

The Valiant Defense of Petrograd in October 1919

Based on the materials of the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic.

The Petrograd operation in October 1919 is extremely interesting and instructive in all respects. A strong, well-armed enemy struck a sudden blow to our army, which was tired from previous operations, weakened by losses and drowsy in its vigilance, standing on the road to Red Petrograd. The Red Army trembled and rolled back to the capital, almost without resistance ... but suddenly, at the moment when triumphal broadcasts were flying in all directions about the fall of Petrograd, when Yudenich was mounting his horse to march victoriously into Red Peter and restore the rule of capitalism there – the valiant Red Army, inspired by mighty words, guided by skillful hands, like an animal who has had its cubs taken, rushed at the enemy. With a mighty blow it pushed the insolent away from the gates of the cradle of revolution. Striking blow after blow we drove it back to its original position, and then finally finished it off. Nothing was left of the once strong, foreign-armed Yudenich's Northwestern Volunteer Army. And all this was accomplished in the space of a month. The formidable cloud that loomed over Petrograd in October was gone by November, leaving nothing behind.

The way such a brilliant victory was achieved, the means and methods by which it was accomplished, are best seen from those materials – in the form of operational orders, reports and summaries – that were compiled on the battlefields and reflect all those events and actions that led to an exceptional and unprecedented victory in the military history of recent times.

The following sketch has been compiled on the basis of materials at the disposal of the Field Staff of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic. Now with the operation well finished, they are no longer considered military secrets, but are infinitely interesting and raise the veil over the marvelous Petrograd Operation.

Moscow, 1921

This is translated from the original Russian, although because I can't actually read Russian it should not be relied upon.

Of the various books on the defence, I chose this one because it focuses on the military, not political and social aspects, and because it was written before Stalin's excesses destroyed reliable history writing in the USSR.

However there are serious issues with it, especially in the political arena and in the structure and command of the White armies. That I have left some views of the book unchallenged does not mean that I endorse the writers' views that Yudenich commanded sizeable amounts of Estonians.

The authors clearly did not have access to high quality information about the size and composition of the NWA, so I recommend ignoring both their unit numbers and compositions.

I have made all place names the modern equivalent in the language of their current country. The text has a lot of small villages that require a period map to locate, having been swallowed by another town, lost to industrialisation or renamed. Even then I could not locate many of the places, so some of them may be transliterated poorly.

The White Russian units named for places in Estonia are given in the Russian forms.

MP, 2022



Chapter I

Strategic Situation on the Petrograd Front before Yudenich's Offensive

Peace talks between Soviet Russia and the Republic of Estonia began in Pskov in the second half of September 1919. That moment was skillfully chosen as the most opportune moment for Yudenich to prepare an attack on Petrograd, which was ultimately demanded by England. He had a good reason to believe that our army, fatigued by previous operations in the Gdov area, would be less vigilant with the news of the peace talks and that he would be able to regroup without our intelligence being aware of it. Regardless, Yudenich hastened to find a new base in the event that Soviet Russia made peace with Estonia, and he was forced to leave that country.

Yudenich's forces. By the beginning of October, Yudenich's North-Western Volunteer Army (NWA) consisted of Russian and foreign White Guard units, Estonian regiments and partisan units, numbering 28,000 bayonets and 2,000 sabres (according to newspaper information, Yudenich had only 15,000 men on the front from the Gulf of Finland to Ostrov). All those units were brought together into two corps: the 1st Corps on the left wing corps had Narva as its base, with 15,000 bayonets and 500 sabres; while the 2nd Corps on the right wing was based in Gdov, with 10,000 bayonets and 1,500 sabres in early October. There were 3,000 more bayonets in the army reserve, in the rear of the 1st Corps. In addition, Yudenich had at his disposal a number of mobilised, but still untrained and unarmed soldiers.

The 1st Corps consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions. The 2nd Corps had the 6th¹ and parts of the 1st Division, Bolotovskii's detachment, Kolen's detachment and Kochanov's partisans. During the operation itself, the 1st Corps was reinforced by a battalion of Narva boy scouts, volunteer American partisans, local partisans and, finally, by the French legion, which had arrived from Arkhangelsk through Tallinn, totaling 2,700 men of all arms. In addition, as the operation developed, some units of the 2nd Corps, which by the end of October had only six regiments left, were transferred to the 1st Corps.

All these forces which Yudenich had assembled for the campaign against Red Petrograd, in early October, were deployed on the front between Kopor'e Bay, 75 km west of Petrograd, and the town of Ostrov, in Pskov province. (See Map 4).

The following army units operated in the Narva area. On the leftmost flank, in the Narva – Yamburg² – Lake Kopanskoye area near Kopor'e Bay were: the 2nd Finnish Regiment, the 1st Ingermanland Regiment, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, part of the 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th Estonian Regiments and 500 cavalry (the Horse-jaeger Regiment). The Estonian units covered Yudenich's left flank and did not participate actively in the operation.

South of the Narva-Yamburg railway line up to the Dolgaya River, along the left bank of the Luga River, the 3rd Division occupied the front line, while on the right up to Lake Samro was the 5th Lieven Division. The 6th Division occupied the area between Lake Samro and Lake Syabero along the Saba River, a left tributary of the Luga River. The remnants of the 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions formed the reserve. (See map 1).

Units of the 2nd Corps (Rodzianko) operated in the Gdov and Luga area. Between Syabero and Chornoye Lakes, were the 4th Gdov Regiment, the St George Regiment, 9th Chudsky, 3rd Kolyvan and 1st Revel Regiments. Around Pskov were Bolotovskii and Kolen's units, to their right parts of the 5th, 6th and 7th Estonian Regiments and on the extreme right flank Kochanov's partisans.

It appears that Yