Khomutovskaia-Kagal'nitskaia, with the main White force grouped around the towns of Mechetinskaia and Egorlykskaia. These lay south-east of 8th and 9th Armies down the railway line and north-west of Kavkazskaia and Stavropol', occupied by 10th and 11th Armies respectively. An opportunity existed to encircle the main White force and wipe it out. Tukhachevsky ordered this, but it was not completed and the general White retreat towards Ekaterinodar and Novorossiisk continued. This phase of the operation, moving along the railway lines, was reminiscent of the *eshelonnaia voina* of early 1918. The Whites had lost their mobility with their cavalry, leaving the railways as their final hope for swift retreat and escape from the Red trap. The captures of railway stations and junctions were now the important points for the Reds to trap the fleeing Whites.¹⁹⁰

The White forces routed at Bataisk were retreating before 8th Army, behind the River Eia to Eisk on the Azov Sea coast, and on 3rd March Tukhachevsky ordered their pursuit and encirclement. Again it was not achieved, but 8th Army occupied Eisk on 9th March and 10th Army captured Tikhoretskaia on 10th March.¹⁹¹

This progress was marked by Caucasian Front HQ advancing from Millerovo to Rostov on 4th March, following the pursuit operation.¹⁹² Denikin's rear was collapsing around him as partisan activity increased, but the Reds could not encircle the routed White forces, only catching them at the Black Sea, when the Whites had nowhere to run. Why was this the case?

On 11th March, Kamenev directed Tukhachevsky to take Grozny, but asked for his thoughts on the course of events on his front as "...already it is necessary to carry out regrouping."¹⁹³ Kamenev was referring to the deteriorating situation in the West with Poland. Trotsky had been appointed Commissar for Transport on 7th March to oversee the swift transfer of as many troops as possible to the West from other fronts and Moscow was moving towards prioritising Western Front, especially since Caucasian Front was developing well.¹⁹⁴ Time was of the essence as the need to dispense with Denikin to enable a full concentration against Poland was paramount.

¹⁹⁰ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 462-463, pp. 495-496.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* doc. 464, pp. 495 & 497.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* doc. 465, p. 498.

¹⁹³ *DGkKA*, doc. 733, p. 731.

¹⁹⁴ *L-Vp*, doc. 465, p. 238.

On 12th March, Tukhachevsky ordered 11th Army's Expeditionary Group to move towards Grozny and its main group to take the Vladikavkaz railway around Armavir-Nezlobnaia. With the Whites only active in Kavkazkaia-Stavropol' area, Tukhachevsky urged a general offensive to attempt encirclement again. 8th Army was to attack in Novorossiisk area to cut off the retreat. 10th Army was to swing round on the left flank and occupy Ekaterinodar with its right flank group by 18th March, whilst directing its left flank group southwards, to take Petropavlovskaiia-Kurgannaia station-Ubezhevskaia area. 1st Cavalry Army was to cooperate with 10th Army, whilst 9th Army was to press forwards in the central sector, forcing the Whites back into the enclosing 8th and 10th Army pincers. Tukhachevsky stressed the importance of seizing intact the railway bridges over the River Kuban, illustrating again that time was of the essence and no delays in crossing the river could be tolerated, but also lessons learned from previous campaigns.¹⁹⁵

On 15th March, Kamenev expressed some concern about Tukhachevsky swinging 10th Army southwards, as this endangered the weak left flank of 1st Cavalry Army and 10th Army attacking towards Ekaterinodar. The Whites were regrouping in Ekaterinodar and Armavir-Stavropol' areas which introduced the possibility of a counter-attack into the gap. Kamenev advised forming an attacking fist of several divisions, beyond the left flank on the Ekaterinodar-Tikhoretskaia Railway, to guard against this.¹⁹⁶ Kamenev was watching over the operation and ready to give advice to the young Front Commander if necessary.

However, Ekaterinodar and Armavir were taken on 17th March by 10th and 11th Armies respectively.¹⁹⁷ Piatigorsk, south-east down the Vladikavkaz railway line, was taken the same day by 11th Army's Expeditionary Corps with Prokhladnaia reached on 20th March.¹⁹⁸

On 18th March, Tukhachevsky ordered the final push, with the Whites desperately seeking the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas to escape the oncoming Red hordes. Caucasian Front was now advancing in two completely different directions, the

¹⁹⁵ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 467, p. 499.

¹⁹⁶ *DGkKA*, doc. 734, p. 732.

¹⁹⁷ *DkfKA, Tom II*, p. 499.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 501.

Expeditionary Corps moving for Petrovsk on the Caspian Sea, whilst the main forces closed on Novorossiisk and Tuapse on the Black Sea.¹⁹⁹

Following this order, 1st Cavalry Army occupied Labinskaia and Maikop on 20th and 22nd March and the Expeditionary Force occupied Groznyi and Petrovsk on 24th and 30th March, encouraging Daghestani partisans to take Derbent on 25th March, another instance of partisans in the rear activated by Red Army offensive success.²⁰⁰

However, the shift from Caucasian to Western Front was evident in Kamenev's instruction of 19th March, indicating 1st Cavalry Army should only advance to the Armavir-Tuapse Railway and not exceed Maikop and Tuapse areas, to avoid creating "difficulties for its allocated transfer to the Polish Front". Tukhachevsky had to select one division from 1st Cavalry Army and position it in the Kavkazskaia-Rostov railway sector, to reinforce and re-equip it for transfer West.²⁰¹ Moscow wasted no time reinforcing Western Front with troops from the Caucasus and Tukhachevsky was pressurised to quickly complete the North Caucasus Operation.

This was underlined by Kamenev's report to Lenin on 20th March in which he asked for instructions on what action to take when Caucasian Front reached the border with Georgia and Azerbaijan. The main body of his report was taken up with transfer details for the majority of Caucasian Front troops to Western Front. He concluded,

...in view of the importance of the Polish Front and the seriousness of planned operations here, Supreme Command recommends for the moment of decisive operations, to transfer to Western Front the present Caucasian Front Commander comrade Tukhachevsky, who capably and decisively conducted the final operations for routing General Denikin's army, and in his place in the Caucasus to appoint current Western Front Commander comrade Gitis....²⁰²

Novorossiisk was captured on 27th March, with thousands of White troops stranded in the town, ending Denikin's involvement in the Civil War.²⁰³ The remainder of the North Caucasus Operation occurred against a background of constant demands for troop transfers to Western and South-Western Fronts and the remaining Caucasian Front forces advancing in three different directions. 9th Army

¹⁹⁹ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 469, pp. 500-01.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 499, & 502-504.

²⁰¹ *DGkKA*, doc. 736, p. 733.

²⁰² *Ibid.* doc. 737, pp. 733-35.

²⁰³ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 471, p. 502; docs. 740-741, *DGkKA*, p. 737.

moved south-east down the Black Sea's eastern coast, towards Tuapse and Taman' Peninsula, pursuing White forces retreating from Novorossiisk, 10th Army advanced directly westwards towards Taganrog, and 11th Army moved south-east down the Caspian Sea's west coast towards Derbent and Baku. On 30th March, Tukhachevsky ordered regrouping to achieve these targets and create the Caucasus Labour Army from 8th Army units, administration and rear institutions, reflecting Caucasian Front's changing role.²⁰⁴ With Denikin defeated, the Caucasus, the main oil-supplying region of Russia, would fuel the Red Army's advances on other fronts.

9th Army captured Tuapse on 7th April, then received the remainder of 8th Army's units and was directed with the Don-Azov Flotilla to attack Crimea, assisting South-Western Front's 13th Army. This was the start of action against Wrangel in Crimea.²⁰⁵

White forces were attempting to make the short crossing from Taman' to Kerch', on the Crimean peninsula, to join Wrangel. Moscow wanted to prevent this and Tukhachevsky ordered 9th Army to wipe them out. If the Poles launched an attack in the West, Wrangel would pose a danger to South-Western Front's underbelly. This became crucial in the Polish-Soviet War and the need to allow as few Whites as possible to reach Crimea would quicken the final resolution of the overall conflict. The weakened 9th Army made slow progress and Kamenev voiced concerns that a White counter-attack may defeat it, but it eventually captured Sochi on 29th April, clearing the eastern Black Sea coastline and completing this part of Caucasian Front's tasks.²⁰⁶

Events on the Caspian shores panned out more successfully, with the eastern shore fort of Aleksandrovskii taken by the Volga-Caspian Flotilla on 5th April, opening the way eastwards. 11th Army, reinforced by 10th Army elements, reached the Russo-Azerbaijani border and Tukhachevsky ordered it to begin an offensive for Baku and Azerbaijan on 27th April.²⁰⁷ Tukhachevsky was to have led this, meeting with

²⁰⁴ *DkfKA, Tom II*, docs. 472-475, pp. 503-507; *DGkKA*, doc. 743, pp. 739-740; *DkfKA, Tom III*, p. 746, endnote 58.

²⁰⁵ *DkfKA, Tom II*, doc. 475, pp. 506-507; *DGkKA*, doc. 746, p. 741; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 363, p. 305.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* doc. 366, pp. 307-308 & 314; *DGkKA*, doc. 747, pp. 741-742.

²⁰⁷ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 365, 368-369, pp. 307 & 309-310.

Ordzhonikidze and Sergei Kirov in Vladikavkaz on 30th March to formulate plans, but Western Front events took over.²⁰⁸

Kamenev had suggested that Tukhachevsky replace Gittis as Western Front Commander because of the former's performance against Denikin. After Poland's invasion of Belorussia on 25th April began the Soviet-Polish War (in Soviet eyes), Kamenev gained approval for this, and appointed Tukhachevsky Front Commander of the prioritised Western Front.²⁰⁹ How Tukhachevsky's star had risen to eclipse his erstwhile Southern Front superior, Gittis. Western Front Commander was the most important active frontline position, completing Tukhachevsky's rapid Civil War climb up the promotional ladder. Caucasian Front was the culmination of a quite stunning Civil War career in which he had served on every major front, almost always at the most crucial time, playing the role of troubleshooter or "fireman" for Moscow, taking on the most difficult tasks and each time turning them round.

Conclusion

Tukhachevsky was now one of the Red Army's top two military commanders and the only former junior officer from the Tsarist Army to command at army level and above. He had constantly improved as a military leader, risen to meet the challenges before him and striven to understand the conflict in which he was involved, the methods to be employed to win it and who should be employed to utilise the methods. The level of responsibility and trust shown in him increased with each posting and as he moved further from his former Tsarist superiors, he moved closer to the Communist Party hierarchy. This was the way in which to be successful in the Red Army, but Tukhachevsky did not profess to believe in Communism because of career ambition, although he did harbour this.

Fighting in the Civil War, working with those of similar outlook as well as those who differed, convinced Tukhachevsky that the methods he was using were correct for victory in a class war. From the outset, the Red Command had no real army and only a vague idea of how to build one and fight. Tukhachevsky had shown it was

²⁰⁸ R. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union. Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 224; Sergei Mirinovich Kirov (1886-1934) became Leningrad Party boss, but was murdered in 1934. Stalin has been implicated, but no concrete evidence exists.

possible to do these simultaneously in 1918 and continued to do so during the next two years. Swift, continuous operations, using whatever technical resources were available and political agitation to raise partisan support to compensate for low troop numbers, accompanied by strict revolutionary discipline, were the general methods. Constantly mobilising whilst on the move and fighting was how Tukhachevsky started out in 1918 and this was the methodology used by the Red Army throughout the Civil War. It was a methodology born out of necessity under Civil War conditions and prompted by constant Moscow demands for swift task fulfillment, but one Tukhachevsky proved particularly adept in using. However, by April 1920, the support Tukhachevsky saw these methods generating at the expense of the White Armies, which simply disintegrated under the pressure, convinced him they were correct. His absolute belief had led to several confrontations with superior officers, but this actually made him stand out as the capable leader in the midst of the rapidly-evolving mass which was the Red Army. He had been recognised to have this potential early on by the Red leadership and had fulfilled it throughout the conflict. The ideas he had formulated met with Moscow approval, as did the formation of courses to create Red Commanders, the ultimate aim for the class-based army. Tukhachevsky himself, a former Tsarist officer, had joined the Bolshevik Party and risen to become the epitome of the many former *voenspetsy*, loyally serving the Communists. He had remained faithful to the tenets of manoeuvre, pursuit and continuous offensive and had taken this to a new level in the North Caucasus Operation, when able to command the mobile 1st Cavalry Army for the first time, in combined operations with infantry and artillery. The North Caucasus Operation, Tukhachevsky's first as Front Commander, illustrated that the lessons learned and experience gained from previous commands, which he had formulated into *Voyna klassov*, were accurate portrayals of Civil War conflict and effective methods for achieving victory.

Tukhachevsky was now to lead the Red Army against Poland in the first Soviet invasion of Europe, the extension of the Civil War about which he had written. Tukhachevsky had reached this position on merit and with a good measure of luck. However, for various reasons this luck deserted him at the most crucial and dangerous

²⁰⁹ Gittis moved in the opposite direction, serving as Caucasian Front Commander from 15th May 1920-29th May 1921, when the front was disbanded, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 530.

moment and his Civil War achievements were in danger of being all but forgotten by a rout and messy retreat back to Soviet soil.

Chapter V: Front Comander - Polish-Soviet War, 1920

Polish and Soviet historiography record varying starting dates for the Polish-Soviet War. For Poland, the conflict began in 1919 with the first clashes over areas vacated by Germany after the Great War - Ukraine, Belorussia, Galicia and the Baltic States. However, the Soviets dated the conflict from the Polish offensive into Ukraine on 25th April 1920 and did not regard it as a separate war at all, but another front in the Civil War, with the "White Poles" allies of the interventionary *Entente*. As has been shown in chapters III and IV, Moscow fought the Civil War through a process of threat determination, concentrating the majority of men and resources on the prioritised front. Therefore, although the Soviets wished to secure European Russia and had originally formed the Red Army to meet the threat of Germany in this area, Western Front remained a system of screens once the Civil War began in the East and South. Iudenich's advance on Petrograd saw Northern Front activity intensify in autumn 1919, but Western Front was never the centre of attention, despite Poland occupying much of the area.

Moscow avoided open war, whilst trying to recover as much as possible of the territory surrendered at Brest-Litovsk, and the Western theatre was only prioritised after Poland attacked South-Western Front.¹ Kamenev had recommended Tukhachevsky as Western Front Commander in March and as the Western situation deteriorated, this was approved days before Poland attacked. Tukhachevsky performed the "fireman" role again, taking on the most difficult and responsible post on 29th April.²

Tukhachevsky's success on Caucasian Front made him the prime candidate for the post. He was also closer geographically than Frunze, the other leading candidate, who was leading the drive into Turkestan. Kamenev later lamented not also having Frunze in the European theatre, indicating he would have liked to reunite the team which had

¹ This was decided at a Central Committee meeting of 4th May and officially declared on 23rd May with the publication of the Central Committee theses, *Pol'skii front i nashi zadachi*. V. M. Ivanov, *Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky*, (Moscow: 1990), p. 151; *Direktivy komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii, 1917-1922, Tomy I-IV*. (Moscow, 1971-1978), (hereafter *DkfKA*), *Tom III*, doc. 1, pp. 11-14.

² *DkfKA, Tom IV*. (Moscow: 1978), p. 529, gives 29th April as the date Tukhachevsky assumed the post, but A. S. Bubnov et al, eds. *Grazhdanskaia voina, 1918-1921, Tom III*, (Moscow, 1930), p. 319, gives 30th April. However, from the evidence of a Hughes Telegraph conversation between Tukhachevsky and Kamenev taking place on 29th April, it is apparent that Tukhachevsky had assumed the Western Front Command no later than this date, *DkfKA, Tom III*, pp. 21-22.

worked so well on Eastern Front, and that these were the two top Red commanders by 1920. Tukhachevsky was confident within himself and with the methods he had used to emerge victorious so far. Now he would face the Polish Army united under Józef Piłsudski and intent on regaining Poland's historical pre-partition borders.³

By Tukhachevsky's definition in *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia*, the Polish-Soviet War appears to be a "national" conflict rather than a "class" one. However, Tukhachevsky and the majority of the Red leadership saw it differently. Moscow viewed the clash with Poland as another Civil War front, but did not wish to clash with Poland in the spring of 1920, prioritising Wrangel's defeat in Crimea. However, once Poland had attacked and large-scale clashes were unavoidable, the internationalist Bolsheviks viewed it as a chance to spread revolution into Europe. Post-war Germany, on Poland's western border, seemed ripe for revolution, as the effects of the Treaty of Versailles began to be felt. Eastern Europe had already witnessed revolutionary attempts in the wake of the Great War and Russian Revolution, but these had failed, through lack of force, to defeat the established regimes. By 1920, the Red Army had emerged as the force to ensure that the next uprising in Eastern Europe succeeded. If this was in Germany, from where Marx originated and an industrialised state in which Marxism could blossom, it could provide the industrial base and educated proletariat absent in peasant Russia. Therefore, spreading "Revolution on the point of bayonets" became the Bolshevik catchphrase for summer 1920.⁴ Did Tukhachevsky believe this?

Whilst in Ingolstadt, Tukhachevsky had reportedly stated to Fervacque that Poland should be within the Russian Empire. By April 1920, he still believed this, but now within the context of the class struggle he had been waging since early 1918. In the essay *Revoliutsiia izvne* (Revolution From Without), written in early 1920, Tukhachevsky wrote of revolutions being caused by internal uprisings or introduced by force from without and he believed the Red Army could perform the latter in Poland.⁵ The transformation Tukhachevsky had undergone during the Civil War, by

³ Poland was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1772, 1793 and 1795.

⁴ Lenin used this phrase in a speech on 22nd September 1920, assessing the defeat in Poland, A. Richardson, ed., *Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, Vladimir Lenin, Karl Radek, Leon Trotsky, Mikhail Tukhachevsky and Grigory Zinov'ev: In Defence of the Russian Revolution, A Selection of Bolshevik Writings, 1917-1923*, (London: 1995), p. 141.

⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Revoliutsiia izvne", *Voina klassov*, pp. 50-59.

which he now believed in the possibility of a conquering revolutionary doctrine to spread Russian influence to Europe and the world, manifested itself in his Western Front Command. The clash with Poland was not a different war, but an extension of the Civil War between Communist Russia and Western capitalism, and should be fought the same way. Tukhachevsky wrote,

This ability of the Red Army to carry revolution by offensive and infinitely reinforce at the expense of the revolutionary masses of all nations and peoples, - gives extraordinary possibilities of socialist, class strategy. It with full belief can consider its future victory over world capitalism.⁶

Tukhachevsky believed the Polish workers and peasants would support a Red Army advance into Poland. This matched the view of Lenin and the majority of the Communist Party, with dissenting voices such as Dzierżyński, Julian Marchlewski and Trotsky ignored.⁷

To study the Polish-Soviet War around Tukhachevsky, it is essential to realise this was how he viewed and fought it. His performance can only be considered as part of his Civil War campaigns. This is how I shall examine his conduct of the Polish Front, taking into account conditions he fought under, numbers involved, his opponent and the type of fighting involved.

Patterns have emerged running through his Civil War commands. Under Civil War conditions and in the role of "troubleshooter", Tukhachevsky consistently arrived in new postings which required the initial reorganisation and reformation of broken forces to fight with. Whilst conducting this work, he was pressurised into offensive action before his troops were ready, which achieved little or mixed results, although in his pre-emptive attack against Denikin he fared better with early military action than during previous commands. This stage was followed by the completion of reorganisation and regrouping and an all-out offensive to gain victory. This pattern which developed throughout Tukhachevsky's commands was how the Reds generally fought the Civil War - urgent appeals, mobilisations and hurried attacks - but Tukhachevsky had mastered it by the time of the North Caucasus Operation. When he arrived at Western Front, precisely the same pattern unfolded and it is little wonder he used the same methods.

⁶ Ibid. p. 56.

⁷ Julian Marchlewski (1866-1925) was a Polish member of the Communist Party and was Chairman of the Polish Revolutionary Committee set up in Białystok in July-August 1920.

He inherited a weak, disorganised front, low in morale, which required instant reorganisation under fire, as Poland had already attacked. Two weeks into his command, Tukhachevsky had to launch a pre-emptive strike which lasted until early June, producing the same apparently mixed results, although actually as effective as in the Caucasus. The rest of June saw him complete reorganisation of Western Front for the main Belorussian offensive in July, which was again a stunning success, developing into continuous manoeuvre pursuit operations into Lithuania and Poland. However, offensive success slowed under strategic overstretch and Poland launched an all-or-nothing counter-offensive in mid-August from behind the River Wisła at Warsaw, similar to Kolchak from behind the Ishim at Petropavlovsk. The pattern deviated here though, as the counter-strike became an irrecoverable defeat and rout for Tukhachevsky's forces, the first time this had occurred.

As with his previous Civil War commands, Tukhachevsky recorded his thoughts on the Polish campaign, both at the time and later. *Voina klassov* contains writings completed during or just after the conflict and these compare well to a series of lectures Tukhachevsky delivered to the Red Army General Staff Academy in 1923, under the title *Pokhod za Vislu* "March Beyond the Wisła".⁸ This provides an excellent insight into his command of the Polish campaign, why decisions were made and why it went wrong. It was written with hindsight, but the conclusions drawn show his views remained remarkably consistent three years later. The conclusions Tukhachevsky drew became part of the heated debate within the Red Army and Communist Party over who or what was to blame for the failure of the Polish offensive, a debate which, it has been suggested, was linked to the military purges in 1937. The question must be asked why Tukhachevsky was defeated at Warsaw after conquering so completely elsewhere and I shall examine this later in the chapter. To do so accurately, it is first necessary to examine Tukhachevsky's conduct of the Polish campaign in close comparison to his Civil War commands, to determine why his success and luck finally ran out and why the methods applicable to Civil War thus far, were not as suitable for a "War of the Classes" in Poland. At the end of the chapter I shall return to the debate over the genesis of "Deep Battle", introduced at the

⁸ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", *Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Tom I, 1919-1927*, pp. 114-168; This is translated into English and published as an appendix in J. Pilsudski, *Year 1920 and its climax: Battle of Warsaw during the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920*. (London: 1972), pp. 223-275.

beginning of Chapter III, and demonstrate why the Polish campaign in defeat provided a crucial part of the operational theory.

The Western Theatre

European Russia was guarded by two Fronts separated by the Pripet Marshes - Western and South-Western - similar to Russia's approach to the Great War. While Tukhachevsky commanded the former, the latter was headed by A. I. Egorov. Ten years older than Tukhachevsky and an ex-Tsarist colonel, Egorov appeared to be the exception which made the rule for Tukhachevsky's assessment of older *voenspetsy* and makes an interesting comparison to him. He commanded Southern Front's 9th and 10th Armies, receiving the Order of the Red Banner at Tsaritsyn in May 1919, before assuming Southern Front command in October 1919. He was the most prominent Red Commander in this area, working well with Stalin, despite his background. Formerly a Left SR,⁹ he joined the Communist Party in 1918 and was another of the few commander-communists in the country, who made the transition to the Red Army easily. Egorov was probably regarded as the next most capable Red Commander after Frunze and Tukhachevsky and his career after 1920 is also comparable with the latter's. They were two of the first five Marshals of the Soviet Union in 1935, but were both executed in 1937. These were the two men who led the Soviet campaign against Poland.

Kamenev prepared a general plan of offensive, which the *Politburo* passed on 28th April, earmarking Western Front's Belorussian theatre as the main sector.¹⁰ Poland had attacked in Ukraine, therefore this would allow a Soviet attack into the weaker sector. Besides, whilst facing Poland in Ukraine, South-Western Front had to guard against possible Rumanian incursions from Bessarabia and Wrangel in Crimea, three fronts.

Ukraine was the main sector for Poland, targeting Kiev, with a supplementary attack aiming for Odessa on the Black Sea to open an *Entente* supply line. Fielding 39,300 infantry and cavalry, they found immediate success against the 14,209 troops of South-Western Front's 12th and 14th Armies. 13th Army, fielding only 4,456 men,

⁹ L. D. Trotsky, (trans. and annotated B. Pearce), *How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Volume III: The Year 1920*, (London: 1981), p. 210.

was trying to prevent Wrangel's retreat to Crimea, but did not succeed, meaning that 18,000 infantry and 5,200 cavalry faced South-Western Front's underbelly. South-Western Front's troops had little experience of the victorious campaigns on other fronts and were generally low in confidence and morale. However, although the Poles occupied the Ukrainian capital Kiev on 6th May, South-Western Front managed to stem the advance, 12th Army limiting the Poles to a small bridgehead on the eastern bank of the River Dnepr opposite Kiev by mid-May.¹¹

Western Front was not attacked, but on the day he arrived, Tukhachevsky discussed launching an attack to aid South-Western Front, with Kamenev. Kamenev had previously ordered Mozyr' to be attacked on 29th April, but this had not occurred. However, Kamenev asked Tukhachevsky's opinion on the best course of action now he had arrived to take command and said he would support whatever decision Tukhachevsky made, as the latter was now the man on the spot and conditions may well have changed since Kamenev himself was in Smolensk.¹² This reflects the trust Kamenev had in Tukhachevsky, giving him the plan to assess and amend as he saw fit, to local conditions.

Western Front's theatre of operations was bisected by the River Beresina running diagonally from south-east to north-west. The River Dvina joins the Beresina between the towns of Zhlobin and Gomel', just north of the eastern end of the Pripet Marshes and the town of Mozyr' on the River Pripiat. Mozyr' formed the juncture point of Western and South-Western Fronts and was an important target to secure Western Front's left flank and South-Western Front's right flank. The banks of the Beresina were marshy and wooded and its upper course in the north was surrounded by forest-covered swampland, difficult for manoeuvre. The south of the river was surrounded by marshy woodland and sparsely populated. Three railway crossings existed over the river at Borisov, Bobruisk and Shatsilki in the south. The only area of dry ground, around the town of Igumen, had no road or rail communications. North of the Upper Beresina marshes lay a belt of dry ground between the River Dvina and railway junction of Polotsk - the "Gates of Smolensk". Tukhachevsky assessed the

¹⁰ V. M. Ivanov, pp. 152-153.

¹¹ *DkjKA, Tom III*, p. 149; N. Kakurin, *Russko-Pol'skaia kampaniia, 1918-1920. Politiko-strategicheskii ocherk*, (Moscow: 1922), p. 41.

¹² *DkjKA, Tom III*, pp. 21-22.

Belorussian operational theatre and decided on the "Gates of Smolensk" and Igumen as the best routes of attack.¹³

Reorganisation

On 1st May, Tukhachevsky directed 16th Army Commander N. I. Sollogub to attack with his left flank towards Domanovichi-Mozyr', to relieve South-Western Front's 12th Army.¹⁴ However, Tukhachevsky did not limit the attack to this, but proposed a similar tactic to that used in the Caucasus, reorienting his troops for a pre-emptive attack into the northern sector of Belorussia to pre-empt a second Polish offensive, which he correctly estimated would be made in the Belorussian theatre. He intended to use offence as the best form of defence, to gain the offensive initiative and aid South-Western Front, but it was another gamble.

When Tukhachevsky launched the attack on 14th May, Western Front was not fully reorganised. Many reinforcements earmarked for the general offensive had not arrived and the Front was short of signal and rail troops. Supplies and equipment, especially communications and signalling equipment and transport resources, were scarce.¹⁵ Therefore, whilst reorganising for the general offensive, Tukhachevsky planned and launched the pre-emptive attack with scarce numbers on a new Front working with new people, in the knowledge that time was at a premium to forestall the Polish attack.

Gittis had apparently planned to attack through the "Gates of Smolensk", advancing straight towards Minsk to take the Belorussian capital, a good target in political terms,¹⁶ but Tukhachevsky altered this. He envisaged a right flank envelopment and encirclement through the "Gates of Smolensk", supported by a central frontal attack through Igumen, with the left flank guarded at Mozyr', pinning down and wiping out the Polish forces. This was similar to the North Caucasus Operation and was the tactic employed by the Soviets in 1944 in this area against Germany. For the general offensive, more formations were required than the 15th and 16th Armies which currently existed, but Tukhachevsky used the same plan on a

¹³ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", p. 115.

¹⁴ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 10, pp. 22-23; Former Tsarist Colonel Nikolai Pavlovich Sollogub (1883-1937) commanded 16th Army from 14th August 1919-21st September 1920, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 543.

¹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 225-226.

smaller scale for the pre-emptive strike. On 1st May, he instructed 15th Army Commander A. I. Kork to attack from Polotsko-Vitebsk sector on the right flank, whilst 16th Army, already moving towards Mozyr', would hold from the front.¹⁷ Kork was to use seven rifle divisions and make every effort to use horses and automobiles for transporting units during the operation, whilst Sollogub was to use four rifle divisions for the supplementary attack, concentrating on the main flanking movement and supplying speed, echoing previous Civil War operations.

Already beginning reorganisation, Tukhachevsky created a right flank Northern Group, comprising two divisions and a brigade of 15th Army, for which Kork formed a field HQ using Velikolutskii Fortified Zone HQ. This was formed on 5th May under E. N. Sergeev, becoming 4th Army, on 2nd June.¹⁸ On 25th June, it received 3rd *Kavkor* (Cavalry Corps), formed in June from 10th and 15th Cavalry Divisions and commanded by Tukhachevsky's old comrade Gai.¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, Tukhachevsky entrusted Gai with the vital role during the summer offensive.

Tukhachevsky also created a separate 16th Army left flank group on 18th May, comprising two divisions and a brigade of 16th Army, for which Sollogub created a field HQ using Gomel' Fortified Zone HQ. This became Mozyr' Group under T. S. Khvesin.²⁰

Finally, Tukhachevsky created Southern Group on 18th May, which became 3rd Army on 2nd June under V. S. Lazarevich.²¹ Therefore, by early June, Tukhachevsky

¹⁶ V. M. Ivanov, p. 153.

¹⁷ *Direktivы Glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi Armii (1917-1920), Sbornik dokumentov.* (Moscow, 1969), (hereafter *DGkKA*), doc. 619, pp. 632-633; Former Tsarist Lieutenant-Colonel Avgust Ivanovich Kork (1887-1937) commanded 15th Army from 31st August-15th October 1919 and 22nd October 1919-16th October 1920, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 543.

¹⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Evgenii Nikolaevich Sergeev (1887-1937) commanded Northern group and 4th Army until 31st July, *DGkKA*, pp. 805-806, note 108; Aleksandr Dmitrievich Shuvaev commanded 4th Army until 17th October, when former Tsarist Colonel Nikolai Evgen'evich Kakurin (1883-1936) replaced him on 17th October, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 536; Both Sergeev and Kakurin wrote accounts of the Polish-Soviet War, with Kakurin also completing a two-volume history of the Russian Civil War. These are two early and invaluable sources on the conflicts: E. N. Sergeev. *Ot Dvinska k Visle*, (Smolensk, 1923). N. E. Kakurin. *Russko-Pol'skaia Kampaniia, 1918-1920. Politiko-strategicheskii ocherk.* (Moscow, 1922), and *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia, Tomy I-II*, (Moscow/Leningrad, 1925 & 1926).

¹⁹ *DkfKA, Tom III*, p. 739, note 12. 15th Cavalry Division was headed by Borevich, another Pole, who had fought with Tukhachevsky and Gai in 24th Simbirsk Iron Division in 1918.

²⁰ *DGkKA*, p. 806, note 109. Tikhon Serafimovich Khvesin (1894-1938), a former Tsarist NCO, commanded Mozyr' group until its disbandment in September 1920.

²¹ Southern Group was commanded by 29th Division Commander Vladislav Florianovich Grushetskii, *DGkKA*, p. 806; *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 568-69; Vladimir Salamanovich Lazarevich (1882-1938) commanded 3rd Army from 12th June-18th October when N. E. Kakurin took over until 31st December, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 530 & 535.

had on paper reorganised Western Front, although in practice it was not fully ready until July. In early May however, Tukhachevsky was only beginning this when he had to launch the pre-emptive offensive, which gives some indication of how unprepared Western Front was and how much of a risk Tukhachevsky was taking.

The comparison to Tukhachevsky's Civil War commands are apparent, as he spent the first half of May moving around Western Front, issuing orders to 15th and 16th Armies and preparing for the offensive. He instructed Sollogub on 3rd and 8th May to concentrate at Borisov and Igumen by 13th May for crossing the Beresina and attacking towards Minsk.²² This would allow an advance directly up the railway and via Igumen, the shortest route over dry land through the marshes, allowing 15th and 16th Armies to arrive at Minsk simultaneously. Mozyr' was to be occupied before this to secure the left flank, but by 6th May Kamenev had directed 16th Army to only screen the sector south of the Beresina and advance to Borisov.²³ This was a reaction to the Polish advance on Kiev, which was captured on 6th May. With South-Western Front retreating so rapidly, there was no time for the preparatory attack on Mozyr', which would also have brought 16th Army into direct contact with the Polish forces advancing against 12th Army and prevented its concentration in Borisov sector. Therefore, securing Mozyr' and the left wing had to be sacrificed, which proved important to the outcome of the pre-emptive attack and planning for the general offensive.

On 5th May, Tukhachevsky directed Kork to attack at dawn on 14th May, using all rifle divisions, with none kept in reserve and the "most urgent" measures to be taken to prepare the rear and communications in the attack area.²⁴ Tukhachevsky recognised that bad communications between frontline and rear areas and between neighbouring frontline areas would be problematic and urged his commanders to solve any problems as quickly as possible, as he had done in the Caucasus. With communications "unreliable", he decided to lead operations from Vitebsk which was closer than Smolensk.²⁵

²² *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 11 & 14, pp. 23 & 25.

²³ *Ibid.* docs. 11 & 13, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ *Ibid.* doc. 12, p. 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.* doc. 15, pp. 25-27.

As Mozyr' was not secure, the weakness of the left flank was another problem. A Polish attack towards Bobruisk could threaten Zhlobin and Gomel and the Poles had a 3:1 advantage in Mozyr' sector. They had pushed the Soviets behind the Dnieper en route to Kiev by 10th May, but Tukhachevsky calculated they would not advance north towards Mozyr', reporting to Kamenev,

...Altogether, if we consider not men, but bayonets, then the enemy has 65,000 and we have in thousands up to ten less, apart from that, many badly reinforced. In view of this for creating a strong attack group we have to take several risks in other sectors, otherwise it is difficult to hope for success.²⁶

This clearly illustrates Tukhachevsky's tactical thinking. Troop shortages led him to concentrate the majority of his troops on the right-wing and centre for the envelopment and front holding groups, but weakly screen the left flank despite the Polish offensive against South-Western Front. This was a risk, but Tukhachevsky felt it was worth taking, if it allowed concentration elsewhere.

Kamenev pressed for reinforcements for the pre-emptive strike and on 12th May Lenin emphasised to Smilga, "It is necessary to energetically help Western Front", asking him to personally ensure all divisions asked for by Kamenev reached Western Front without delay with their full compliment, (ie. with no desertions).²⁷ Reinforcements were on the way, although Kamenev informed Tukhachevsky that he must take his share of the blame for 12th and 21st Divisions arriving in an unbattleworthy state. As Caucasian Front Commander, Tukhachevsky had argued about transferring them from Caucasian Front and had insisted that they be equipped at Western Front.²⁸ He must therefore, have stripped them of a good deal of their equipment before they were transferred, retaining the equipment on Caucasian Front. This decision was now backfiring because he had to equip them on Western Front. However, this illustrates the supply problems and shortages which persisted throughout the Civil War.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ V. I. Lenin, *Voennaia perepiska, 1917-1922gg.* (hereafter *L-Vp*), docs. 475 & 477, pp. 243-244 & 365, note 286; *DGkKA*, docs. 749 & 751, pp. 743-744 & 744-45; Ivar Smilga was Temporary Caucasian Front Commander until 20th May 1920, *DkfKA*, *Tom IV*, p. 530.

²⁸ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 15, pp. 25-27.

Pre-emptive Strike

On 15th May, Western Front comprised 49,474 infantry and 3,993 cavalry facing 50,700 Polish infantry and 5,800 cavalry. South-Western Front fielded 49,676 infantry and 29,633 cavalry against 30,800 and 7,900 Polish infantry and cavalry. 45,000 infantry and 6,200 cavalry were positioned in Bessarabia and Wrangel fielded 28,400 infantry and 11,500 cavalry.²⁹ Even without action from Bessarabia, South-Western Front was outnumbered.

31,230 infantry and 2,644 cavalry were concentrated by Tukhachevsky in Northern Group and 15th Army in the "Gates of Smolensk" sector for the quick envelopment, with 18,244 infantry and 1,349 cavalry in the southern sector to pin down frontally, displaying the concentration on the right.³⁰

With the Poles already attacking at Borisov, on 12th May, Tukhachevsky ordered Northern Group to force the Western Dvina in Disna-Polotsk area and attack in Zagat'e station area. 15th Army was to take Sharkovshchizna station-Novodrutzk station-Dokshitsy-River Serguch' estuary area on 18th May. 16th Army was to push the Poles back, force the Beresina in Borisov-Beresina (the town) area by 17th May, for a further offensive in Minsk sector, involving screening the Beresina and Dnieper Rivers, whilst guaranteeing the left flank with its remaining forces.³¹ Therefore, 15th Army was to rapidly envelop in its sector, whilst 16th Army was to cross the Beresina and pin the Poles down, to prepare an attack on Minsk.

The offensive began on 14th May with Northern Group crossing the Western Dvina. Tukhachevsky directed Sollogub that Polish forces had dug in along the River Dnieper and that he should guard against an attack in Mozyr'-Zhlobin area on the left flank. He agreed with Sollogub that he should use air squadrons to "ease the crossing for the troops by a massive raid and attacks from the air on the enemy positions on the bank". The crossing would be difficult with poor engineering resources, so an aerial bombardment was to be used, reminiscent of the Ufa Operation in May 1919 and another combined operation.³²

²⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 119-120, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 152-155 & 522.

³⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 119-120.

³¹ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 16, p. 28.

³² *Ibid.* docs. 17-18, pp. 28-29.

15th Army and Northern Group advanced successfully, with Northern Group's left flank aiding 15th Army's right flank, to force the Western Dvina River and attack along its left bank.³³ However, 16th Army and the Poles both attacked in Borisov and Zhlobin sectors, with neither side making headway.³⁴ Tukhachevsky urged Sollogub to attack towards Minsk on 17th May, to aid 15th Army, before the Poles could attack further in Borisov sector and Sollogub launched the Borisov Operation that day.³⁵

Tukhachevsky's confidence in his class warfare methods is illustrated by his order to Kork on 18th May, urging him to develop 4th Rifle Division's breakthrough, by advancing 15th Cavalry Division into the Polish rear to encircle and wipe them out. Tukhachevsky said that the flanks and rear of the cavalry would be secured because Minsk Province was rife with uprisings and partisans.³⁶ He was utilising the presence of pro-Soviet forces in his enemy's rear as he had done against Kolchak and Denikin.

With 15th and 16th Armies across the Beresina, Tukhachevsky directed the next stage of the offensive to "...be decisively developed" on 19th May. Northern Group was to clear the Western Dvina's left bank, not crossing the Latvian border, and move to Sharkovshchizna area to guard 15th Army's right flank by 24th May. 15th Army, screening Svetsiany area, was to take Molodechno (the railway station after Minsk) on 25th May. 16th Army was to screen Rogachev and Gomel', whilst advancing to Minsk-Ruvnopol' area by 25th May.³⁷ In this way, Minsk would be encircled by the right flank envelopment and frontal attack.

Kamenev directed South-Western Front to immediately attack to support Western Front and Egorov directed 14th Army and 1st Cavalry Army to attack into the Right-Bank Ukraine and 12th Army to encircle and wipe out the Polish Kiev Group.³⁸ The opportunity provided by Western Front's breakthrough, forcing Polish troops to transfer northwards, was seized by South-Western Front.

By 23rd May, 16th Army held a bridgehead on the Beresina right bank. Following advice from Kamenev, Tukhachevsky directed 15th Army to occupy Zembin area, then advance to Smolevichi and occupy Lake Velikoe-Lake Maloe area by 25th May. 16th Army was to occupy Zhodzina sector, whilst screening south of Borisov

³³ Ibid. docs. 19-20, pp. 29-30.

³⁴ Ibid. doc. 21, p. 31.

³⁵ Ibid. doc. 22, p. 32.

³⁶ Ibid. doc. 23, p. 32.

³⁷ Ibid. doc. 24, p. 33.

³⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 678, pp. 682-683; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 184-186, pp. 156-159.

bridgehead. With Zembin and Zhodzina occupied to the south-west and north-west of Borisov respectively, 15th and 16th Armies could then encircle it, cut rail communications and capture the town and the Polish troops within it, another case of screening one sector to allow a pincer manoeuvre operation in the main sector.³⁹

However, by 25th May Polish reinforcements had been introduced. 15th Army had been engaged in battle for three days around Polotsk-Molodechno Railway, slowing its envelopment manoeuvre, and Tukhachevsky urged Kork to take Molodechno in 3-4 days to aid 16th Army. The latter had also encountered stiff resistance, but both Kork and Sollogub advanced the next day, towards Molodechno and Zhodin respectively. At this point, Tukhachevsky asked Kamenev for more staff, telegraph-construction companies and workers columns to be hurried to the front, as communications were poor, especially with 15th Army, whose messages were incomprehensible. Kamenev said staff and reinforcements would arrive, but, clearly displeased, asked Tukhachevsky if he had absolutely no reserves left. However, Tukhachevsky had used all available troops in the offensive, instructing his army commanders to hold none back and was counting on reinforcements in transit as reserves.

This was not the first time he had clashed with superiors over this tactical measure and it would not be the last. However, Tukhachevsky had launched the pre-emptive attack with barely enough troops and resources and as Polish reinforcements arrived, the offensive slowed.⁴⁰ This was demonstrated on 26th May, when Polish reinforcements, advancing north from Ukraine, attacked 16th Army's left flank, forcing it back over the Beresina the following day.⁴¹

In a 27th May Hughes Telegraph discussion, Tukhachevsky reported the Poles had drafted in great numbers of reinforcements and stated that 15th and 16th Armies had suffered serious losses and required reinforcement and reformation to retain battleworthiness. He stressed the need for more staff and communications resources for the new divisions now on Western Front.

Tukhachevsky also criticised Sollogub for continually conducting small attacks (instead of presumably forming a concentrated attack group for a breakthrough - *NC*), but he believed Kork "...fully can and must win the operation, if only he wasn't

³⁹ *DGkKA*, doc. 620, p. 633; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 25, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁰ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 26-27, pp. 34-36.

nervous."⁴² Sollogub evidently was not following Tukhachevsky's instructions on concentration, but Kork was manoeuvring well on the right flank.

By the end of May, the Poles had gained the upper hand. A counter-offensive was launched on 31st May by Polish Reserve Army under General Sosnkowski, attacking between Northern Group and 15th Army, and by 1st Polish Army in Molodechno and Zembin areas against 16th Army.⁴³

Kamenev and Tukhachevsky urged Northern Group and 15th Army to advance on the right flank and 16th Army to cross the Beresina once more, aided by the now-active Mozyr' group on its left flank.⁴⁴ However, little progress was made and by 4th June Tukhachevsky ordered Sollogub and Head of Western Front Air Fleet, E. I. Tatarchenko,

...on beginning a second crossing with all air resources, in full tactical cooperation with the crossing infantry, attack the opposite bank of the River Beresina at the points of crossing and by this guarantee the fulfillment of the crossings. Aeroplanes must not be spread out, but must be used in mass squadrons. The task of land forces command must be to give the air fleet determinedly clear points for attacks from the air, they must not be very scattered.⁴⁵

Tukhachevsky was demanding concentrated strikes to provide air cover for the infantry, targeted by spotters on the ground, a combined-arms operation again. Explaining it in such detail suggests that Sollogub had never carried out such an operation before or had done so poorly. Tukhachevsky also gave detailed topographical advice to Kork and Sergeev, telling them which areas of land to use amongst the marshy areas of the Upper Beresina and River Serech'. Knowledge of the area, amassed during the Great War, would have been invaluable to Tukhachevsky, but he would also have been aided by his Civil War command experience, and this was another area he wrote about.⁴⁶ However, he did not always listen to advice from Kamenev so easily.

On 2nd June, Kamenev voiced his concerns over Tukhachevsky apparently nervily throwing reserves from one sector to another, when using neighbouring units

⁴¹ A. S. Bubnov et al. *Tom III*. p. 347.

⁴² *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 29, pp. 37-40.

⁴³ A. S. Bubnov et al., pp. 347-348.

⁴⁴ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 28 & 30-36, pp. 37 & 40-43; *DGkKA*, doc. 622, p. 634.

⁴⁵ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 38, p. 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* doc. 39, p. 46; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Statistika v grazhdanskoi voine", "Inzhenernoe sorazmerenie operatsii", *Voyna klassov*, pp. 78-88 & 116-134.

to help each other would be more effective. Tukhachevsky replied, "That is why I don't like reserves which are scarcely able to be used, I personally always help with neighbours". Kamenev's reply, "Yes, only without reserves it is difficult to develop success and gives no breathing-space to exhausted units" may well have fallen on deaf ears, with no reply to this forthcoming from Tukhachevsky.⁴⁷

Tukhachevsky hoped to stop the Polish counter-offensive by re-launching Western Front's offensive. 15th Army could ease the pressure on 16th Army, whilst Mozyr' Group could take Mozyr' to secure the left flank.

However, concerns in Moscow about Western Front's position are shown by a 2nd June telegram from Lenin to Stalin noting,

On Western Front the position is worse than Tukhachevsky and Supreme Commander think, therefore it is necessary to ask you to send divisions there, as it is impossible to take any more from Caucasian Front because an uprising there would make the position ultra-worrisome. Trotsky is working on sending you reinforcements from Crimean Division that perhaps will give you the possibility to take two-three divisions from these for Kiev sector. Try to pressure the units at all costs to continue beginning the offensive energetically. You of course remember that the *Politburo* decision to attack Crimea is postponed until a new *Politburo* decision.⁴⁸

South-Western Front was to attack to relieve Western Front, but Lenin seemed to doubt that Kamenev appreciated the seriousness of the situation.⁴⁹ However, Kamenev was trying to direct reinforcements to Western Front and his appraisal of the Front situation is shown in a 4th June directive to Tukhachevsky noting,

The circumstances on your front clearly underline the following three facts, which in my opinion, must be placed as the basis of any further directives: 1) The inability of 16th Army to cross the Beresina and by this render help to 15th Army; 2) the complete insecurity of 15th Army Southern Group's left flank, without which 15th Army is not able to risk wide operations; 3) in view of the strength of resistance by enemy troops in Molodechno area, the decision of this... sector... can be achieved by developing the success in Vilensk sector, with actions further on the flank of the enemy Molodechno Group.

He urged quick regrouping and conducting an attack into Molodechno sector to prevent further Polish action and seize back the initiative.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 37, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 683, p. 686; *L-Vp*, doc. 480, pp. 244-245.

⁴⁹ *DGkKA*, doc. 684, pp. 686-688.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* doc. 623, p. 635.

South-Western Front launched an attack on 6th June and Tukhachevsky urgently issued orders to support it, stating, "Only by energetic and brave tasks will you stop the retreat of your troops", again indicating his belief in attack being the best form of defence.⁵¹

The reason for launching the May offensive was to pre-empt the Poles in Belorussia and to relieve South-Western Front in Ukraine. This had been achieved by early June because the Poles had not been able to launch their Belorussian attack and had transferred the majority of their forces from the Ukrainian to the Belorussian theatre to halt Tukhachevsky, thus relieving the pressure on Egorov. However, Western Front now faced vastly superior Polish forces, with only depleted, exhausted troops still awaiting reinforcement and resupply. To add to the general problems facing the Soviets, Wrangel launched an offensive from Crimea into the Tauride on 6th June, taking advantage of the Red decision to delay offensive action against him. This put pressure on Egorov, just as he was beginning his offensive into Ukraine to regain Kiev.

Soviet forces were back at their starting points for the May offensive by 8th June and Tukhachevsky and Kamenev discussed a new Western Front offensive to support South-Western Front's attack. Tukhachevsky stressed that the main problem was the quality and organisation of Polish reinforcements, compared to Western Front, and said he hoped to raise 30,000 reinforcements, but that he would accept any help Kamenev could give. He then stated,

The war with Poland, as you have already noted, is significantly closer to regular forms of war of big armies, in connection with this I have prepared calculations, so to speak, for a plan for a summer offensive. Figures are important and perhaps for the first time, can allow us to wage war not with just what there is, but to create what is demanded for the war.

Tukhachevsky and Kamenev arranged to meet in person to discuss it.⁵²

Both Kamenev and Tukhachevsky knew that a different approach was necessary. The pre-emptive offensive, although quickly planned and unprepared, had served its purpose, but now the Poles had reacted and with their superior ability to reinforce formations, prevented the Soviets making further gains. Both men realised that operations were on a larger scale on Western Front than previous Civil War fronts and

⁵¹ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 40-44, pp. 47-49.

⁵² *Ibid.* doc. 45, pp. 49-51.

therefore required careful planning, for which time would be needed. Northern Group and 15th Army had advanced some 100-130 kms and secured the use of the Polotsk-Molodechno Railway for the general offensive, but 16th Army's lack of progress had exposed 15th Army's left flank and forced Kork to spread his men over an ever-widening front, eroding his attacking impetus. Therefore, the time had come to dig in and prepare for the general offensive in the summer. Tukhachevsky pulled his forces behind the Rivers Auta and Beresina to stabilise the Soviet line and using the time won by the May offensive, reinforced and reorganised Western Front in June. Kamenev ordered regrouping to begin and Mozyr' Group's operation to take Mozyr' was postponed, although Western Front forces were to keep the Poles in their sector occupied, to prevent forces being transferred back to face South-Western Front.⁵³

Build-Up of Western Front

The rest of June followed a similar pattern to the first two weeks of May. Tukhachevsky reorganised Western Front for the general offensive, prevented Polish advances with defensive measures and limited advances, and supported South-Western Front's right flank. Tukhachevsky had tremendous experience in reorganisational work under fire, having conducted it on every Civil War front. His command record, but also probably the military ideas he had already formulated and command courses he had created, were recognised on 22nd May when he was appointed a member of the Red Army General Staff, despite being too young to have attend Nikolaevskii General Staff Academy.⁵⁴

To begin reorganisation, on 9th and 10th June, Tukhachevsky ordered 15th and 16th Armies to dig in behind the Dvina and Beresina Rivers to hold the Polish advance, allow reinforcements to be introduced and begin regrouping.⁵⁵ On 11th June, he formed 3rd and 4th Armies from Southern and Northern Groups, reorganising Western Front for the summer offensive.⁵⁶ Tukhachevsky informed Sollogub on 12th June that in the forthcoming operation, he was to cross the Beresina and attack Minsk sector, whilst the three-army Northern Group attacked on the right flank. He was to

⁵³ Ibid. doc. 46, p. 52; *DGkKA*, doc. 624, p. 636.

⁵⁴ N. I. Koritskii, ed., *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia soratnikov i druzei*, (Moscow: 1965), p. 231.

⁵⁵ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 48-49, pp. 53-54.

attack with four divisions and prepare beforehand all resources for crossing, communications and transport in his selected crossing area.⁵⁷ Therefore, the offensive was planned well beforehand, using the same areas of operations, but this time ensuring enough men and resources were available to exploit any breakthrough.

Whilst reorganising however, Tukhachevsky was forced to attack with Mozyr' Group. South-Western Front's offensive continued and Mozyr' was as important for the security of its right flank as for Western Front's left flank. On 11th June, Tukhachevsky ordered Mozyr' Group to cross the River Dnieper and occupy Rechitsa, to guarantee the railway bridge on the river's right bank, aiding 12th Army and opening up an advance to Mozyr'.⁵⁸

The Poles were still active against Western Front, anxious to use their numerical superiority and advance as far as possible before the Soviets reinforced. Therefore, on 14th June, Tukhachevsky was forced to order 3rd, 15th and 16th Armies to launch limited counter-attacks to secure their areas.⁵⁹

Whilst the northern forces held position, Mozyr Group's attack in support of South-Western Front developed into an operation to occupy Mozyr', with 16th Army advancing to support its right flank on 18th June. Khvesin supported 12th Army, which was attacking along the River Pripiat', by moving towards Mozyr' area.⁶⁰

Khvesin had already learned of a Polish retreat from Rechitsa and attacked on his own initiative, crossing the River Dnieper and capturing Rechitsa station-Derazhnia area.⁶¹ On 19th June, Tukhachevsky ordered him to develop this further by taking Vasilevichi-Khoiniki area. 16th Army was to cross the Beresina in its left flank area no later than 21st June and advance to take Evtushkevichi-Domanovichi-Novosovichi-Zolotukha area.⁶² 12th Army pushed on with 24th Division and the Dnepr Flotilla, to aid the occupation of Mozyr'.⁶³

As well as guarding 12th Army's right flank, occupying Mozyr' was a vital precondition for the summer offensive into Belorussia, guarding Western Front's left flank. The Poles knew the tactical importance of the town and transferred troops from

⁵⁶ Ibid. doc. 51, p. 55.

⁵⁷ Ibid. doc. 52, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁸ Ibid. doc. 50, p. 54.

⁵⁹ Ibid. doc. 53, p. 56.

⁶⁰ Ibid. doc. 54, p. 57.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 57, footnote.

⁶² Ibid. doc. 55, pp. 57-58.

⁶³ Ibid. doc. 221, p. 199.

the northern sector to try to hold Mozyr'. On 27th June, Kamenev instructed Tukhachevsky and Egorov to take all possible measures to occupy Mozyr'.⁶⁴ The two Front Commanders relayed these instructions and 12th Army and Mozyr' Group pressed on, taking the town on 29th June. Tukhachevsky directed Khvesin and Sollogub to secure the town and area the next day. This linked Western and South-Western Front and provided the security for Western Front's left flank, which had been missing during the pre-emptive attack, clearing the way for the general offensive.⁶⁵

Whilst offensive action was encouraged in southern sector, on 22nd June Tukhachevsky had ordered 15th and 4th Armies, which were involved in protracted battles along their front, to withdraw, dig in and conduct energetic reconnaissance to seize prisoners. Troops were to be withdrawn to reinforce divisions for the forthcoming offensive, which was to be completed by 28th June, for the offensive to begin along the front of 4th, 15th and 3rd Armies on 5th July.⁶⁶ On 26th June, the urgency to attack and again relieve South-Western Front was underlined by Kamenev stressing, "...the circumstances taking shape on South-Western Front demand action begins on your front to achieve general results, the circumstances for which already, visibly are favourable."⁶⁷ Tukhachevsky was to attack as soon as possible, whilst the situation remained so. South-Western Front had retaken Kiev on 12th June and Novograd-Volynskii fortified zone further west and maintained pressure on Poland, relieving Western Front and allowing Tukhachevsky to reinforce and prepare for the general offensive.⁶⁸ Now Western Front had to attack to retain the initiative won in Ukraine and wrest this back from Poland in Belorussia.

By early July, Tukhachevsky had successfully conducted his reorganisational and reformational work on Western Front, forming 3rd and 4th Armies and Mozyr' Group to compliment 15th and 16th Armies. Whilst doing this, he had also directed Mozyr' Group's occupation of Mozyr', cooperating with 12th Army, and had stabilised the line in the other sectors. He had transformed a weak front, manned by troops low in morale, into a strong eager fighting force. Numbers had risen from 49,474 infantry

⁶⁴ *DGkKA*, pp. docs. 627-628 & 691, pp. 637-38 & 699-701.

⁶⁵ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 58-59 & 224, pp. 59 & 201.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* docs. 56-57, pp. 58-59.

⁶⁷ *DGkKA*, doc. 626, p. 637.

⁶⁸ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, p. 186, footnote; *DGkKA*, docs. 628 & 694, pp. 638 & 701.

and 3,993 cavalry in early May to 80,912 infantry and 10,569 cavalry by 4th July.⁶⁹ The 30,000 recruits Tukhachevsky had informed Kamenev he was hopeful of raising, was exceeded as deserters were rounded up or voluntarily surrendered, to supplement those mobilised. 100,000 people were mobilised and entered the Reserve Army and frontline reinforcement groups, but, as with previous fronts, no time existed for intensive training. New pontoon bridges were constructed to cross the Dvina at Polotsk and the Beresina at Borisov, providing railway crossings and ensuring communications for the Belorussian offensive. Reminiscent of the Civil War, local transport resources were mobilised. 4th Army mobilised 8,000 carts, 15th and 3rd Armies 15,000 each, and 16th Army 10,000. Tukhachevsky recalled that the local population reacted well to this as they were afraid of the Polish invasion.⁷⁰

Belorussian Igumen-Minsk Operation

If the North Caucasus Operation was the archetypal Civil War operation, the Belorussian campaign, which started with the Igumen-Minsk Operation does not lag far behind. If the Polish-Soviet War had ended after this campaign, Tukhachevsky would have been remembered as an undefeated, victorious commander who led sweeping manoeuvre campaigns throughout the Russian Civil War. The Igumen-Minsk Operation was on a bigger scale than the North Caucasus Operation and against an arguably more effective force than the Armed Forces of South Russia in early 1920. The Poles were relatively inexperienced, but were well-equipped and supported by the *Entente*, especially France. They were fighting for their new nation with a nationalism which united them more effectively than Denikin's notion of "Russia, One and Indivisible" had for the lower class troops in his forces.

As with earlier commands, the pre-emptive May offensive gave Tukhachevsky an example to follow, when planning the Igumen-Minsk Operation. The capture of Mozyr' secured Western Front's left flank and the friendly Lithuanian and Latvian and neutral Prussian borders secured the right. This enabled Tukhachevsky to again plan a strong envelopment by the right flank, but with three armies this time - 15th, 3rd and 4th, whilst launching a powerful frontal attack with an enlarged 16th Army guarded

⁶⁹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 119-120 & 129-131.

⁷⁰ Ibid. pp. 127-128.

on the left by Mozyr' Group. In this way, Minsk area and the Poles positioned there were to be encircled and wiped out.

In the right-wing "Gates of Smolensk" Northern Group, Tukhachevsky placed: 4th Army, including 3rd *Kavkor* (Cavalry Corps) - 9,715 infantry and 4,119 cavalry; 15th Army - 23,174 infantry and 2,762 cavalry; 3rd Army - 17,893 infantry and 2,255 cavalry; in total 50,692 infantry and 9,133 cavalry facing 32,600 and 2,200 Polish infantry and cavalry.

In southern sector, Tukhachevsky placed 16th Army - 24,045 infantry and 953 cavalry; Mozyr' Group - 6,105 infantry and 483 cavalry, in total 30,150 infantry and 1,436 cavalry facing 26,800 and 5,200 Polish infantry and cavalry.⁷¹

Tukhachevsky had concentrated almost twice the number of troops on the right wing as the Poles could muster and planned a double envelopment by 4th and 3rd Armies on the right and left flanks, whilst 15th Army pressed from the front to encircle the Poles in the northern sector. 3rd Army would then turn south to cut the Minsk-Molodechno Railway, preventing a Polish retreat from Minsk and encircling the Polish group there, as 16th Army pressed from the front, covered by Mozyr' Group advancing on the left flank.

Tukhachevsky gave final directives on 30th June and 2nd July for the offensive to begin on 4th July. To encircle the Poles in Dokszyce-Głębokie-Germanovichi area, on the right flank 4th Army was to cross and attack with its main forces south of the Western Dvina River and north of Lake Belaia El'na to reach Sharkovshchina-Luzhki by 5th July, whilst 3rd *Kavkor* advanced north of the river, deep into the Polish rear, to cut the path of retreat at Swienciany. 15th Army was to attack down the Polotsk-Molodechno Railway, reaching Parafianowo Station by 6th July, cutting the retreat from Germanovichi to Głębokie. 3rd Army was to attack along the Kasari-Dokszyce highway, attacking the Dokszyce-Parafianowo Station sector, before turning down towards Pleshchenitsy-Minsk.

In Southern sector, 16th Army Commander was to cross the Beresina on the night of 5th-6th July at the River Bobr estuary-River Kleva area, to attack Igumen-Minsk area. Mozyr' Group, after an intervention by Kamenev, had its main task changed from pursuing the Poles along both banks of the River Pripiat' to aid South-Western

⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 129-131.

Front's right flank.⁷² This remained a secondary task, but its main forces were to advance north-west along the Beresina right bank to aid 16th Army's left flank.

Tukhachevsky's final instruction was to not retain many reserves, but attack "...immediately with maximum forces".⁷³ Evidently the earlier conversation with Kamenev had not changed his mind on this tactic.

By 5th July, 16th Army had crossed the River Beresina and reached Baranowicze area and Mozyr' Group, also making good ground, was instructed to alter its direction again, from north-west towards Slutsk area, to directly west towards Pinsk, to cover 16th Army's left flank.⁷⁴ 4th Army had achieved its initial targets and was ordered to cut off the Polish path of retreat to Swieczany at Glębokie area by the night of 6th-7th July. 15th Army was to continue pushing forwards, whilst 3rd Army was to take all measures to cut off the Polish retreat route along the railway in Parafianowo area no later than 6th July.⁷⁵

3rd *Kavkor* occupied Glębokie on 5th July, taking prisoners, whilst 15th Army's 33rd Division reached the line Zhuki-Seslavino and 15th Division reached the line Glębokie-Lawrinowka-Matiąsy, but suffered heavy casualties to command staff and line troops from a Polish counter-attack. 3rd Army occupied its initial target of Dokszyce on 6th July, a day behind schedule, but cut the railway line and forced the Poles northwards, as planned.⁷⁶

Tukhachevsky reported on 7th July that 16th Army was just beginning its offensive, whilst Mozyr' Group had repelled Polish attacks at Kowalewichi and Katsury station and was engaged in battle at the River Ptich'. Weaponry and 3,000 prisoners had been taken, and he felt that 4th Army's envelopment was developing successfully and that the general operation was proceeding well, but did not know which railway the Poles were primarily retreating along. Although agreeing that the first three days of the offensive had developed excellently, Kamenev suggested that 4th Army's envelopment could have been deeper, since moving to Germanowichi would not result in an envelopment. He noted that Tukhachevsky had made

⁷² 1st Cavalry Army occupied Rovno on 4th July, *DkfKA, Tom III*, p. 202.

⁷³ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 60-62, pp. 60-62; *DGkKA*, doc. 629, pp. 638-639 & 806, note 112.

⁷⁴ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 63-64, pp. 62-63.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* doc. 65, pp. 63-64.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* docs. 62 & 66, pp. 61-62 & 64-66; 16th Division is mentioned as part of 15th Army's complement in doc. 66, but is not listed in either *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 142 or in M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", p. 273. This could be an error and should possibly be 15th Division. 33rd division is listed in "Pokhod za Vislu", but not *DkfKA, Tom IV*.

corrections already, but said he felt the tasks involved were unfeasible because it expected infantry to cover 35-40 *versty* in 24 hours. If half of this was achieved, the envelopment would still be deeper. He also asked about 16th Army and remarked that Mozyr' Group should be pushed as it had "disgraced itself a little today".

Tukhachevsky replied that he expected great success from 16th Army because Sollogub had 22,000 troops against 3,000 Poles, who could only be reinforced to around 8-9,000, and that Mozyr' Group was engaged with the greater part of 14th Polish Division. They also discussed Latvia's attitude and agreed that it would view Soviet success favourably and do nothing.⁷⁷

Tukhachevsky and Kamenev were working well as a team again, with the latter ready with suggestions, but leaving the ultimate decision to Tukhachevsky as the man on the spot.

On 9th and 10th July, Tukhachevsky outlined the next stage of the operation. 4th Army was to cut down with its enveloping manoeuvre towards Vilno-Grodno area, behind the Polish troops retreating through Molodechno, and to use the Molodechno-Wilno Railway, as the Poles may have cut the Wilno-Swięcany-Postawy Railway. 15th and 3rd Armies were to occupy Molodechno, from where 3rd Army should help 16th Army southwards at Minsk and 15th Army should advance south-east to cross the River Nieman towards Grodno. 16th Army was to take Minsk from the north and east, then move down the Aleksandrovska Railway to Baranowicze, whilst Mozyr' Group cleared Slutsk and Bobruisk areas south of Minsk and advanced to Baranowicze.⁷⁸ Shvarts outlined the next phase of the operation,

Western Front Commander's basic idea is that the main mass of Western Front forces must be grouped on the right flank and we must conduct our offensive guaranteeing our right flank with the friendly attitude of Lithuania and further along of Eastern Prussia. If the enemy resists mainly in Baranowicze sector, then the enveloping movement of 15th and 3rd Armies must bring the full rout of the enemy forces, concentrated in that sector. If the enemy intends to hold us at the line Krevo-River Beresina, then 4th Army moving to Oszmiana must assist the offensive of 15th and 3rd Armies. Concerning Mozyr' Group, its task remains as before - leave for Slutsk and a further attack to Pinsk.

⁷⁷ Ibid. doc. 66, pp. 64-66.

⁷⁸ Ibid. doc. 68, p. 67.

Army commanders were to base future actions on this and organise their rear accordingly.⁷⁹

Tukhachevsky was unsure where the Poles would make a stand, therefore he issued the general directive and entrusted his army commanders with their own zones. Operational lines were lengthening and an advanced front base was established at Molodechno, as the base of operations advanced to keep up with the frontline, after Molodechno and Minsk were occupied on 11th July. This successfully concluded the Igumen-Minsk Operation and began a period of continuous pursuit operations to clear Belorussia and advance to the Polish border.⁸⁰

Tukhachevsky and Kamenev discussed this on 11th July and Kamenev warned that, after Minsk, the way eastwards from Lida was an area like Polesia, limiting movement between Lida and Słonim and perhaps temporarily separating Western Front in two. Therefore, Tukhachevsky should consider local natural conditions. Tukhachevsky replied that 4th, 15th and 3rd Armies were guaranteed on the right flank by Lithuania and Eastern Prussia and were moving north of the Nieman-Beresina marshes. However, until Grodno, the Nieman was not a serious obstacle in many places. 16th Army was advancing along the Aleksandrovsk road, but for the main attack Tukhachevsky considered this latter to be disadvantageous because it would have to advance with inverted flanks.⁸¹

On 12th July, Tukhachevsky ordered the pursuit and annihilation of Polish forces, who were retreating along the whole front, setting targets to be reached by 17th July. 4th Army was to take Orana railway junction; 15th Army, Zyrmuny area; 3rd Army, Lida-Lake Glukhoe area; 16th Army, Baranowicze area; Mozyr' Group, Timkovichi-Semezhevo-Wyzna-Starobino area, continuing to attack with the left flank along the River Pripiat'. Deep raids by cavalry to secure communications and maintain offensive momentum were used again as the cavalry of 4th, 15th and 3rd Armies moved forwards to take the crossings over the River Nieman.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid. doc. 69, pp. 67-68. Nikolai Nikolaevich Shvarts was Western Front Chief-of-Staff from 25th February-30th September 1920, *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 530.

⁸⁰ *DkfKA, Tom III*, pp. 66 & 67.

⁸¹ *DGkKA*, doc. 630, pp. 639-640.

⁸² *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 70, pp. 68-69.

Diplomatic Influences

On 12th July, the *RSFSR* and Lithuania signed a peace agreement which gave Vilno to Lithuania and secured the Lithuanian Army's cooperation against Poland. This was crucial for the Western Front offensive as it secured the right flank of the northern sector until East Prussia.

Diplomatic affairs played a crucial role in the Polish-Soviet War at this point. Protracted peace negotiations had continued throughout the conflict. The Soviets had offered terms as the Poles advanced in late May/early June, but now the Poles, retreating rapidly in both Belorussia and Ukraine, pressed for a peaceful settlement. The British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, intervened at this point with the suggestion for a border to be drawn and hostilities to end. What became known as the Curzon Line ran along the border of the ethnic Poland Congress Kingdom and the Tsarist Empire.⁸³ Curzon's note was wired to Moscow, leading to the pivotal political decision whether or not to continue attacking into ethnic Polish territory or stop advancing, pull back to this line, and sign a peace treaty with Poland. With hindsight, the Soviets should perhaps have sought peace to end the six years of the Great War and Civil War, but this is where the Soviet view of the conflict comes into focus. Had the Soviets viewed it as a national war, they would perhaps have halted, settling their national border and gaining a chance to re-build the Soviet state. However, the Polish-Soviet War was not viewed in these terms by Lenin, the majority of the Communist hierarchy or by Tukhachevsky and the Red Army leadership. They were engaged in a war with the "bourgeois" Polish Government and wanted to spread revolution on the point of bayonets into Europe. However, indecision still existed.

On 12th-13th July, Lenin contacted Stalin in Kharkov, informing him of Curzon's note and that a peace conference could be held in London between representatives of Soviet Russia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and East Prussia. Wrangel was also invited to London to meet Curzon separately to discuss the fate of his army and a suggested peace settlement between Wrangel and Soviet Russia. By this point Wrangel was looking to evacuate the remnants of the White movement from Crimea.

⁸³ The border was to run through Grodno, Ialovka, Nemirov, Brest-Litovsk, Dorogusk, Ustilug and Krylov with Poland receiving Galicia between Przemyśl and Rava-Ruskaia to the Carpathian Mountains and Russia gaining everything to the east, but having to withdraw the Red Army a further 50 kms east of the line.

He knew his forces would stand little chance once the Polish-Soviet War was over and the Red Army could concentrate against him. Lenin asked Stalin how the offensive was progressing against Wrangel, adding that he felt Curzon was trying to cheat the Soviets out of gaining Crimea.⁸⁴ Lenin was canvassing the opinions of those in the frontline areas to aid discussions in Moscow. He also telegraphed Sklianskii,

Comrade Sklianskii! International circumstances, especially the proposal of Curzon (annexation of Crimea for peace with Poland, line Grodno-Białystok), demands *furious* quickening of the offensive into Poland.

Is this happening? Everything? Energetically?⁸⁵

From this, it is clear that Lenin wished the offensive to be driven on as quickly as possible against Poland. The more territory the Soviets could conquer, the better terms they could demand in peace negotiations, but this also reflected the mistrust of the Communists towards the Curzon Note and Polish peace proposals. The Soviets were worried these were delaying tactics to allow the Poles to regroup, receive new equipment and weaponry from the *Entente*, and renew their offensive. The Soviets were advancing across the whole European theatre, but Moscow and the Supreme Command knew that this would become more difficult as they progressed further towards Poland and away from their supply bases and secure rear. If the Soviets were to defeat Poland and foment European revolution, as well as securing the Soviet Western border, they would have to press on as vigorously as possible. This matched the need for the continuous offensive theory which Tukhachevsky had utilised so successfully during the Civil War. The Soviets had to keep pushing, giving the Poles no respite, but would the Red Army receive the support of the workers and peasants in the areas they conquered, to gain the supplies and recruits necessary, to keep the offensive moving? This was the crucial question surrounding the Red Army's military capabilities. However, the political decision was the one which governed whether or not the offensive proceeded, not Tukhachevsky acting independently, as suggested by Fiddick.⁸⁶

The final decision was taken in Moscow and Lenin informed Stalin and Smilga on South-Western and Western Fronts by telegram on 17th July. Peace negotiations were

⁸⁴ *L-Vp*, doc. 490, pp. 248-249.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* doc. 491, p. 249; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 71, p. 69.

⁸⁶ T. Fiddick, *Russia's Retreat From Poland, 1920: from permanent revolution to peaceful coexistence*, (London: 1990), p. 141-142.

rejected by the Central Committee on Lenin's recommendation and the offensive continued.⁸⁷

Pursuit Operations

There had been no break in the offensive, despite the diplomatic manoeuvres. On 13th July, Kamenev directed Tukhachevsky and Egorov that current circumstances demanded they push on, seizing as much territory as possible, whilst pursuing the Polish troops and preventing them establishing "favourable lines".⁸⁸

By favourable lines, Kamenev was referring to the German Great War trenches and the Rivers Nieman and Szczara, to which the Poles had retreated. On 14th July, Tukhachevsky, on Kamenev's advice, directed 3rd and 16th Armies through the forested-marshy areas of the River Nieman running through the German trenches, since the area was similar to the Polesian marshes, and passable. Sollogub was to mass reserves on his right flank and cooperate with 3rd Army to breakthrough the German trenches, bypassing and enveloping the fortified areas.⁸⁹

This was an ideal opportunity to try out manoeuvre warfare against entrenched positions to achieve a swift, decisive breakthrough, avoid positional warfare and allow the continuous offensive to develop. Tukhachevsky had sufficient troops for such an operation and an envelopment of the Polish left flank by 4th Army, combined with the above movements, forced the Poles back from the German trench line, which had endured for so long in the Great War.⁹⁰ Its defensive potential was much lower than before, but the principle of allowing no time for organising defence or reinforcement was working.

On 17th July, 3rd Army occupied Lida, the railway junction connecting the lines from Wilno and Molodechno to Baranowicze and an important target before Grodno. The next day, Tukhachevsky directed the next stage of the Belorussian Operation. 4th Army was to cross the River Nieman with its main forces south of Grodno no later than 21st July and 15th Army was to cross the Nieman a day later, with Tukhachevsky's reserve, 5th Rifle Division, to concentrate by 21st July in Myto-Lida

⁸⁷ *L-Vp*, doc. 492, p. 250; Lenin said the decision had been taken in a Central Committee meeting called after receiving the Curzon Note, A. Richardson, p. 139.

⁸⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 631, p. 640.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* doc. 632, p. 641; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 72, pp. 69-70.

area. 3rd Army was to cross the Nieman on 22nd July with its main forces at Mosty-Orlia and with its left flank take Vseliub, continuing its attack south of the Nieman. 16th Army, breaking through the German trenches, was to pursue the Poles, cross the River Szczara with its main forces north of Słonim no later than 22nd July and use 2nd Rifle Division from Tukhachevsky's reserve, for attacking Korelichi-Novogrudok sector. Mozyr' Group was to take Pinsk in the next few days.⁹¹ Conducting these movements, 3rd *Kavkor* and 16th Army occupied Grodno and Baranowicze on 19th July and Mozyr' Group captured Pinsk on 23rd July.⁹²

Acting on the political decision of 17th July, three days later Kamenev directed all other Soviet Fronts to render all possible help to South-Western and Western Fronts. He directed Tukhachevsky, Egorov and Northern Front's 7th Army to pursue the Poles and maintain the pressure, ignoring border constraints suggested by the Curzon Note. Egorov was to prepare reserves in case of Rumanian intervention, but ensure no measures were taken which Rumania could interpret as aggressive, whilst Tukhachevsky and Odintsov were to block Latvian and Finnish troops if they attempted to intervene.⁹³ All measures were to be taken to reinforce armies with men and horses, and cavalry was to be prepared for operations for the next three months.⁹⁴ This signalled the end of the Belorussian Operation and the beginning of the push beyond the Curzon Line into ethnographic Poland.

The Drive for Warsaw

The swift execution of the Belorussian Operation ensured that Western Front routed the Polish forces and pushed them back to Poland within three weeks. Tukhachevsky had regained the territory lost to Poland since 1919. As Western Front advanced, mobilisation was again conducted on the move. The addition of 30,000 new recruits from liberated Belorussia showed support for the Red Army advance, as did German Spartacists and workers crossing the Prussian border to join the advance, who were formed into a German infantry brigade. This would have convinced

⁹⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", p. 140.

⁹¹ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 74, pp. 68 & 70-71.

⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 69-71.

⁹³ Former Tsarist Major-General Sergei Ivanovich Odintsov (1874-1920) commanded 7th Army of Northern Front from 17th November 1919-30th July 1920.

⁹⁴ *DGkKA*, docs. 633-634, pp. 641-643.

Tukhachevsky and the Red leadership that class warfare methods were working, with the international working class joining the Red Army to fight.⁹⁵

However, the Belorussian Operation was not an unmitigated success. Despite 3rd *Kavkor* rapidly advancing on the right flank, the movement of the other forces had not been quick enough to complete encirclement and annihilation of the Polish troops - Tukhachevsky's ultimate objective. The Poles had been able to retreat, holding the Soviets temporarily at the German trench line and behind the Rivers Nieman and Szczara. Although routed again by envelopments of their positions, they managed to extricate most of their troops. It became a matter of where the Poles would stand and fight.

Conducting continuous pursuit operations from mid-July to mid-August, Tukhachevsky reached the outskirts of the Polish capital of Warsaw and seemed on the cusp of another momentous victory, but a massive Polish counter-offensive completely split and routed Western Front, pushing it back to its 4th July starting positions. Various factors combined to cause the Soviet offensive to fail and, whilst examining the conduct of the operation, I shall highlight these to show where it went wrong, before discussing which factors were more significant.

Kamenev's strategy for the campaign against Poland involved Western and South-Western Fronts advancing independently within their theatres until the capture of Brest-Litovsk, which occurred on 1st August.⁹⁶ At this point, Tukhachevsky was to take command of all Soviet forces in a massed offensive to wipe out the Polish Armies. The Western Front operation to swing around Warsaw from the right, encircling and wiping out the Polish forces, was the main operation. Egorov was to support Western Front's left flank with 12th Army and draw Polish forces to the Ukrainian theatre, but to be prepared, upon switching to Tukhachevsky's command, to move north-westwards towards Warsaw, to protect Western Front's northern envelopment, from the south.

The operation eventually centring on Warsaw was due to the Poles withdrawing and grouping their troops there, not because the Soviets planned to take the political

⁹⁵ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "The March Beyond the Vistula", J. Pilsudski, *The Year 1920*, pp. 242-243. Section 8 of "Pokhod za Vislu" entitled "Exporting the revolution" is omitted from *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*. It was also apparently omitted from the Polish version, also published in 1964. It is included in the version published in "The Year 1920", pp. 241-244. The Soviets must have found the idea of exporting revolution on the points of bayonets, which underlay the Warsaw offensive, too sensitive to include in the 1964 edition.

target of Warsaw. Kamenev and Tukhachevsky aimed to destroy the Poles militarily in the field, wiping out their armies.

For the Soviet strategy to work, Tukhachevsky and Egorov had to cooperate fully, having confidence in each other and a belief in the joint strategy. In July however, this appeared stretched already. Budennyi had been unhappy at the delay in launching the Belorussian offensive, whilst Tukhachevsky conducted reorganisation. On 19th July, however, Tukhachevsky informed Kamenev that 1st Cavalry Army was perhaps being employed wrongly by Egorov. This was reminiscent of Budennyi complaining about Shorin on Caucasian Front. Tukhachevsky stated,

Before leaving I wanted to share several thoughts with you. Circumstances on South-Western Front concern me - I wonder how South-Western Front has not tattered Budennyi's army. Budennyi occupies a front of 80-100 *verst* that is totally unusual and altogether disadvantageous for the action of cavalry. Continuous stubborn battle can break up this mighty cavalry force. It seems to me that it would follow immediately to swap some infantry units for Budennyi and give the Cavalry Army three-five days rest, after that throw it into battle in one sector without specifying demarcation lines. Apart from that, learning of the difficulties which the cavalry has met in breaking through the German trenches, it would be possible to think about a Cavalry Army attack in a south-western direction in order to bypass the fortified area, weakly defended by the Poles and further to take the flanks of the Poles, similar to Gai's Cavalry Corps.⁹⁷

Kamenev replied that 24th Rifle Division had already swapped with 1st Cavalry Army and the latter would be used in a south-western direction without limit of area or demarcation lines.⁹⁸

Whether this decision had anything to do with Tukhachevsky's telegram is unclear. If the decision had already been taken, it probably did not. However, because 1st Cavalry Army was transferred further south to attack south-westwards, this moved it away from Western Front towards Lwów area, where it was involved when Tukhachevsky demanded its transfer to help Mozyr' Group later. He evidently did not have this in mind at this point, but perhaps regretted speaking up about it later. It also raises questions about Tukhachevsky's and Egorov's relationship. Egorov would not have been impressed to learn that Tukhachevsky was questioning his decision-making and this possibly gives some indication of the level of trust Tukhachevsky held in Egorov's abilities. Did this effect their cooperation?

⁹⁶ *DkfKA, Tom III*, p. 73, note.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* doc. 75, pp. 71-72.

On 22nd and 23rd July, Kamenev directed the offensive to continue, stressing that current circumstances demanded an energetic pursuit towards Warsaw and the final defeat of the Poles. The line of Łomża-Brest-Litovsk was to be reached no later than 4th August and the line of Przasnysz-Novogeorgiewsk and south along the River Wisła to Novo-Aleksandrov, including the capture of Warsaw, no later than 12th August. Western Front's right flank should not cross the Eastern Prussian border and 12th Army should advance to the front Kovel'-Wladimir-Wolynski by 4th August, protecting Western Front's left flank. 1st Cavalry Army and 14th Army were to take Lwów-Rawa-Ruskaia by 29th July and the River San crossings at Siniawa-Przemyśl area.⁹⁹ These set the tone for Kamenev's directives over the next few weeks, constantly urging swift and energetic action, whilst conditions were ripe to attack.

By 23rd July, 4th Army had crossed the River Nieman and 3rd and 16th Armies had crossed the River Szczara. Tukhachevsky directed the offensive to continue with the line Ostrołęka-Ostrów-Kossow-Droginin-Bela-Włodawa to be reached no later than 3rd August. He ordered his reserve, 5th Division, to return to 3rd Army, indicating that all forces were to be thrown into the attack again.¹⁰⁰

Kamenev and Tukhachevsky had met in Minsk on 23rd July to discuss operations. The former reported to Sklianskii that troop morale was high, the breakthrough of the line of the Rivers Nieman and Szczara meant the Poles had no more natural defensive lines upon which to hold the Soviets and the operation could be completed within three weeks.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the target for defeating the Polish armies was mid-August.

From 27th July-1st August, 16th Army and Mozyr' Group advanced on Brest-Litovsk. Tukhachevsky directed 16th Army to isolate Brest-Litovsk from Piszczats area to the north and Mozyr' Group to isolate it from Włodawa area and occupy it, whilst 12th Army supported in Kovel' area on the left flank.¹⁰²

Brest-Litovsk was captured on 1st August and the same day Tukhachevsky directed Northern Group to encircle and annihilate the Polish forces dug in before the River Narew marshes. 4th Army was to press down from the north and 3rd Army to

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 740, endnote 14.

⁹⁹ *DGkKA*, doc. 635, pp. 643-644; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 260, p. 227.

¹⁰⁰ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 76, p. 72.

¹⁰¹ *DGkKA*, doc. 636, p. 644.

¹⁰² *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 77-78 & 273, pp. 73 & 238.

push up from the south, whilst 15th Army continued to move forwards.¹⁰³ Tukhachevsky had ordered a double envelopment, which succeeded in forcing the River Narew by 3rd August, as the Poles had to retreat again to avoid encirclement.

South-Western Front's advance was slowing, with 1st Cavalry Army and 14th Army encountering fierce resistance in Lwów area.¹⁰⁴ However, Kamenev urged both Fronts onwards on 30th July, insisting the Poles were on the brink of collapse and could sue for peace. He stated that this would only be accepted if they could be sure the Poles would not use the breathing-space to rebuild their forces for further action and stressed that the Polish forces must be annihilated before any negotiations started.¹⁰⁵ This was the typical attitude shown to peace negotiations by both sides during the conflict.

The military offensive was augmented from 2nd August, when Northern Group captured the town of Białystok. The warm welcome for the Red Army from the inhabitants of the town and area encouraged the creation of a Polish Revolutionary Committee (*Polrevkom*). This was to oversee the political-agitational side of the offensive now that the Soviets were on Polish soil.¹⁰⁶ It became very influential in determining the reaction of the Polish population to the Soviet advance and levels of support. The *Polrevkom* issued a "Manifesto to the Polish Working Peoples of the Towns and Countryside" on 30th July and on 3rd August, Lenin instructed Smilga and Tukhachevsky to use all measures possible for distributing this, including aircraft.¹⁰⁷ This was the beginning of the *Polrevkom*'s agitation offensive and illustrates one of the more common uses for aircraft in the Russian Civil War - the dropping of political literature.

With Brest-Litovsk captured, Kamenev directed, "...the administration for all armies continuing to move towards the River Wisła, to be in the hands of Western Front Commander, ie, transfer in the next few days of 12th and 1st Cavalry Armies from South-Western Front to... Western Front Commander." Tukhachevsky and

¹⁰³ Ibid. doc. 79, p. 74.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. docs. 269 & 272, pp. 235 & 237-238.

¹⁰⁵ *DGkKA*, doc. 638, p. 645

¹⁰⁶ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 275, p. 239. On 30th July, Egorov reported Western Front had occupied Białystok, suggesting that it was taken the previous day. Members of the *Polrevkom* included several influential Polish Bolsheviks, including J. Marchlewski, F. Dzierżyński, Head of the *Cheka*, F. Kon, E. Próchniak and I. Unszlicht. Dzierżyński and Unszlicht were also members of Western Front *RVS* from 9th August-10th September 1920 and 11th December 1919-12th April 1921 respectively, *DkfKA*, *Tom IV*, p. 530.

¹⁰⁷ *L-Vp*, doc. 498, p. 254.

Egorov were to ensure the close cooperation of Mozyr' Group and 12th Army, whilst Tukhachevsky was to send enough forces to Lublin-Kholm area to help 12th Army reach the River Bug. Tukhachevsky was to establish communications with 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army, whilst Egorov was to transfer them quickly.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the order for all forces to come under Tukhachevsky's overall command had clearly been given on 2nd August.

Kamenev also instructed Tukhachevsky to transfer two divisions from 12th Army to the Wrangel Front to relieve the pressure there. Tukhachevsky insisted this was impossible "...in view of strengthening enemy resistance and its constant strengthening by units of the volunteer army formed in Warsaw area and also losses which have resulted from continuous battles and general tiredness of the troops".¹⁰⁹ Despite assuming overall command, Tukhachevsky had to fight to retain his forces. Western Front was still advancing well, but moving further from its supply bases and reinforcements each day, whilst the retreating Poles were now within their heartland and gaining fresh forces daily. Tukhachevsky did not want to give up any troops, indeed he wanted and needed more.

Fiddick suggests this episode was the beginning of Tukhachevsky's "independent actions" which led to the Battle of Warsaw and that he disobeyed direct orders by not transferring the divisions.¹¹⁰ However, this was just another case of Supreme Commander and Front Commander haggling over troops, which had occurred on every front with every commander, during the Civil War. Nothing unusual stands out about this exchange and Kamenev took no action because Tukhachevsky said he needed the divisions. Fiddick appears to have viewed events purely from the perspective of the Polish campaign without taking into account Red Army leadership dynamics.

South-Western Front was also struggling by this point, as its advance stuttered at Lwów, and Egorov tried to coordinate the Wrangel Front simultaneously. On 2nd August, the *Politburo* decided to split South-Western Front in two, leaving South-Western Front under Egorov to fight Poland and creating South-Eastern Front against

¹⁰⁸ *DGkKA*, doc. 639, p. 646.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 806, endnote 115.

¹¹⁰ T. Fiddick, pp. 141-142.

Wrangel.¹¹¹ This sparked some debate between Lenin and Stalin, with the latter disputing the decision.¹¹² The Front did not split until September when Frunze became Southern Front Commander,¹¹³ but this was too late to allow Egorov to concentrate on Poland. Vital time and resources were diverted to the Wrangel Front which could have been used against Poland.

Meanwhile, Tukhachevsky ordered Western Front to press on. With Polish reinforcements being introduced against Northern Group's right flank, on 3rd and 4th August Tukhachevsky directed 4th Army to attack north of the River Narew with at least three rifle divisions and 3rd Army to attack north of the River Bug with its main forces. Pushing the armies north-eastwards would take on the stronger Polish sector and with Mozyr' group attacking westwards to assist 12th Army, Western Front was to reach the line Przasnysz-Wyszków-Siedlce-Parczew, no later than 8th August.¹¹⁴

Tukhachevsky was expecting 12th Army to continue advancing westwards and 1st Cavalry Army to move north-westwards to aid Western Front's left flank, but on 3rd August, Kamenev advised Egorov to direct 12th Army to Wladimir-Wolynski area north of Lwów to help 1st Cavalry Army, which was involved in heavy fighting. Therefore, on 4th and 7th August, whilst instructing 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army to establish communications with Mozyr' Group, Egorov directed 12th Army to attack Wladimir-Wolynski area and then southwards to Kholm, Rava-Russkaia and Tomashov. This meant 12th Army was moving away from Mozyr' Group and not covering its left flank. 1st Cavalry Army was to be withdrawn into reserve and regroup for transfer to Western Front, once 12th Army relieved it, and 14th Army was to transfer northwards with it, but this all delayed Tukhachevsky receiving any forces to guard the weak left flank.¹¹⁵

Egorov was complying with Kamenev's directives at this point, but was in the difficult position of trying to transfer troops which were engaged in combat. 1st Cavalry Army was the formation which Tukhachevsky wanted on his left flank as this would have given him a cavalry force on each wing, but for this, 12th Army had to

¹¹¹ This had previously been undertaken by South-Western Front's 13th Army and Caucasian Front under Gittis in Kuban.

¹¹² *L-Vp*, docs. 496-497, pp. 252-253.

¹¹³ *DkfKA*, *Tom IV*, p. 533. Frunze oversaw the final defeat of Wrangel from 21st September-10th December 1920.

¹¹⁴ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 81-82, pp. 75-76.

¹¹⁵ *DGkKA*, docs. 701 & 640, pp. 707 & 647; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 284-285 & 289-290, pp. 245-246 & 248-249.

swap with 1st Cavalry Army, moving away from Mozyr' Group, leaving an uncovered gap.

Moscow's concern at South-Western Front's faltering progress was shown on 4th August when Lenin asked Stalin why Budennyi was "hesitating". Stalin reported that the Polish Lithuanian, Lutsk and Galician Groups had attacked in Brody area, preventing 1st Cavalry Army moving on Lwów, and the latter was fatigued and in need of rest.¹¹⁶

Another problem associated with the transfers was the providing and setting-up of sufficient communications. On 7th August, Tukhachevsky informed Kamenev that he would need help to organise the rear and communications for the three South-Western Front armies transferring to Western Front. He asked for a supply base to be established and for the three armies not to be stripped of depot battalions and communications resources upon leaving South-Western Front jurisdiction, especially telegraph construction and work companies. An operational point would be needed in South-Western Front area to provide communications until direct links with Tukhachevsky in Minsk could be established, which could take ten to fourteen days. Therefore, Tukhachevsky expected Egorov to send all communications resources with the armies. The lengthening of supply lines is also shown by Tukhachevsky asking for South-Western Front to provide equipment until it could be brought from the depots to the intermediate bases.¹¹⁷

The next day, Kamenev agreed to these conditions, but said an entire operational group might be better than an operational point, interestingly commenting that he wished Frunze could have reached the area quickly enough to lead this, but not indicating he wanted Frunze to replace Tukhachevsky, as Fiddick suggests.¹¹⁸ He instructed Tukhachevsky to pick a group leader from his army commanders. However, Egorov stated that it would be impossible for him to provide all these communication resources. He needed them for the remainder of South-Western Front against Wrangel and did not have the apparatus to set up an operational point, but agreed that each army must retain its reserve units and apparatus and South-Western Front could be an intermediary point for armies transferring from the centre.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *L-Vp*, doc. 499, pp. 254 & 368, endnote 303.

¹¹⁷ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 83, pp. 76-77.

¹¹⁸ T. Fiddick, p. 207.

¹¹⁹ *DGkKA*, doc. 642, pp. 648-649; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 292, p. 250.

Insufficient communications was a problem, especially since Tukhachevsky would not have the ten to fourteen days necessary for proper organisation, even if all resources were available immediately. Communications failures were to contribute to the Soviet defeat.

To compound this, renewed offensive action by Wrangel into South-Western Front's underbelly forced Kamenev to cancel the transfer of units from Caucasian Front, cutting reinforcements available for Western Front later.¹²⁰

With these problems mounting, Kamenev and Tukhachevsky disagreed over the latter's direction of attack. Tukhachevsky ordered 15th Army to advance north-westwards, moving north of the River Bug along with 3rd and 4th Armies, to create a strong right-wing group to envelop the Polish forces behind the Bug, before Warsaw. This placed only 16th Army on the east bank of the Bug and Mozyr' Group on its left. Tukhachevsky was acting further against the Polish reinforcements he had said were being introduced against the right flank and calculating on help from South-Western Front's forces, but on 6th and 8th August Kamenev pointed out that 16th Army could not depend on help from 12th Army because of the latter's forced move towards Wladimir-Wolynskii-Tomashov area. He continued that Tukhachevsky's grouping for crossing the Bug was incorrect and wondered if Tukhachevsky had considered how serious an obstacle it posed with the Poles dug in behind it. He stressed the taking of the Bug was more important than the right wing achieving an even deeper and longer envelopment and warned that the concentration of Northern Group north of the Bug endangered 16th Army to a similar fate as during the first Minsk Operation, when it gained the bridgehead over the Beresina, but couldn't hold it through lack of support. He recommended that 3rd Army helped 16th Army, in Siedlce area and that Tukhachevsky should bear in mind that 16th Army advancing under his current demarcation lines, would come up against Ivangorod fortress. He also disagreed with Tukhachevsky's notion that the transfer of the South-Western Front armies would produce more decisive action and better results, as he did not believe South-Western Front had held Tukhachevsky up or lagged behind his line, which had not acted decisively enough anyway.¹²¹

¹²⁰ *DGkKA*, doc. 758, pp. 748-749.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* docs. 641-642, pp. 647-649.

Kamenev had doubts over Tukhachevsky's tactics and felt he should concentrate on moving his own forces, instead of complaining about South-Western Front's progress. However, Tukhachevsky did not heed Kamenev's advice. In final discussions on 10th August, he informed Kamenev that between 3rd and 9th August the Poles had increased their troops from 50,000 to an estimated 70,000, but had grouped most of them in the north, transferring them away from South-Western Front. He reported he had decided to group 16th Army further north, as he did not want to cross the Wisła with two attack groups, meaning that he had acted contrary to Kamenev's advice. The four Western Front armies were now attacking north of Warsaw, with 16th Army acting alone, whilst the other three swept round to envelop from the right. Mozyr' Group was acting on the left flank in a very isolated position, but 58th Division was transferred to it.

Kamenev reiterated his warning about leaving 16th Army to face 70,000 Polish troops alone and that no help would be forthcoming from South-Western Front, as Polish forces remained there. He stated that a quick rout over the Bug would be better than a long manoeuvre, was worried about 16th Army's exposure and did not agree that Polish forces had transferred northwards. However, Tukhachevsky insisted that the main Polish forces, up to 40,000 troops, were north of the Bug, with captured prisoners confirming this. Kamenev said he felt more inclined to believe the Poles had retreated behind the Bug because of the overhanging Western Front right flank, but concluded that, since Tukhachevsky was so categorically insistent on this point and had more detailed knowledge, although he could not agree with this from information he had at Western Front HQ in Smolensk, Kamenev would give Tukhachevsky freedom of action. Kamenev still instructed Tukhachevsky to quickly rout the Poles, wiping out their main forces, but said he was not keen on the depth of Tukhachevsky's strategy, since it introduced the danger that there would be insufficient time to employ it.¹²²

Therefore, Kamenev expressed severe doubts over Tukhachevsky's tactics, but eventually gave him freedom of action, as he had done in the past, trusting his commander on-the-spot. Kamenev anticipated correctly where the Polish counter-attack would be made, but was willing to trust Tukhachevsky, as he had done in the past with great success. The offensive had to continue swiftly to have any chance of

¹²² Ibid. docs. 643-644, pp. 649-652.

success and on 7th August Lenin urged it on, commenting that peace talks continued in London and a Polish delegation was travelling to Russia, but the military offensive was the key factor. He noted "Altogether, much depends already on Warsaw and its fate".¹²³ Clearly worried however, he contacted Smilga, Dzierżyński and Marchlewski on 9th August to find out the mood of the Polish peasantry and Warsaw workers.¹²⁴ To influence peace negotiations the offensive had to proceed quickly, but the Polish population they were advancing to liberate had to support the Red Army. The possibility of the bourgeois and landowning Poles creating nationalist resistance concerned the Soviet leadership, as did possible intervention by the *Entente*. The Baltic, Black and Azov Sea Fleets were put on full alert on 8th and 9th August in case of *Entente* naval intervention.¹²⁵

Genuine fears existed over foreign intervention and Kamenev informed Tukhachevsky that the *Entente* were reportedly supporting Poland, with British ships en route to Riga to intervene through Latvia and Lithuania; France by rail through Germany; and Italy through Austria, Czechoslovakia and Rumania.¹²⁶

Therefore, despite mounting problems, the need to seize the opportunity offered demanded the offensive continue without respite. On 10th August, Tukhachevsky ordered the final assault on Warsaw. 4th Army, holding the right flank, was to occupy Iablonov-Graudents-Torn area, whilst crossing the Wisła with the main part of its forces no later than 15th August in Vlotslavsk-Dobrzhin area. 15th and 3rd Armies were to cross the Wisła no later than 15th August, with the latter advancing from Zalubitse area, to attack Praga area and push the Poles from Warsaw, which would be retreating before 16th Army. 16th Army was to cross the River Wisła with its main forces north of Warsaw on 14th August. Mozyr' Group was to take Kozenitsy-Ivangorod area on 14th August. Tukhachevsky concluded by emphasising that political circumstances demanded the immediate rout of the Polish forces.¹²⁷

On 1st August, Western Front forces numbered 117,280 frontline troops, although Tukhachevsky estimated active troop numbers to be as low as 46,279 infantry and 6,484 cavalry with 31,502 in Northern Group, 10,584 in 16th Army and only 4,193 in

¹²³ *L-Vp*, doc. 502, p. 255; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 288, p. 247; The Polish peace delegation passed through the Soviet lines on 10th August, en route to Minsk, *L-Vp*, doc. 504, p. 256.

¹²⁴ *L-Vp*, doc. 503, pp. 255-256; *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 85, p. 78.

¹²⁵ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 84 & 291, pp. 77-78 & 249.

¹²⁶ *DGkKA*, pp. 806-807, endnote 117.

¹²⁷ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 86, pp. 78-79.

Mozyr' Group. On 25th August, Polish forces numbered 123,320 infantry and 18,830 cavalry, but Tukhachevsky's estimate is 45,400 infantry and 5,855 cavalry with 29,600 in the north and 15,800 south of the Bug. Piłsudski estimated the figures to be 130,000-150,000 Soviets and 120,000-180,000 Poles.¹²⁸ The Soviet and Polish figures are fairly comparable and probably do provide a good indication of the total effectives of both sides. Tukhachevsky based his figures on troops involved in the actual frontline battles, with those too far away to influence the fighting, ie. reserves, not included. In all three sets of figures the Soviets and Poles are quite evenly matched. The crucial factor behind the numbers was where the troops of each side were concentrated. Whilst Tukhachevsky had concentrated most of his forces in the right-wing attack group, the majority of Polish troops were not in the northern sector as he had thought, but behind the Bug, south of Warsaw, where Kamenev had predicted the counter-attack would come.

By 11th August, the second day of the attack, Kamenev was expressing concern at apparent Polish strength in the southern sector. He reported that 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army were heading south to attack Lwów, but, since Tukhachevsky had turned his forces northwards, 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army would have to go northwards to prevent a thinning of forces in the centre. Intelligence had revealed that the Poles were not generally retreating behind the Wisła, therefore Kamenev recommended Tukhachevsky take the whole 12th Army for the left wing, not just 58th Division. Tukhachevsky agreed it was essential to move 1st Cavalry Army and 12th Army north, as the Poles were resisting between the Bug and Narew and daily launching counter-attacks. He had communications with 12th Army, but contact was more erratic with 1st Cavalry Army, although he hoped to have more reliable morse communication by 12th August. In the north, 3rd *Kavkor* had taken Mlava and Ciekanów by 9th August, 4th Army had taken Makov and 3rd and 15th Armies were fighting on the railway and road to Wyshków.¹²⁹

Wyshków fell on 12th August and Western Front was advancing despite stiff resistance, but with 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army attacking Lwów and not transferring northwards, the left wing was perilously weak.

¹²⁸ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, pp. 180-181 & 521; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 150-151; J. Piłsudski, *The Year 1920*, p. 52.

¹²⁹ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 87, pp. 79-80.

Kamenev directed Egorov on 11th and 12th August to break off the Lwów attack and move 12th Army to Lublin area to aid Mozyr' Group, which was attacking from Kotsk to Ivangorod on 14th August. 1st Cavalry Army was to move to Zamość-Tomashow-Grubeshow area to aid Tukhachevsky's left flank, and both armies were to transfer to Tukhachevsky's command on 13th and 15th August respectively.¹³⁰

However, when Tukhachevsky contacted Kamenev by Hughes Telegraph at 00.25 hours on 13th August, Kamenev reported that Egorov had ordered 12th Army to attack Rava-Ruskaia, the complete opposite of Kamenev's order. He thought that a misunderstanding must have occurred, but this complicated the transfer. He also related a request by Egorov to retain 6th Cavalry Division of 1st Cavalry Army for use against Wrangel, but agreed with Tukhachevsky that 1st Cavalry Army needed to remain intact for immediate use without reorganisational work. Tukhachevsky urged Kamenev to get Egorov to fulfill his duty to the Soviet offensive, saying that he could send Ermolin down to oversee it, if Petin would not interfere, and demanded that 1st Cavalry Army and 12th Army be transferred immediately and intact with equipment.¹³¹

It appears that Tukhachevsky felt that South-Western Front may have deliberately not fulfilled its orders and the request to retain a division of 1st Cavalry Army probably increased his suspicion that they did not want to transfer it and were stalling.

On 13th August, Kamenev again directed Egorov to transfer 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army fully-equipped at 12.00 hours on 14th August.¹³² However, Egorov replied the same day, reporting that orders No. 4738/op 1041/sh and No. 4752/op 1044/sh had only just been received and decoded, and stating the reasons for the lateness had been discovered.¹³³ These were Kamenev's directives from 11th August to redirect and transfer 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army and for 12th Army to aid Mozyr' Group. The delay meant that Egorov only read the directives on the day he was supposed to transfer 12th Army. Egorov continued in his report that he had dispatched 12th Army's left wing to help Mozyr' Group, but South-Western Front

¹³⁰ *DGkKA*, doc. 705-706, pp. 709-710.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, doc. 645, pp. 652-654, Egorov ordered 1st Cavalry Army to attack Rava-Ruskaia and requested the retention of 6th Cavalry Division on 12th August. Kamenev turned down this request one hour after the discussion with Tukhachevsky, *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 295-296, pp. 251-252; *DGkKA*, doc 708, p. 711; Former Tsarist Colonel Nikolai Nikolaevich Petin (1876-1937) was Chief-of-Staff of South-Western Front.

¹³² *DGkKA*, doc. 709, pp. 711-712.

¹³³ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 298, p. 253.

forces were engaged in their original task to take Lwów and he thought it impossible to stop this and transfer them. However, the delay only partially explains why Egorov ordered South-Western Front to attack Lwów instead of subordinating it to Tukhachevsky. It does not excuse it because Kamenev had ordered the transfer to happen back on 2nd August. It was a costly and critical error for Tukhachevsky's offensive plan. Although Egorov reported that he knew why the orders had arrived late, this is not expanded upon. Therefore, what caused it? Poor communications? Telegraph operators? The answer to this is unknown, but would help clear up the puzzle.

Egorov wrote another directive, relaying Kamenev's instructions to 12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army to transfer to Western Front at 12.00 hours on 14th August, but it was not counter-signed by his political commissar R. I. Berzin until early on 14th August and sent at 04.00 hours, giving little time for either army to withdraw and comply.¹³⁴

It emerged in a Hughes Telegraph conversation with Kamenev on 14th August that Stalin had refused to sign the order. Berzin had also refused, explaining that he was subordinate to Stalin and had already submitted a report to Trotsky and Sklianskii on the matter. Kamenev replied in some disbelief that he did not know why they could not fulfill the order, as it had been decided long before that command of South-Western Front would transfer to Tukhachevsky. Egorov then read a note from Stalin to Kamenev in which Stalin said that Kamenev's order could have been fulfilled on 11th August, when 1st Cavalry Army was in reserve, but it was now involved in battle at Lwów and could not conduct another regrouping to transfer to Western Front, so Stalin had refused to sign the order.¹³⁵

Therefore, 1st Cavalry Army had been withdrawn into reserve and could have moved north, but the delay in receiving and decoding the orders saw it sent back to Lwów and made a transfer virtually impossible.

Tukhachevsky and Kamenev discussed all this by Hughes Telegraph on 15th August and the former agreed to reinforce 12th Army, which had been pushed behind the Bug and lost Grubeshow, with 1,500-2,000 men and then 58th Division. Tukhachevsky then directed the South-Western Front forces on their tasks for shoring

¹³⁴ Ibid. doc. 299, p. 254.

¹³⁵ Ibid. doc. 300, pp. 255-256.

up Western Front's left flank. 12th Army and Mozyr' Group were to attack the Polish Group at Siedlce-Krasnostaw-Kholm from the north and south respectively. He ordered 45th and 47th Divisions to swap with 1st Cavalry Army, which was to move to Ustilug-Wladimir-Wolynski, and 14th Army was to extend its right flank to the demarcation line between Western and South-Western Fronts at Dubno-Toporow.¹³⁶

However, in a Hughes Telegraph conversation on the night of 17th August, Kamenev informed Tukhachevsky that these directives were invalid as only he had signed them, without an *RVS* member's counter-signature. Tukhachevsky disputed this, but Kamenev countered that he had received a note from Minin which said it was only signed by Tukhachevsky.¹³⁷ However, Unsicht wrote to Lebedev, explaining the directives had been signed by Tukhachevsky, the Chief-of-Staff and an *RVS* member, but the copy sent to 1st Cavalry Army by automatic telegraph machine had only one signature. Therefore, communications had broken down again, which further delayed the movement of 1st Cavalry Army to support the left flank.

12th Army and 1st Cavalry Army were finally subordinated to Tukhachevsky at 12.00 hours on 17th August and 14th Army was to follow. Tukhachevsky was eventually being forced to transfer two of his own infantry divisions, 45th and 47th, to swap with 1st Cavalry Army and attack Lwów.¹³⁸ However, this had been a long and protracted affair which could have been completed earlier by the original plan. A combination of confused and delayed dispatches and possibly disagreements amongst the Red Army frontline hierarchy over how the war should be fought, combined with stiff resistance from the small Polish force remaining before Lwów, to prolong the issue. However, as was constantly stressed by Kamenev, Tukhachevsky and Egorov in their orders, speed was essential for the Soviet continuous offensive, as political and military conditions fluctuated, but turned more and more towards Poland as time wore on. The delay in completing the transfers was disastrous for the Soviet offensive.

¹³⁶ *DGkKA*, docs. 648-649, pp. 655-657; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 90-91, pp. 81-82.

¹³⁷ *DGkKA*, doc. 650, pp. 657-59 & 807, endnote 119.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* doc. 710, p. 712; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 301, p. 256. Iona Emmanuilovich Iakir (1896-1937) was to lead the attack on Lwów.

Piłsudski's Counter-Offensive and Tukhachevsky's Retreat

Piłsudski launched a massive counter-offensive on the night of 16th-17th August. Secretly regrouping five divisions into an attack group behind the Wisła, south-east of Warsaw, he struck through the weak Mozyr' Group sector, sweeping aside the few thousand Soviet troops and striking northwards behind 16th Army and Northern Group, to attempt an encirclement of Western Front. Simultaneously, a Polish attack was launched in the north, driving a wedge between 15th and 4th Armies. The attack was a complete surprise to Tukhachevsky, who believed the Polish forces to be crumbling and retreating behind the Wisła, with their main forces still in the northern sector, about to be enveloped by Northern Group.¹³⁹

Kamenev urged Tukhachevsky to press on with the north to south right wing attack, since an envelopment of the Polish left flank may still have thrown the Polish forces off balance and saved the day. However, the overstretched Red communications collapsed under Piłsudski's northward thrust. 16th Army had been reorienting its position southwards to cover the left flank when the attack occurred and Sollogub lost contact with his frontline troops. No report came from the swamped Mozyr' Group. Therefore, Tukhachevsky did not actually learn of the counter-attack until 18th August, by which time the Poles were advancing across the front. Communications were also lost with 4th Army and 3rd *Kavkor*. West of Warsaw and attempting to cross the River Wkra, they were completely cut off. Tukhachevsky ordered them to strike southwards, but with no communications established until 19th August, this did not occur and by this date, the Polish advance prevented their retreat. Communications were also lost with 1st Cavalry Army, which was still attacking Lwów on 19th August, and the left flank received no help.¹⁴⁰

On 20th August, Tukhachevsky ordered 16th, 3rd, 4th and 15th Armies to retreat behind the Rivers Bobr and Narew to stabilise the line and put Kork in command of coordinating the latter three armies in case of further communications loss. However, 4th Army and 3rd *Kavkor*, with their path of retreat blocked by the completed Polish encirclement, despite fighting their way back to Augustów by 25th August, could not cut their way out, and were forced over the Prussian border into internment. 3rd and

¹³⁹ *DGkKA*, doc. 654, p. 662; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 92, pp. 82-83.

15th Armies, fighting fierce rearguard battles to buy time for their isolated comrades, lost half their number. 16th Army, overwhelmed by the Polish right-wing attack, also suffered terrible losses and Mozyr' Group ceased to exist as an operational formation. Its remnants were combined with the remnants of 4th Army and 3rd *Kavkor* on 30th August.¹⁴¹ Soviet losses are evident in troop numbers recorded for 22nd August-15th September. 3rd, 4th, 15th and 16th Armies in total numbered 72,402, a drop of some 45,000 from early August, the majority of whom must be considered casualties. On 22nd September, Lenin actually said 100,000 troops had been lost, taken prisoner or were interned in Prussia, meaning new recruits probably comprised the majority of Western Front's forces by mid-September. The Red Army suffered staggering losses.¹⁴²

Piłsudski's counter-manoeuve bore a striking resemblance to that planned and conducted by Kamenev, Frunze and Tukhachevsky at Buguruslan in 1919, when the Buzuluk attack group had struck from south to north behind Khanzhin's Western Army. However, Piłsudski's superior numbers ensured his manoeuvre was more successful, completing part of its encirclement. Tukhachevsky in hindsight must have admired the manoeuvre. It was the epitome of everything he had been practising and preaching for the previous two years.

However, the Polish operation overall is more comparable to Western Army's Petropavlovsk counter-offensive in September 1919. The Polish attack started from the Wisła, as Kolchak's began at the Ishim. The Poles were able to counter-attack into Tukhachevsky's weak left flank because South-Western Front's advance had not kept pace and exposed it, just as 1st Army of Turkestan Front had not matched 5th Army's advance to Petropavlovsk, exposing 5th Army's right flank to the Siberian Cossack counter-attack. However, Tukhachevsky had made the very mistake for which he had criticised Ol'derogge. Whilst Ol'derogge had concentrated 5th Army's forces on the left flank, leaving the exposed right flank undermanned and ripe for a flanking counter-manoeuve, Tukhachevsky massed his troops on the right flank at Warsaw and left the exposed left flank with only a few thousand troops. Finally, the most striking resemblance was the Polish counter-attack pushing Western Front almost

¹⁴⁰ *DGkKA*, doc. 653, pp. 660-661; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 100 & 308, pp. 87-88 & 261-262; M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", p. 163.

¹⁴¹ *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, docs. 101-102 & 109, pp. 88-89 & 93-94; *DGkKA*, p. 807, endnote 120.

¹⁴² *DkfKA*, *Tom IV*, pp. 186-187; A. Richardson, p. 147.

back to its starting positions of early July around Minsk, as Kolchak had pushed 5th Army back to the Tobol.

Kamenev and Tukhachevsky tried to steady the retreat, with a defensive line envisaged along the River Nieman, but by 23rd August, the retreat was in danger of turning into a rout and Kamenev ordered Tukhachevsky and the army commanders to get it under control, as troops fled without resisting.¹⁴³ It seems likely blocking battalions and *Cheka* would have been over-employed at this point, trying to slow the retreat.

From late August until 18th October, when the armistice was signed between the Soviet Republic and Poland, Tukhachevsky returned once more to reorganisational work under fire, attempting to form defensive lines to hold the Polish advance, whilst regrouping for a renewed offensive. A defensive line was attempted behind the Nieman. Reinforcements eventually arrived through the ruined transport network, as the retreating Soviet frontline moved closer to its bases. Divisional strength was raised to around 6,000 by 15th September and communists drafted in to restore the hardcore of units, stiffened morale, although supply shortages almost led to mutinies.¹⁴⁴

Whilst trying to stabilise and reorganise Western Front, Tukhachevsky typically attempted to attack with 12th and 14th Armies and 1st Cavalry Army, to relieve the northern situation. Fighting still raged around Lwów until late August and on 28th August, Tukhachevsky ordered 1st Cavalry Army, at last withdrawn from Lwów, to attack north-west to Zamość, to reach Lublin and aid the retreating northern armies. This was the manoeuvre Tukhachevsky had envisaged for two weeks before, but now 1st Cavalry Army marched into a Polish trap. Engaging vastly numerically superior Polish forces at Zamość and Komorowo on 31st August, Budennyi was forced to cut his way out to avoid encirclement by a Polish concentric offensive. 6th Cavalry Division alone had faced 13 Polish divisions and, unsurprisingly, the losses suffered in these engagements forced 1st Cavalry Army into retreat, diminishing its effectiveness as a force.¹⁴⁵

The Poles launched a general offensive in the southern sector after this and advanced across the whole of Western Front. However, on 2nd September, the *RVSR*

¹⁴³ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 105, p. 91; *DGkKA*, doc. 665, p. 663.

¹⁴⁴ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 113 & 115, pp. 96-98 & 99-102.

instructed Tukhachevsky to form an attack group to renew the offensive in the northern sector. Conducting reorganisation and regrouping, Tukhachevsky was planning to attack in late September/early October. However, it was Poland's turn to pre-empt the Soviet attack this time. With peace talks beginning in Riga on 21st September, the Poles wished to increase their bargaining position and launched the Battle of the Nieman, pushing the Soviets back from their defensive line in late September.¹⁴⁶

Further efforts to hold the Polish advance at the German trench lines and the River Sczara collapsed when the Lithuanian Army fell back on the right flank, exposing Western Front to a flank envelopment once more and forcing retreat. By mid-October, with the armistice about to be signed, Tukhachevsky was holding a line before the River Beresina after abandoning Minsk on 15th October.¹⁴⁷ The town was regained with the armistice, but Tukhachevsky had been almost pushed back to his starting positions for the July Igumen-Minsk Operation, just as he had been pushed back behind the Tobol from Petropavlovsk. However, the comparison to Civil War operations ended here as, although plans for a renewed offensive were made, despite the armistice, Tukhachevsky never launched another offensive towards Warsaw to retake the lost territory. He had been able to learn from defeat previously to turn it into attack, but not on this occasion. Therefore, why had the Polish campaign turned out so differently from previous Civil War fronts?

Causes of Defeat

In *Pokhod za Vislu*, Tukhachevsky made several criticisms regarding the conduct of the Polish campaign. He slammed the terrible mobilisation and training of *Vserosglavshstab*, which necessitated mobilisation in frontline areas.¹⁴⁸ This echoed the criticism he made of the recruitment apparatus in his May 1918 report. The central system had not improved and it has been shown how Tukhachevsky had to constantly mobilise men. This necessity found its way into his military thinking - the ability of the Red Army to mobilise on the move.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. docs. 112-113, 115 & 311, pp. 96-98, 99-102 & 263.

¹⁴⁶ *DGkKA*, docs. 657, 662-664, pp. 664-665, 668-670; *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 126, 128-131 & 134, pp. 109-110, 110-112 & 114.

¹⁴⁷ *DkfKA, Tom III*, docs. 137, 143, 146, 149 & 157-158, pp. 116-117, 121-123, 125-127 & 132-133.

He also criticised the general staff for gathering inaccurate information on Polish troop placements before Piłsudski's counter-offensive. The general staff believed that Polish forces were still positioned against South-Western Front, but they had actually been transferred northwards. However, Tukhachevsky did not have too much cause for complaint here. As has been shown, he argued with Kamenev over the Polish positions and was also mistaken in his belief that most of the Polish forces were facing Northern Group, when they were actually before the Wisła, waiting to sweep northwards through Mozyr' Group, as Kamenev suggested.

Tukhachevsky also highlighted the poor state of communications, which did indeed influence the battle in several ways. The problems with the telegraph network and loss of communications with several of the armies has been illustrated. Tukhachevsky also mentioned a lack of signalling apparatus. He recalled that the July offensive was the first occasion the Red Army attempted the use of operational centres and signalling units at the front along an organised plan, but the shortages affected the operation's success. Similarly, at Warsaw, communications were affected by signalling apparatus shortages, which made coordination of Western and South-Western Fronts impossible at the crucial point.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, when retreating in September, Tukhachevsky mentioned radios, suggesting Western Front was experimenting with field radio usage.¹⁵⁰ Communications were a major problem and the stretching of operational lines, as the Soviets advanced further from their bases, exacerbated the problems.

Tukhachevsky specifically mentions 4th Army losing communications, but is also critical of 4th Army Commander for not acting independently to attack southwards, behind the northern Polish group. Sergeev was replaced by Shuvaev on 31st July and it is the latter Tukhachevsky criticised for inaction and poor leadership overall. It is unclear why Shuvaev assumed command and Sergeev himself did not mention it in his book. Shuvaev was an ex-Tsarist Lieutenant Colonel, and being an older *voenspetsy*, perhaps did not come up to Tukhachevsky's standards like Gittis et al.¹⁵¹

However, the major reason Tukhachevsky saw for the failure at Warsaw was the delay by South-Western Front to despatch 1st Cavalry Army north-westwards to

¹⁴⁸ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 122 & 126.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 128 & 153.

¹⁵⁰ *DkfKA, Tom III*, doc. 141, pp. 119-120.

¹⁵¹ *DkfKA, Tom IV*, p. 740, endnote 19.

guard his left flank. He criticised South-Western Front's concentration on a task of "local importance", capturing the Galician capital of Lwów, and compared Egorov's and Stalin's actions to those of Rennenkampf in 1914, when he failed to assist Samsonov, resulting in the latter's defeat by Ludendorff.¹⁵²

The fact that Tukhachevsky publicly drew this conclusion has led to suggestions Stalin purged him in 1937 because he had a long memory, bore grudges and eventually repaid Tukhachevsky's allegation. On 19th August 1920, after discovering that the Polish counter-offensive had cut through his weak left flank, Tukhachevsky had immediately criticised Budennyi for his lateness, whilst admitting surprise at the direction of the Polish attack. The day before, Kamenev informed Egorov that his delay in fulfilling the 11th and 12th August orders had proved costly for Western Front.¹⁵³ Therefore, anger towards South-Western Front's actions was vented as the events occurred, but perhaps became more public with Tukhachevsky's lectures. I shall talk more about the likelihood of this being connected to Tukhachevsky's execution in my conclusion, but for now shall examine the accuracy of Tukhachevsky's suggestion, the fact he accepted no blame personally and the accuracy of other accounts.

As the sources show, 1st Cavalry Army was not supporting Mozyr' Group when the Polish counter-offensive occurred. Problems with communications could be blamed for this, but it seems to have been the case that all the problems, where orders concerning the transfers were concerned, were at South-Western Front's end. Egorov had the delay in decoding the 11th and 12th August orders and Tukhachevsky's counter-signed 15th August order managed to reach Egorov with only Tukhachevsky's signature on it. Egorov also wanted to retain at least part of 1st Cavalry Army, which adds fuel to the possibility he stalled on the transfer. On top of this, Stalin refused to obey a direct order from Kamenev, taking it upon himself to decide that 1st Cavalry Army should not be transferred because it was fighting at Lwów. Trotsky later blamed Stalin for his part, agreeing with Tukhachevsky on the former's wish to gain the prize of Lwów. Lenin's assessment of South-Western Front's actions was, "Ach, who would go to Warsaw via Lwów?".

¹⁵² M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pokhod za Vislu", pp. 153-154.

¹⁵³ *DGkKA*, doc. 654, p. 662; *DkfKA*, *Tom III*, doc. 304, pp. 258-259.

An air of suspicion does hang around the delayed or mis-signed orders, but South-Western Front was only attacking Lwów because Kamenev had previously ordered it on 23rd July. 1st Cavalry Army and 14th Army were to capture the town and Rava-Ruskaia by 29th July, but the attack became bogged down because of stiff Polish resistance. This led South-Western Front to be two weeks behind schedule by mid-August, as they were still fighting in this area when Tukhachevsky had reached Warsaw. However, if obeying orders thus far, Egorov seemed to do little to comply with Kamenev's 2nd August order to subordinate his command to Tukhachevsky and transfer his forces northwards. If measures had been taken from this date to swap infantry divisions for 1st Cavalry Army, the latter could have been transferred in time. The fact that this did not occur, even for ten days before the telegram fiasco began, suggests a reluctance to subordinate command. Perhaps dislike of Tukhachevsky's superior position lay at the root of South-Western Front's actions rather than a wish to take Lwów. Either way, South-Western Front *RVS* must take a share of the blame, although Budennyi and his fellow army commanders may be exempt from it.

In Egorov's defence, he did also have to direct 13th Army against Wrangel and screen the Bessarabian border against possible Rumanian incursions. The severity of the Wrangel Front is demonstrated by Moscow prioritising it again on 19th August, even whilst Tukhachevsky was trying to extricate his forces from the Polish encirclement.¹⁵⁴

Hostilities on the Wrangel Front also affected Tukhachevsky, as reinforcements intended for Western Front were re-routed to the Caucasus in August, when Wrangel attacked at the height of the Battle of Warsaw. This meant that Tukhachevsky had less men than he could otherwise have done at Warsaw and also did not receive reinforcements whilst retreating, necessitating local mobilisations once more.

Tukhachevsky did not criticise Kamenev, but the latter has been criticised for his role in the offensive, with Davies claiming that he was "chiefly responsible" and did not lead the offensive firmly enough.¹⁵⁵ However, the offensive had progressed virtually to plan until early August. Criticism of the Soviet offensive claims Western and South-Western Fronts advanced independently of each other, with Tukhachevsky and Egorov even being able to wage their own private wars in their respective

¹⁵⁴ *L-Vp*, pp. 369-370, note 310.

¹⁵⁵ N. Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920*. (London, 1972), p. 219.

theatres. However, the sources show that the two Fronts, although separated geographically and with separate objectives within their own areas, were coordinated by Kamenev. As has been shown, each Front alternately attacked to ease the burden of its neighbour and Tukhachevsky and Egorov both made the importance of this point clear to their army commanders on several occasions. Each knew the importance of ensuring the other was still progressing.

Kamenev conducted the campaign exactly as he had done during the Civil War. He had general plans for actions within his strategy, but whilst giving directives, would readily discuss tactical operations with his front commanders to get the input of the man at the frontline, who had knowledge of prevailing local conditions. This had previously worked effectively and there was nothing unusual in it now. In this way, Kamenev discussed Tukhachevsky's direction of attack to Warsaw in early August, debating the wisdom of the northern envelopment. However, after discussing it with Tukhachevsky and hearing the latter's reasons, he was happy to trust Tukhachevsky's judgement. He had done this before and the results had proven this method to work. His decision to allow Tukhachevsky to decide from his local position and knowledge came from trust of the latter and not, as Fiddick suggests, because he felt he needed to keep Tukhachevsky sweet.¹⁵⁶

This is why an examination of the conduct of the Polish campaign can only be accurately made alongside the other Civil War campaigns. Studying the Polish campaign in isolation precludes an accurate portrayal and understanding of the mechanisms of Red Army leadership. Fiddick and Davies selectively use documents from *DGkKA*, but do not use *DkfKA* alongside these to reflect the full command picture. A study of these ample sources and other collections of army command documents throughout the whole Civil War, illustrates the style of command of Kamenev, Tukhachevsky and the other Red Army commanders very well and avoids theories based on a few documents selectively translated. In Poland, Kamenev worked with Tukhachevsky, and indeed Egorov, in the same manner he had during the whole conflict.

Both Davies and Fiddick cite notes from Lenin to Sklianskii, although Davies translates them differently from Fiddick to provide a different nuance. Davies suggests that they show Lenin felt Kamenev to be weak, whilst Fiddick suggests a

¹⁵⁶ T. Fiddick, pp. 211-212.

difference existed between the Red Army Command and Communist Party hierarchy over policy in Poland. The notes read,

Supreme Commander does not dare to be nervous. If the military department or Supreme Commander does not give up taking Warsaw, it must be taken (Are there any extra measures for this? Tell me?).

To speak about swiftening an armistice when the enemy is retreating is idiocy.

If the Poles have launched an offensive along the *whole* line, it is necessary to not whimper (like Danishevskii) for that is absurd.

It is necessary to *counter-manoevre*: military measures (evade, delay *all* negotiations etc.).¹⁵⁷

Fiddick translates the document roughly as above, but Davies produces, "The Supreme Commander does not dare to get angry with anyone... Warsaw must be taken... To talk of speeding peace talks...". This selective translation with an extra phrase in the first sentence gives the document an entirely different meaning. In fact, this telegram is typical of those sent by Lenin in tone, style and content - brusque and to the point. To suggest that this displays weakness on Kamenev's part is inaccurate. If anyone is being criticised for weakness, it is Danishevskii. Kamenev still believed that the campaign could reach Warsaw and beyond, as the document states. Also, if Kamenev displayed any caution at this point, it was because he had surmised the Poles were strengthening and was not sure about Tukhachevsky's direction of attack, when South-Western Front could not move up to protect it. In the end he was proven correct about this and was leading the attack in the correct manner, taking account of all details and reports.

Fiddick produces this telegram, along with other notes exchanged between Lenin and Sklianskii, as part of his general argument that a dispute existed between the Party and Red Army hierarchies, with the former more cautious about attacking, but being led along by Tukhachevsky. However, he has again misinterpreted events.¹⁵⁸ He believes that Lenin was "Operating, albeit unconsciously, according to the Metternichian maxim - "negotiate only when advancing"". However, this was the policy Lenin had conducted consciously from the beginning of the conflict and it matched Poland's policy. Negotiations were only pursued by either side with interest

¹⁵⁷ *DGkKA*, doc. 646, p. 654; An accurate translation of this document is included in J. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers, Volume II, 1920-1922*, pp. 254-257; Karl Iulii Khristanovich Danishevskii (1884-1938), Communist Party member since 1900 and Deputy Military Commissar of the Red Army Field Staff in August 1920.

if they were in retreat. Fiddick further states the notes exchanged referred "undoubtedly to Tukhachevsky's desire to attain Warsaw", but the notes actually appear to refer to Kamenev and the decisions he wished to make. Lenin stated to Sklianskii "... at whatever cost Warsaw must be taken in 3-5 days", which Fiddick remarks is "usually quoted out of context", but the context of it was that Lenin and the Red Army Command wanted the same result - a victory over Poland - and Lenin was pushing them on as he had been doing from the start of the campaign. Fiddick's assertion that Tukhachevsky independently decided to attack Warsaw just does not stand up to an accurate reading of the battle orders. Tukhachevsky only acted after directives or discussions with Kamenev, who was in constant contact with Moscow.

The idea that Lenin and Trotsky allowed Tukhachevsky to dictate policy towards Poland and had to try all manner of measures to rein him in (combining Western and South-Western Fronts under his command to overload him with work and prevent him attacking Warsaw, being one) is just pure fancy. The Red Army did not work that way. If Lenin and Trotsky felt that Tukhachevsky was overstepping the mark, they would simply have ordered him to stop or recalled him. This had happened to various personnel during the Civil War. There was no mechanism whereby Moscow felt the need to take major measures such as combining Western and South-Western Fronts to restrain a commander. This was a strategical decision. It is true that commanders, as has been shown, had great leeway in deciding tactics at the battlefield level according to local conditions, but they were not able to take matters into their own hands and determine Moscow policy by military actions. The decision to attack into Poland came from Lenin and the decisions to maintain the offensive also originated from Moscow. Peace negotiations were conducted, but as much territory as possible had to be seized in the process and the decisions on whether to maintain attacks came from Moscow. The crucial point which Fiddick misses, possibly by treating the Polish campaign in isolation from the Civil War, is that the Party and Red Army hierarchy did work very closely over major military decisions. Tukhachevsky was well-respected by Lenin and Trotsky by this point and his opinions were sought. Moreover, his opinions matched those of the majority of the Communist leadership. Trotsky had

¹⁵⁸ These notes are translated into English in J. Meijer, ed., *The Trotsky Papers, Volume II*, pp. 252-255.

reservations over the decision to advance into Poland, but these were general political ones, not directed at Tukhachevsky personally or at his handling of the campaign.

Kamenev's handling of the campaign went reasonably well and problems arose only with the delay at Lwów and South-Western Front's reluctance to comply. However, he was firm here and demanded their compliance. It was not Kamenev's weakness, but Stalin's apparent dominance of South-Western Front *RVS* and Egorov's reluctance to follow Kamenev's orders. If Kamenev is to be criticised, then perhaps it could be over his trust in Tukhachevsky's judgement, if he indeed did have other information at Smolensk on Polish dispositions. However, the two men had already worked well together and trusted each other's judgement and this is why Kamenev allowed Tukhachevsky to decide on the troop placements and direction of attack.

Kamenev and South-Western Front *RVS* can perhaps be criticised in different ways as contributing to the defeat in Poland, but Tukhachevsky must share the blame. He was personally at fault for turning the majority of his troops northwards, despite warnings from Kamenev on 8th August that South-Western Front forces would not be arriving. Sollogub seemed to realise 16th Army's left flank was exposed, but moved it too late, as the Polish attack began.

Tukhachevsky, as has been shown, was a firm believer in the principle of manoeuvre to complete flanking, envelopment and encirclement movements. He also firmly believed in the concentration of forces in the vital sector, leaving weak screens elsewhere to facilitate it, and explained this to Kamenev in May 1920 before the preemptive attack over the Beresina. He had used this tactic to great effect in the North Caucasus Operation and in earlier operations against the Czechoslovaks and Kolchak. He got away with his gambling and risk-taking on these occasions, but in Poland, came up against a better, more disciplined foe, led by an experienced leader in Piłsudski, who also understood the principles and advantages of manoeuvre.

Piłsudski beat Tukhachevsky at his own game and perhaps there is a suggestion that Tukhachevsky had become over-confident after his continued successes during the Civil War, believing that he was the master of manoeuvre operations and no one would beat him with these. He had risen up the Red Army ladder swiftly, was popular with Lenin and Trotsky and was appointed to the general staff on 22nd May, as he prepared the Polish campaign.

I would suggest that Tukhachevsky exuded too much over-confidence by the time of the Warsaw battle. He had never been defeated and any time he ran into difficulties, he blamed it on his superiors for not understanding class warfare, new concepts he personally was responsible for putting into print. The blame he attached to 1st Cavalry Army and South-Western Front *RVS*, although partially justifiable, was symptomatic of his Civil War command career. He never fell out with Kamenev or Frunze, who agreed with his ideas, but did fall out with Budennyi, Egorov and Stalin.

This brings us back to the underlying principle of how Tukhachevsky fought against Poland. He used exactly the same methods as during the Civil War, as studying the campaign has demonstrated. He believed that it was an extension of the Civil War, whether because Poland had been part of the Russian Empire, was working with the interventionary *Entente* or because this Front could lead into Europe and extend the Civil War internationally. By April 1920, he probably looked on it as a mixture of all three, as national considerations of Poland against Russia combined with class warfare of socialism against bourgeois capital.

However, Tukhachevsky's class warfare methods were not suitable for fighting in Poland because the Poles viewed the conflict as a national war. The major flaw in Tukhachevsky's class warfare theory was that, like the concept of communism in general, for it to work, everybody else had to believe in it too. This had led him into disagreements with superiors during the Civil War who did not hold with these ideas and so planned operations differently. However, a similar problem emerged in Poland.

The Polish workers and peasants did not believe that the Red Army was attacking to liberate them, but saw the historic Russian oppressor advancing to dominate once again. Many of those fighting in the Red Army felt the same and the patriotic ticket was used by the Communists to recruit more troops. Many *voenspetsy* who had sat out the Civil War so far, joined the Red Army to fight a national war against Poland, the most striking case being Russia's best Great War General, A. A. Brusilov.¹⁵⁹

Tukhachevsky wrote in *Revoliutsiia izvne* that a protracted war would benefit the working-class as it would gradually pull away from the bourgeoisie, as its own

¹⁵⁹ Aleksei Alekseevich Brusilov (1853-1926) led the "Brusilov Breakthrough" in 1916, punching a hole through the Austrian frontline and advancing some 60 miles and capturing vast numbers of prisoners and materiel before his offensive momentum dissipated through tardiness by the neighbouring Russian armies and German reinforcements.

interests became clearer, but time may have to be spent educating the working classes in bourgeois nations before a successful class war could be mounted.¹⁶⁰ However, he also promoted the continuous offensive which was to press on relentlessly, allowing no respite for the enemy, but this also precluded time to prepare the working-class. In the Polish campaign this was an insurmountable dialectic.

Lenin and Kamenev consistently emphasised that political and military circumstances determined a rapid advance and this was the case. Poland could not be allowed to reinforce and regroup with *Entente* help. However, this prevented any preparation of the Polish working-class, necessary to utilise class war methods. Dropping *Polrevkom* leaflets by aircraft was a useful method of agitation, but did not have enough time to make an impact. The Red Army was fighting the wrong war. However, it is inaccurate to suggest that Tukhachevsky infected the Party leadership with these ideas. Tukhachevsky's ideas fitted hand-in-glove with those of Lenin and the international revolutionists. He fought the Polish Front as he had fought every other front, by the methods imposed on him by circumstance and urgency, to complete the tasks set by the leadership. This led to the decision not to wait at the border for reinforcements and supply lines to catch up and the frantic advance through Poland which resulted in only 50,000 weary Western Front frontline troops facing almost double the number of fresh Polish troops. The recruits raised in Belorussia and indeed at Białystok and the Prussian border were not trained, fully-equipped or even all participating in frontline divisions by the time Tukhachevsky reached Warsaw.

The methods of mass mobilisation, whilst marching through the Russian countryside, had worked well because peasants wanted to fight to defend their home territories. The fact that they deserted again once the fighting had passed their homes did not matter greatly because new peasants would be mobilised in the next area. This was how Tukhachevsky had advanced from the Volga to Siberia, to the Don and the Caucasus, and was the method by which he won his Civil War campaigns. However, in Poland, he encountered a "dying centre", with Polish workers and peasants who had not been oppressed by White leaders, but were gaining land and freedom to live in a national state, led by a heroic national leader in Piłsudski. The Red Russian Army marching through their territory was not a force they wished to join. The complete opposite was the case and scorched-earth policies and the destruction of the transport

¹⁶⁰ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Revoliutsiia izvne", *Voina klassov*, pp. 55-58.

infrastructure resulted, meaning the Red Armies could not feed from the localities as they had done during the Civil War, and could not travel easily and quickly enough to catch and envelop the retreating Polish forces. No workers' uprisings or widespread partisan activity occurred in the Polish rear because support for the Red Army was absent. Hostile partisan activity would undoubtedly have occurred in the Red rear, adding to the chaos. This was not the class war Tukhachevsky and Moscow envisaged, but a national conflict, and they suffered as a result.

Conclusion: Influence on Military Thinking

To return to the discussion at the beginning of chapter III on the origins of Tukhachevsky's operational "Deep Battle" ideas, the fundamental cornerstone of this emerged from the rubble of the Polish campaign. Tukhachevsky's belief in the efficacy of the continuous offensive gave way to the conduct of successive operations within the deep strike context. He saw with hindsight, that although political and military considerations in July 1920 indicated that the Red Army should press on without pause at the Polish border, if they had in fact halted to organise the rear, the defeat at Warsaw may have been avoidable.

If communications had been properly constructed and reinforcements allowed to catch up, Western Front would not have faced the Poles at Warsaw with battle-weary troops who had marched some 600 kms in six weeks of continuous fighting and pursuit operations. Tukhachevsky had commented to Kamenev in early June 1920 that the war with Poland was closer to regular forms of warfare with mass armies than the previous Civil War fighting had been and after the defeat he saw that he would have to adapt his theories accordingly and did so.

Although retaining manoeuvre and concentration as the basis of the tactics of his class warfare theory - envelopment, encirclement, breakthrough - Tukhachevsky slowed the overall attack down for the ultimate strategic objective. In this way continuous operations became successive operations, with pauses in the offensive necessary to allow the rear to remain organised, communications retained and reinforcements to catch up, before targeting the next objective and moving on. However, "Deep Battle" developed to compensate for this necessity to pause. Attacking to the depth of the enemy force, taking out its reserves and HQ

simultaneously to the frontline attack, meant that the enemy would still have insufficient time to recover from the initial attack, even whilst the attacking troops paused to regroup and reinforce, before launching the next attack and so on. Therefore, although the continuous offensive had slowed down to successive operations, it still would be a relentless pursuit of the enemy, giving no respite for reorganisation or regrouping.

The necessary pause in successive operations would also provide the extra time necessary for agitation amongst the working-classes to prepare the ground for the renewed class offensive and mobilise recruits on the move. By extending the war, it would allow time for the working-class in the bourgeois countries to realise the Red Army was fighting for their liberation and interests. This would allow workers' uprisings to occur in the enemy rear and partisan movements to appear. As mentioned earlier, the development of paratroopers as either a substitute for these or to foment revolution by agitation, along with their military tasks, was introduced by Tukhachevsky in the late 1920s.

To coordinate the international class war, Tukhachevsky envisaged the formation of an international general staff via the *Comintern* (Communist International). He wrote to *Comintern* Chairman Zinov'ev in July 1920 at the height of the Polish-Soviet War, suggesting such a plan, but this was one area of Tukhachevsky's military thinking which was not taken up by the Communists.¹⁶¹

This was the influence of the Polish-Soviet War on the conclusions Tukhachevsky had drawn from the Civil War and on his future operational theory in "Deep Battle". As we can see from looking back to the statements he made throughout the 1920s and into the development of "Deep Battle", he still believed in the same principles he had fought by in the Civil War, but had modified them after the Polish Front experience. The manoeuvre warfare of the Great War Eastern Front also influenced his thought, as did the reading of military history, casting an eye back to Napoleon and Suvurov and his Tsarist military academy education to find the roots of his conduct of the Civil War. However, the command experience he gained in the latter conflict, including the Polish-Soviet War, led directly to the operational side of "Deep Battle". Adapting these ideas to developments in weaponry and technology was typical of

¹⁶¹ M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Pis'mo k tovarishchy Zinov'evy", *Voina klassov*, pp. 138-140; A translation is provided as an appendix in J. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 784-785.

Tukhachevsky's actions during his frontline command years and the ability to innovate and match his military theory to the evolution of the Soviet Union, saw his rise continue after the Civil War years. This was the genesis of "Deep Battle" and it had evolved over two and a half years combat experience.

Conclusion

In October 1917, Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky was a 2nd lieutenant in the Tsarist Army. He had just returned to Russia after escaping from two and a half years imprisonment in German POW camps. By October 1920, he was a Front Commander in the Red Army and one of the top two military figures in the Soviet Republic.

Tukhachevsky had gained an effective promotion in October 1917, when he was elected a company commander in the Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment, but this was soon disbanded and he was demobilised and out of work at the turn of the year. However, after joining the Red Army in early 1918, his rise began once more after he showed great administrative acumen on an investigative tour of frontline provinces and demonstrated he could work under fire. His performance and the ideas he put forward for Red Army reorganisation led his department bosses to bring him to the attention of Lenin and Trotsky and he was despatched eastwards as the Civil War broke out in the Volga. Sent out to conduct the organisational work in practice, that he had so far shown himself capable of in theory, by a measure of luck, he was appointed Eastern Front 1st Army Commander. He was the right man in the right place at the right time, primarily because he had joined the Bolshevik Party in April 1918.

Tukhachevsky was not a communist at this stage. He had joined the Red Army to rejoin the fight against Germany in the Great War after being their involuntary guest for so long. The Red Army was the only force forming in Russia in early 1918 to face Germany. Also, it was based in Moscow, closer geographically than the alternatives, such as the Whites, forming in the south. If Tukhachevsky had decided to travel there, he would either have not seen his family again or they would have had to uproot to go with him. Moreover, he believed that the Bolsheviks were the group with the greatest vision and best chance of pulling Russia out of the chaos into which it had fallen. Therefore, he joined the army they were forming to defend Russia.

The decision to join the Bolshevik Party was completely separate and was only taken after his friend Kuliabko, suggested it. Tukhachevsky was already working with the CEC Military Department at the hub of Red Army formation and saw that the new army was to be politically-based. Therefore, to advance in it, he would have to be politically reliable as well as good at his job, so he entered the Party. This provided

him with the necessary background and qualification to become 1st Army Commander. He was interviewed by Lenin and passed muster with Trotsky as one of the very few "commander-communists" in the country. This made him the ideal military leader for the Simbirsk Bolsheviks in their power struggle with the SRs in the Volga.

On Eastern Front, Tukhachevsky showed his prowess in conducting army reorganisational work, turning scattered partisan formations into regular army units, based on the regimental structure he had known in the Tsarist Army. He was the first person in the Red Army to conduct frontline mobilisations, initially of *voenspetsy*, to create army and divisional command staffs, and then of regular troops, to create the regular 1st Army in less than two months.

However, this was also achieved by a readiness to resort to strict measures of revolutionary discipline. Tukhachevsky was the first to form Revolutionary Military Tribunals, within a week of his arrival in the East, and he was very likely the first to employ *zagraditel'nye otriady* (blocking detachments). He was willing to work closely with the *Cheka* to retain order and stressed from early on that a hardcore of Communists were needed to instill discipline into the other troops. He had witnessed this in action in his May tour of the provinces and realised that those who believed in the political ideals of Bolshevism had something to fight for and would persuade or force the disinterested peasant masses to do the same. Political agitation accompanied by force - this was the way the Red Army worked from the outset. Tukhachevsky saw this and saw that it worked. He adopted these methods for the duration of the Civil War, when he was consistently sent to take charge of disorganised or routed armies and had very little time to pull them together before counter-attacking.

In this way, Tukhachevsky progressed through command of 8th and 5th Armies, defeating Kolchak at the head of the latter, before gaining promotion as Acting Caucasian Front Commander to defeat Denikin. Promotion to full Front Command followed as he led the Soviet Western Front against Poland. Although this ended in defeat, Tukhachevsky was not held in disgrace, but was later called upon to suppress the Kronstadt and Tambov uprisings in 1921. These lie outwith the boundaries of this thesis, but another post Tukhachevsky received, in August 1921, stemmed directly

form his Civil War record.¹ He was appointed Head of the Red Army Military Academy? Why was this so?

Tukhachevsky had pushed from the very beginning of Red Army organisation for "unified command". He wanted Red Commanders to lead the armed forces and did not appreciate the interference of political commissars. He felt that professional soldiers could do the job, but that they also had to be politically sound. Tukhachevsky produced a plan for command courses for Red Commanders in June 1918 and these were running by the end of the year. In 1919, he set up courses himself and taught on them, whilst 5th Army Commander. When the troops were not attacking, they were being educated in how to attack. This was recognised in Moscow and Tukhachevsky was recalled to lecture to the Red Army Military Academy and share his ideas with the Party leadership. Lenin asked him for a report on the likelihood of creating a Red command staff based on his 5th Army experiences. In 1920, Tukhachevsky created the Smolensk State Military Polytechnical Institute of Western Front to educate *kursanty* and produce young Red Commanders.² His vision of youth as the future of the communist state matched that of Lenin and Trotsky. Tukhachevsky was at the forefront of this process and in May 1920 was admitted to the general staff, despite never having attended the Nikolaevskii Academy, as he was too young. He was the prime candidate to head the Red Army Military Academy.

But why did Tukhachevsky go to all this bother? He did not believe in communism when he joined the Party, but did so for career reasons. Did he simply remain a careerist, immune to the ideals? The answer to this question is no.

During the Civil War, Tukhachevsky saw that the methods by which he was forced to fight the conflict were working. Rapid attacks turned into continuous offensives to keep the enemy on the backfoot and press home the advantage whilst it lasted. Such tactics required a continuous supply of troops. Therefore, mobilisation at the front was required and this had to be conducted quickly as the attack moved on. This proved to be the perfect system to win the Civil War as it matched conditions within Russia in every way. The infrastructure was ruined, so troops could not quickly be transferred from one front to another and reinforcements could not be rapidly despatched. Therefore, frontline mobilisation was needed. However, this

¹ A study of Tukhachevsky's Kronstadt and Tambov commands and counter-insurgency theories will be the subject of later work by this author.

system also matched the socio-economic composition of Russia and the wants of the peasant masses.

Tukhachevsky won his campaigns by marching vast distances across Russia with a hardcore of communists, *Cheka* and trained staff, mobilising peasants as they went. Constant mobilisation was needed because peasants were willing to fight to defend their home areas, but would then desert when the fighting moved on. However, plenty of peasants existed to be mobilised and so the process worked. As thousands deserted, thousands more were mobilised. But why did the peasants want to fight for the Red Army? They did so because the Reds were the side who said the peasants could retain their land. The Whites redistributed land within their areas, turning the clock back to pre-1917 Tsarist times. These methods worked and Tukhachevsky fought the Civil War by them.

This methodology also matched Moscow's continuous demands for rapid action and quick advances to turn military situations around. However, it did not always work. Tukhachevsky failed in the Don in early 1919, when he was forced to advance across the steppeland populated by cossacks supportive of the Whites. Why did this cause the offensive to fail? The secure rear which had been supplied on other fronts by a sympathetic peasant population and friendly partisans in the enemy rear, causing disruption and destroying enemy communications, was not present in the Don. However, the Siberian partisan movement on Eastern Front in 1919 reached vast proportions which further fuelled Tukhachevsky's belief in the ability to mobilise constantly on the move, if the motivation was there. He saw that Marxism and the class struggle provided this motive and came to believe in the efficacy of a Marxist Revolutionary doctrine. This was how he fought the Civil War and how he believed the Reds should progress.

However, Tukhachevsky's theory came unstuck in Poland, the first attempt to carry revolution abroad on the point of bayonets. Tukhachevsky, like Lenin and the majority of the Communist Party, believed that the Polish masses would rise, but when they did not, he was left waging a stretched campaign, with a hostile rear and no freshly-mobilised reinforcements, as in the Don. "Class" war tactics had not worked in a "national" war context. The flaw in the theory was that everyone had to believe it for it to work. The Polish masses did not, so it failed.

² *Marshal Tukhachevsky: Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov*, (Moscow, 1965), pp. 141-145.

However, Tukhachevsky did not abandon his ideas. He was a true believer by now and advocated political measures to prepare the proletariat and allow them to realise that the Red Army was attacking for their interests. Poland also brought a change of tack to Tukhachevsky's offensive theory - continuous offensive slowed to successive operations to allow the rear to catch up and prevent a hostile rear and broken communications causing the offensive to collapse. Tukhachevsky retained these basic beliefs in his tactics and overall strategy to win a class war and carried this through the 1920s until it became the operational side of "Deep Battle".

The openness to idea and innovation which Tukhachevsky displayed in the Civil War meant that he was willing to take on new ideas constantly. In this way, he developed his basic premise of attacking quickly with manoeuvre for encirclement to wipe out the enemy force and proceed onto the next target, to include modern developments. He also developed his theory again to suit the socio-economic fabric of the Soviet Union which emerged in the late 1920s. The Five Year Plans, with collectivisation and industrialisation, led to heavy industry concentration creating plants which could convert to munitions production, tractor works for building tanks and so on. It was Tukhachevsky's open mind to innovation and willingness to try new ideas, developed during the Civil War, which led him to develop his theories and rise to the top of the Red Army tree.

This ability to adapt and get the job done had also led Tukhachevsky to become the communist "fireman" or "troubleshooter" during the Civil War. He had consistently been sent to fronts prioritised by the Red leadership, the areas in most trouble and in need of a steady hand, to reorganise and motivate the troops. In this he used sound military methods, but was also willing to resort to brutal revolutionary discipline via the Tribunals. This was why he was chosen by Lenin and Trotsky to fight on the prioritised fronts.

Whilst rising through the Red Army ranks and currying favour with the Bolshevik leadership, Tukhachevsky did ruffle a few feathers. His methods were alien to the hard-left Bolsheviks, but also to older *voenspetsy*, whom he considered outdated and unwilling to adapt to his new methods of class warfare. This could be put down to career ambition once more, wishing to get ahead by getting rid of the senior officers, but it was not. Instead it represented Tukhachevsky's conversion to a belief in class warfare principles and methods. The squabbles he had with superiors occurred over

strategic or tactical matters, but it was part of the process of needing to educate a Red Command Staff. This necessitated the removal of those who did not believe in the ideals and methods. Tukhachevsky's habit of complaining to Moscow over superiors' heads, playing the communist card, must have rankled, although he was not the only one to do so.

However, Tukhachevsky also developed early friendships during the Civil War. Relationships with those with whom he would work closely throughout his life, were formed on the battlefields. In this way he became closest to Frunze and Kamenev, the two people he had fought most closely and most effectively alongside. Tukhachevsky met Triandafillov, the theoretical genius involved in the operational side of "Deep Battle", fittingly at a conference in December 1919, at which they both gave papers on the nature of Civil War combat. He would also work with Uborevich, his closest collaborator in developing mechanised forces in the 1920s and 1930s, at Tambov in 1921. Ordzhonikidze became a close friend as well as a collaborator in the formation of the military-industrial complex. Countless others, some of whom have been flagged up during this thesis, and many further down the command chain, fought alongside Tukhachevsky during the Civil War and continued to work with him in different capacities. Junior officers such as Rokossovskii, Konev and Zhukov all fought under Tukhachevsky during the Civil War and benefited from his notion of a Red Command Staff and the need to maintain a regular Red Army.³

The seeds of Tukhachevsky's future success can be found in his Civil War record. The positions of Deputy Peoples' Commissar for Defence, Chief of Armaments and Chief-of-Staff, all originated from the fact that he had shown himself to be a good man-manager, who could inspire his troops to do well and carry out his orders. His military theories and organisational abilities were clear to see and he produced Red Army Field Regulations, manuals and a plethora of written work incorporating his operational ideas and his views on Red Army organisation.

But can the roots of his downfall also be located there? Various theories are presented surrounding Tukhachevsky's execution. One argument is that Stalin never forgave Tukhachevsky for blaming him and his dominance of South-Western Front *RVS* for the Warsaw defeat. Also suggested is that Tukhachevsky was preparing a plot

to overthrow Stalin and set up an alternative military or political regime. Another possibility is the involvement of émigrés who, bitter at his betrayal of his aristocratic heritage, fabricated evidence that Tukhachevsky was involved with the Nazis and/or Trotsky. Alternatives on this theory are that Stalin had him removed to appease Nazi Germany, as Tukhachevsky was the most vociferous critic of Nazism in 1930s Russia, or that the Gestapo forged the coup evidence to remove him. However, I would speculate a slightly different theory.

As has been shown, Tukhachevsky demonstrated his abilities during the Civil War. He completed the hardest tasks by taking whatever measures were necessary. He matched his Civil War military theories to the needs of the nation and they worked because of this. In the 1920s, the theories he developed for mass, mechanised armies also matched the needs of Russia. The Five Year Plans created the possibility to build a mass army and Tukhachevsky pressed continually for this. He fell out of favour in the late 1920s for suggesting to Stalin that vast military development was necessary, but used the time he was in Leningrad to conduct further experiments, adding paratroopers to his ideas and beginning research which led to the Katiusha rocket launcher.⁴ However, when the needs of the Soviet Union again turned towards Tukhachevsky's ideas and the creation of a new vast army to take on the capitalist world, Stalin looked to Tukhachevsky once again. The "troubleshooter" was recalled to carry out further reorganisation and Tukhachevsky was still engaged in this task when he was executed. Why then did Stalin kill him?

The way the Soviet Union developed in the 1920s under Stalin was apparently the way Tukhachevsky had hoped and envisaged during his conversations with Fervacque in 1917. The Bolsheviks had indeed pulled Russia out of the fire and had won the Civil War. However, under Stalin, the mixture of Russian nationalism with communism which "Socialism in One Country" engendered, was exactly that which Tukhachevsky sought. The Red Army became one of the main lynchpins in the country alongside heavy industry and the Five Year Plans. Tukhachevsky achieved his ambition of leading the army and hoped to lead it into battle using his theories to win a mass, mechanised manoeuvre war with the capitalist West. By 1937,

³ Konstantin Konstantinovich Rokossovskii (1896-1968) fought with 5th Army in 1919, Ivan Stepanovich Konev (1897-1973) fought at Kronstadt, whilst Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov (1896-1974) served in the cavalry on Eastern Front in 1919 and Southern Front in 1920.

Tukhachevsky was the picture of a perfect Stalinist. He was willing to carry out whatever operations were required, using whatever means necessary. In this way, he was no different to any of the others who pinned their sail on the mast of the Stalin regime. By the time of the "Great Terror" in 1937-38, it was the Stalinists who were removed, as the leader dealt with every sector of society in turn. Tukhachevsky was the most prominent military figure in the nation, a man who was good at completing his tasks and willing to take whatever measures were necessary to defend his country. He was the one most likely to lead a coup to overthrow Stalin, either to end the purge process, accelerate it further, change the direction of the economy or step up efforts against Hitler. However, it is highly unlikely that Tukhachevsky would have done this, unless perhaps the future of the Red Army and the nation depended on it. I would speculate that Stalin removed Tukhachevsky, his "Demon of the Civil War", because he saw in him someone very much like himself in terms of method and ruthlessness, someone ambitious and willing to resort to any means necessary to triumph and progress. Perhaps Stalin was afraid someone would once again hire the "fireman" as troubleshooter.

⁴ For details on Tukhachevsky's posting to Leningrad see, D. R. Stone, "Tukhachevsky in Leningrad: Military Politics and Exile, 1928-1931", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 8, 1996, pp. 1365-1386.

APPENDIX A

Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky - 3 (15).2.1893-12.6.1937.

3 (15).2.1893 - Born on Alexandrovskii Estate, Dorogobuzhskii *uezd*, Smolensk *guberniia*.

1898 - Tukhachevsky family moves to Grandmother's estate near Vrazhskoe, Chembarsk *uezd*, Penza *guberniia*.

1904-09 - Attended 1st Penza *gimnasia*. Withdrawn from school in 5th Year and moves with family to Moscow.

1911 - Completes 6th Year at 10th Moscow *gimnasia*.

August - passes entrance exam to 1st Moscow Empress Ekaterina II Cadet Corps, graduating top of year in June 1912.

1912-1914 - Attended Aleksandrovskii Military Academy, graduating July 1914, first in his year.

Commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant.

Chose to join Semenovskii Life-Guards Regiment.

August 1914-February 1915 - Active service in Great War. Decorated six times before being taken prisoner by Germans.

February 1915-August 1917 - POW. Transferred to increasingly secure camps for repeated escape attempts, ending up in high-security Bavarian Castle of Fort 9 Ingolstadt. Fifth escape attempt successful, returning to Petrograd just before October Revolution.

1918 - February-May - Employed as Inspector of Red Army Formations in Military Department of All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

4th April - Joins Bolshevik Party.

27th May-22nd June - Military Commissar of Moscow Region of Western Screens.

26th June 1918-4th January 1919 - 1st Revolutionary Army Commander (*komandarm-1*) of Eastern Front against *Komuch* Government's "People's Army" and Czechoslovak Legion.

26th June-7th September - Forms and organises 1st Army, conducts defensive actions and three abortive offensives, one on Samara and two on Simbirsk

8th-27th September - Third Simbirsk Operation

28th September-8th October - Syzran'-Samara Operation

14th-30th October - Buguruslan, Bugul'ma and Buzuluk Operations

31st October-24th November - Belebei Operation

25th November-31st December - Ufa Operation

1919 - 4th-20th January - Acting Southern Front Commander (*vremkomiuzhfront*)

20th January-15th March - 8th Army Commander (*komandarm-8*) of Southern Front against Krasnov.

Late January-Mid-February - Operations against Krasnov and Volunteer Army, pressing them back to right bank of Don in Kalitvenskaia-Glubokaia-Krasnovka-Inganskaia area, until spring thaw ends campaigning

4th April-25th November - 5th Army Commander (*komandarm-5*) of Eastern Front against Kolchak.

4th-28th April - Conducts defensive actions and reorganisation of 5th Army

28th April-4th May - Buguruslan Operation

4th-13th May - Bugul'ma Operation

14th-17th May - Belebei Operation

25th May-9th June - Ufa Operation

9th June-7th July - Pursuit operations crossing Rivers Ufa and Belaia

7th-13th July - Zlatoust Operation

16th July-4th August - Cheliabinsk-Troitsk Operation

7th August - Awarded Order of Red Banner

11th-20th August - Pursuit operation to River Tobol.

20th August-2nd September - Petropavlovsk Operation

2nd September-13th October - White counter-offensive pushes Eastern Front back behind River Tobol. Tukhachevsky conducts reorganisational and reinforcement work to rebuild shattered 5th Army.

14th-30th October - Second Petropavlovsk Operation

1st-14th November - Omsk Operation

20th November - Appointed 13th Army Commander (*komandarm-13*) of Southern Front

25th November - Recalled to Moscow

1920 - 4th February-22nd April - Acting Caucasian Front Commander (*vremkomkavkazfront*) against Denikin.

14th February-29th April - North Caucasus Operation

21st April - Orders Baku Operation and crossing of Azerbaijani border.

29th April 1920-6th May 1921 - Western Front Commander (*komzapadfront*) against Poland in Polish-Soviet War.

29th April-13th May - Conducts reorganisation of Western Front

14th May-2nd June - Battle of Berezina to pre-empt Polish strike and relieve South-Western Front

3rd-22nd June - Conducts reformation, reinforcement and reorganisation of Western Front, whilst fighting defensive actions and launching small counter-attacks

24th-30th June - Mozyr' Operation

4th-12th July - Igumen-Minsk (Belorussia) Operation

13th-22nd July - Pursuit operations taking Molodechno, Lida, Vil'no and Grodno

23rd July-16th August - Warsaw Operation

16th August - Polish counter-offensive launched from behind River Wisła

16th August-18th October - Conducts rearguard actions in gradual retreat until signing of armistice in Riga

October-November - Operations against band of Bulak-Balakhovich

1921 - 3rd-18th March - Acting 7th Army Commander (*vremkomandarm-7*), led suppression of Kronstadt Revolt.

6th May-25th July - Commander of Soviet forces in Tambov Province. Leads crushing of Antonov peasant uprising in Tambov Province.

25th July or 5th August - Appointed Head and Military Commissar of Military Academy of Red Army (*RKKA*).

24th January 1922 - Appointed Western Front Commander.

1st April 1924 - Appointed Deputy Chief-of-Staff of *RKKA*.

13th November 1925 - Appointed Chief-of-Staff of *RKKA*.

5th May 1928-19th June 1931 - Commander of Leningrad Military District.

19th June 1931-11th May 1937 - Deputy Chairman of *RVS SSSR* and Head of Armaments of Red Army.

February 1934 - Elected Candidate Member of Russian Communist Party Central Committee at 17th Congress (Congress of Victors) of Communist Party.

20th November 1935 - Appointed one of first five Marshals of the Soviet Union, the highest military rank in the country.

11th May 1937 - Stripped of duties as Deputy Peoples Commissar of Defence and appointed Head of Volga Military *okrug*. Arrested en route to take up new command.

11th June - Tried in closed military court along with seven other high-ranking colleagues - accused of treason and plotting a military coup - shot the next day.

31st January 1957 - Military Collegiate of Supreme Court of USSR declared Tukhachevsky and co-defendants not guilty of "Anti-Soviet Trotskyist Military Organisation" charges.

27th February 1957 - Readmitted as member of Communist Party.

27th March 1988 - Documents relating to Tukhachevsky case released under *glasnost'* process.

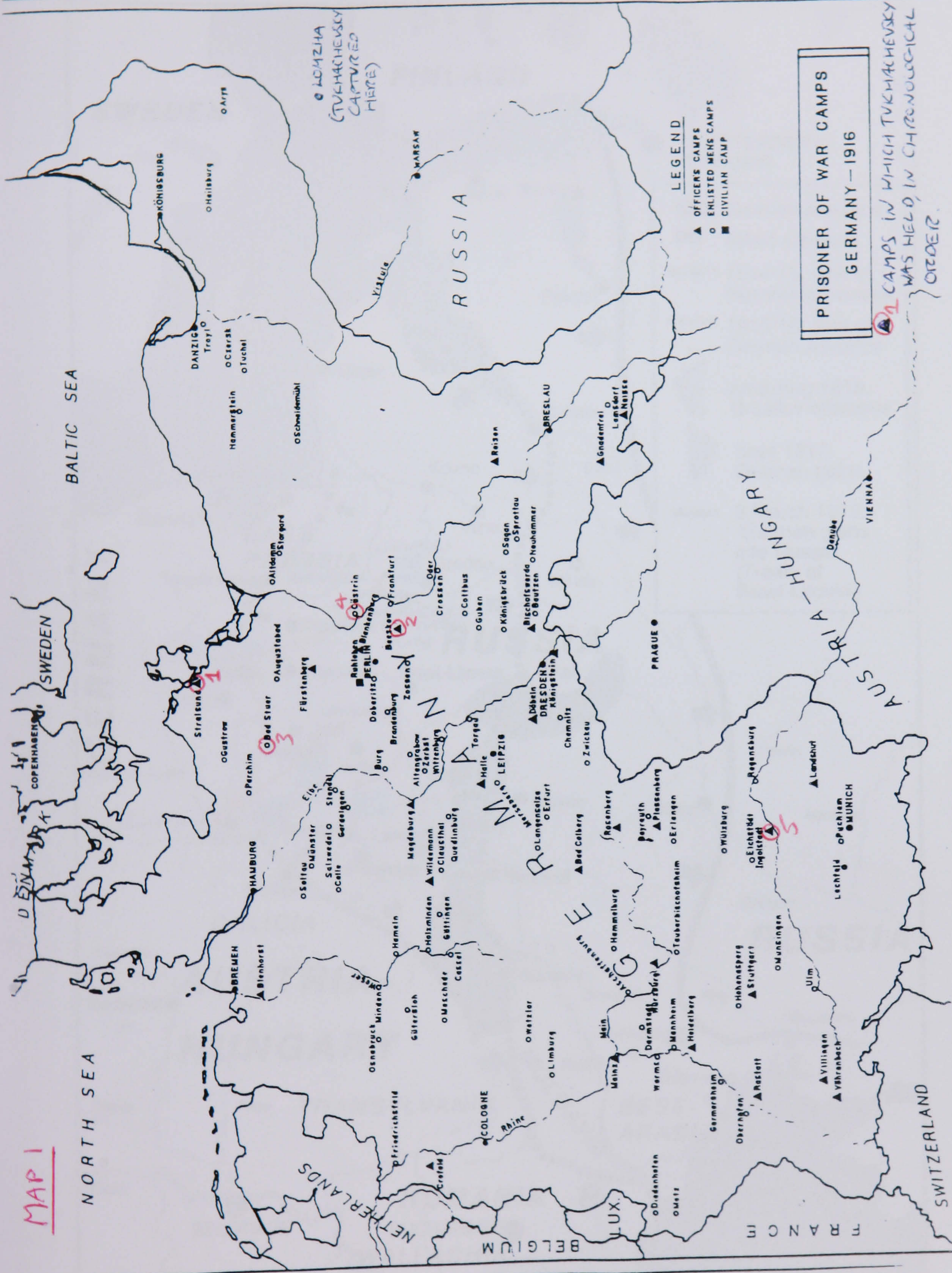
Appendix B: Maps.

1. German Great War POW camps in which Tukhachevsky was imprisoned.
2. Tukhachevsky's Great War frontline service.
3. Russia in summer 1918 and Tukhachevsky's frontline tour of May 1918.
4. General map of Volga Region.
5. The "fluid" Eastern Front: June-August 1918.
6. Tukhachevsky as 1st Army Commander of Eastern Front: September 1918-January 1919.
7. Tukhachevsky's change of manoeuvre on Southern Front: February-March 1919.
8. The drive against Kolchak. Tukhachevsky as 5th Army Commander on Eastern Front: April-November 1919.
9. The North Caucasus Operation. Tukhachevsky as Acting Caucasian Front Commander: February-April 1920.
10. The Belorussian Operation and Drive for Warsaw. Tukhachevsky as Western Front Commander: April-August 1920.

Maps adapted from originals by:

1. R. B. Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War. A Study of Diplomacy in Captivity*, (New York, 1990).
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10. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia01/poland_sm01.jpg;
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/belarus_sm97gif.

MAP 1



MAP 2

THE FIRST WORLD WAR





MAP 4

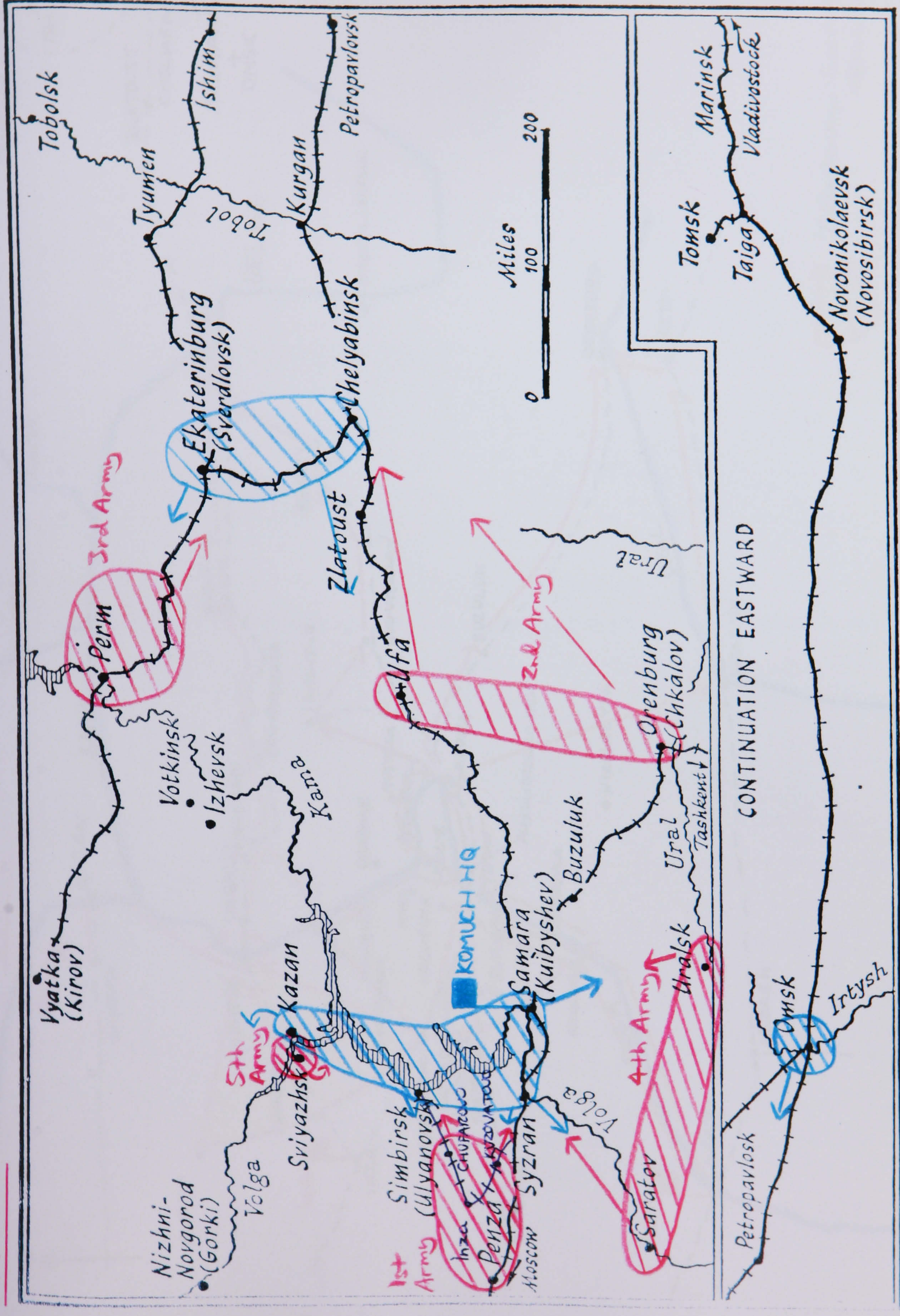
Wagner & Debes' Geogr. Anstalt., Leipzig.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 Kilometres

0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

1:1,500,000

Penza, Tula



MAP 6



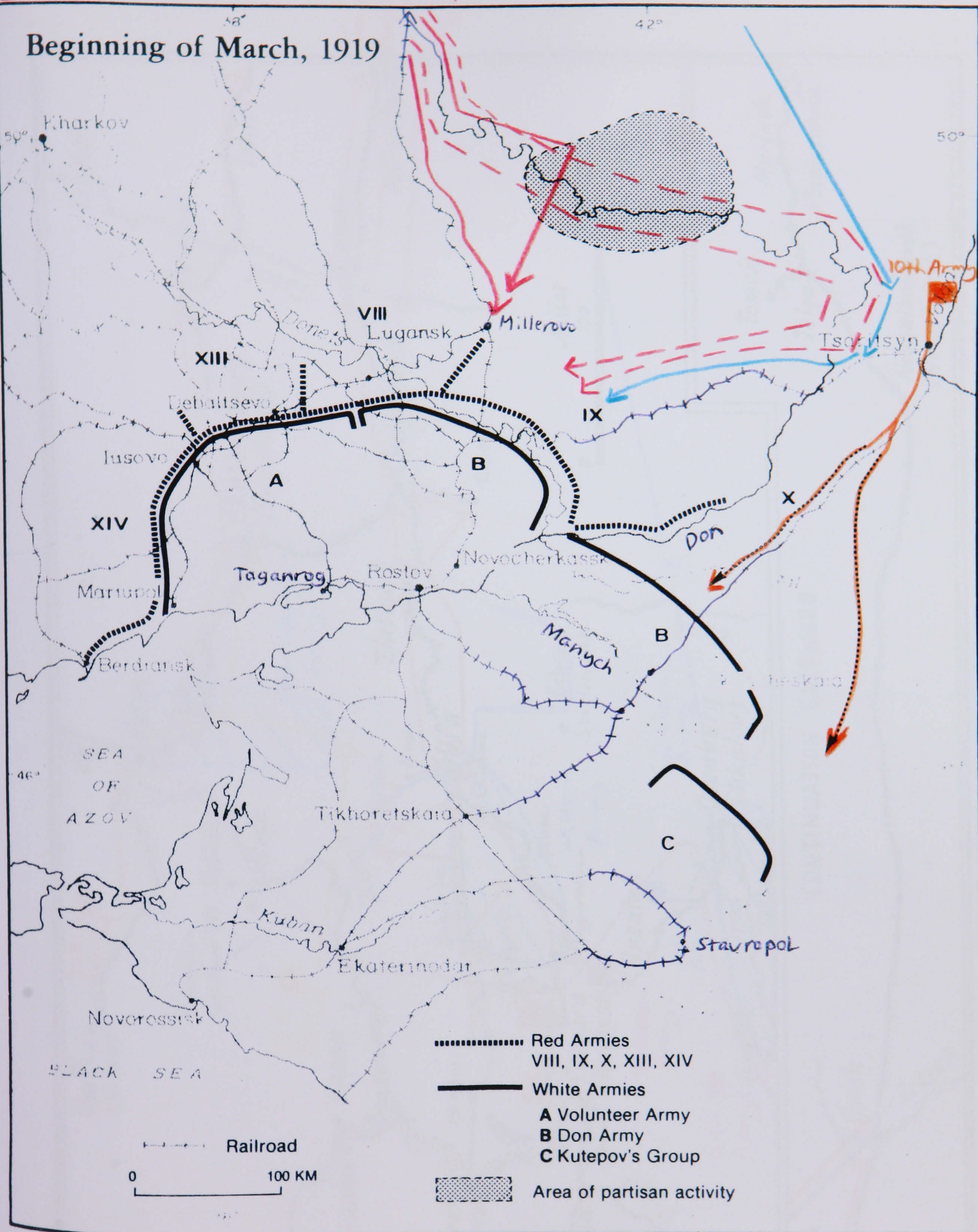
Tukhachevsky's Concentric Offensives

MAP 7

To Voronezh 8th Army HQ

9th Army

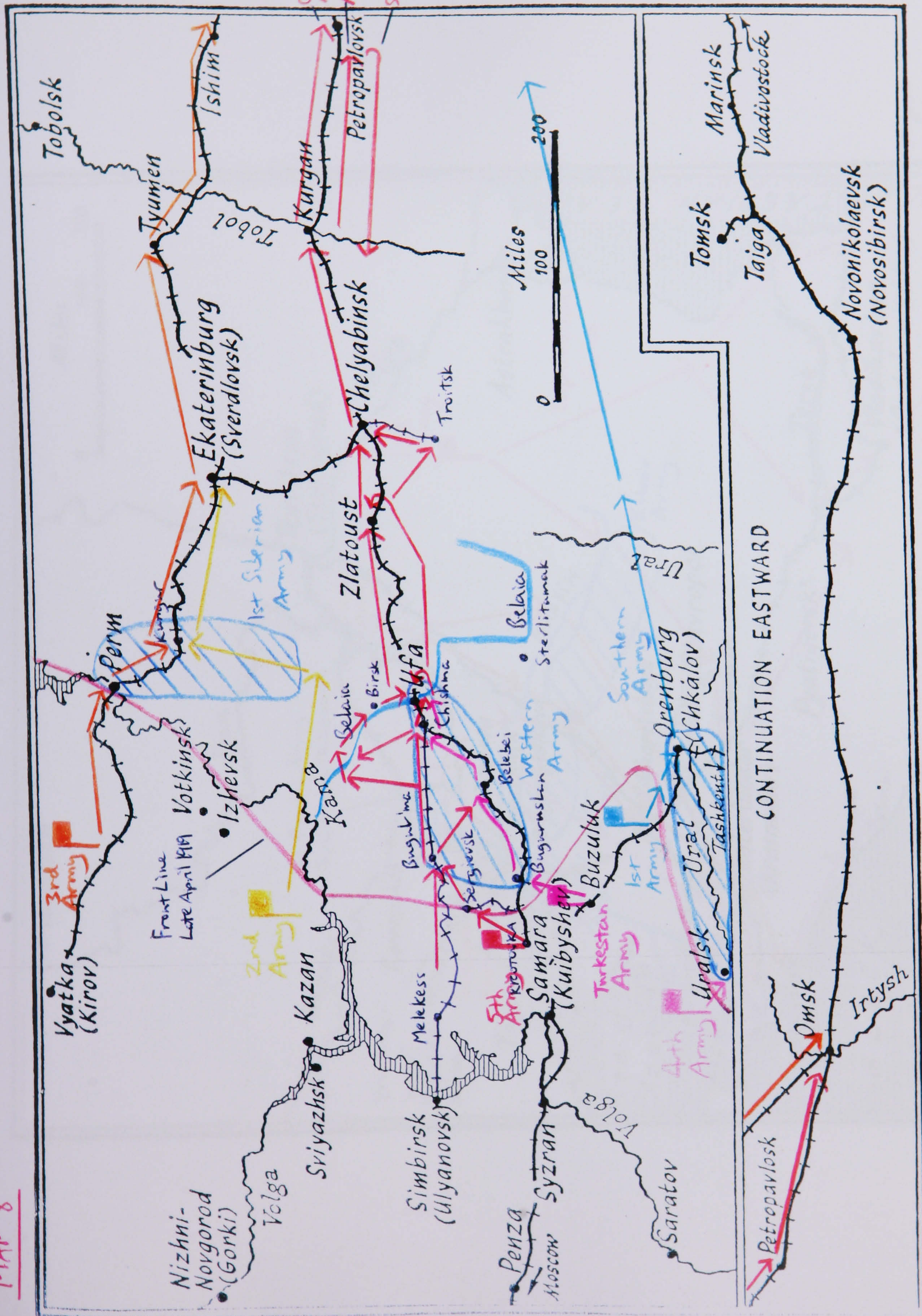
Beginning of March, 1919

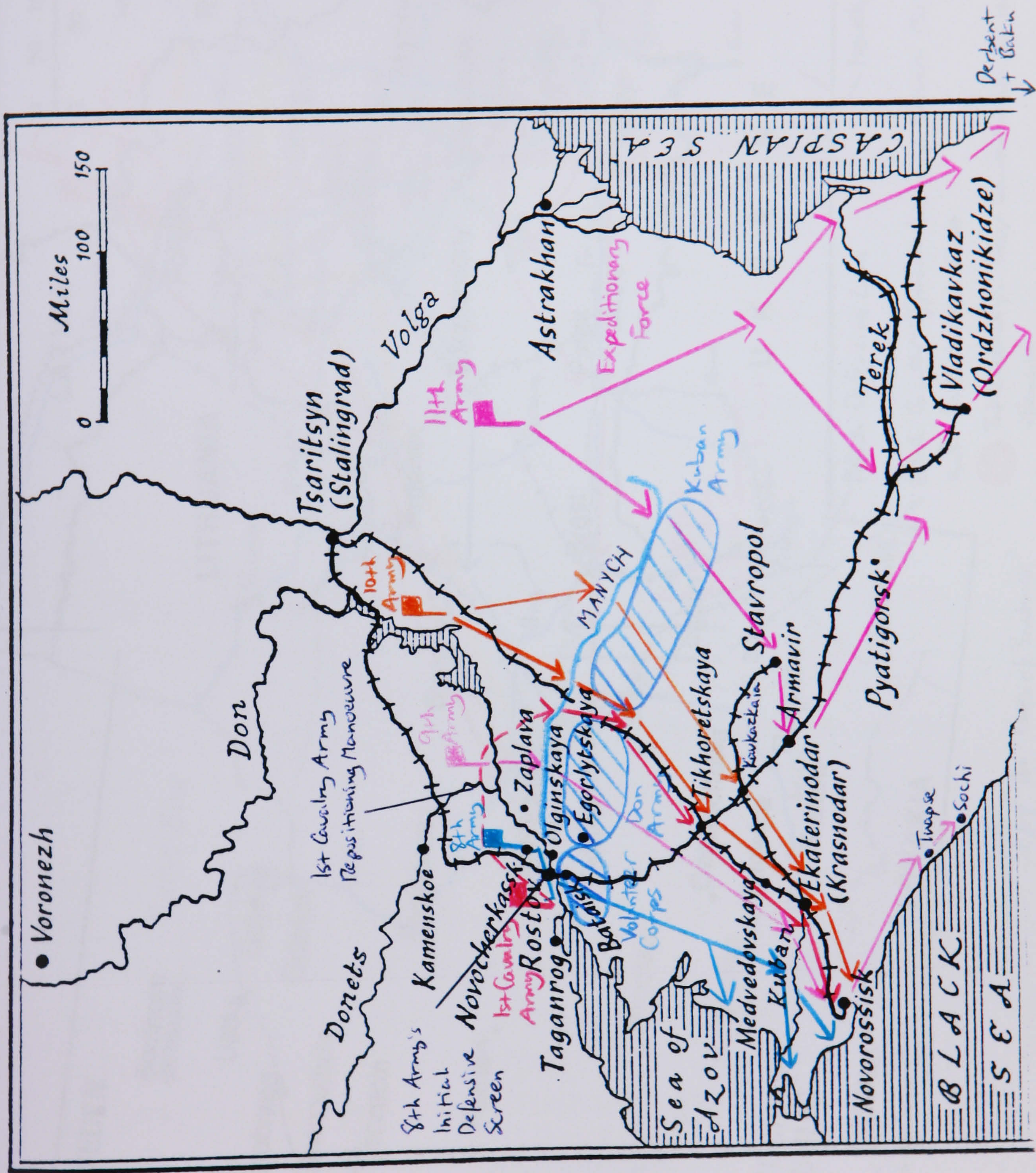


Gittis' Proposed Route Through Don Region

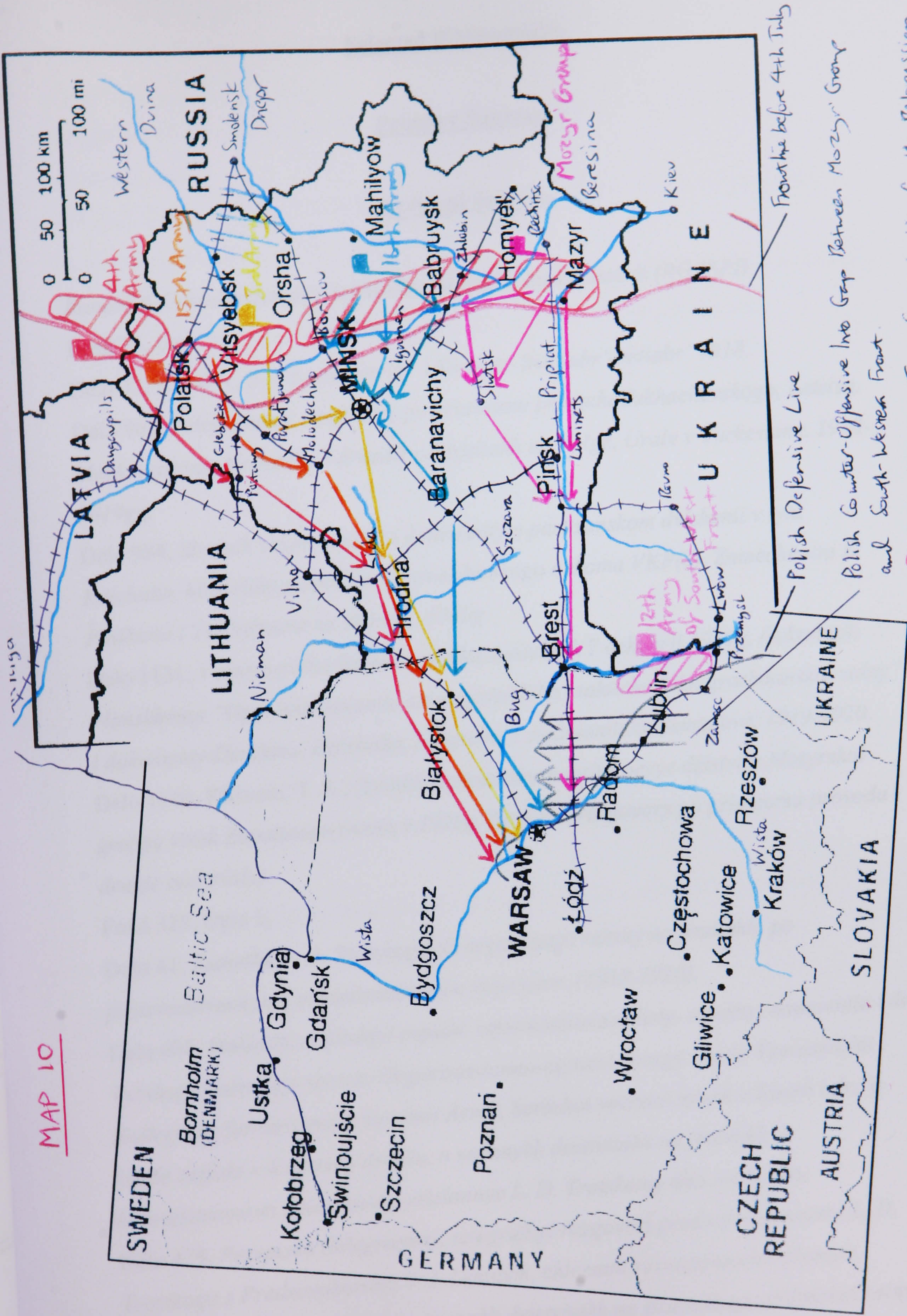
Tukhachevsky's Amended Route

MAP 8





MAP 10



The "Gates of Smolensk"

Tikhachevsky's Troop Concentration for the Belorussian Offensive

Polish Counter-Offensive Into Gap Between Mozyr' Group and South-Western Front

Polish Defensive Line

Front line before 4th July

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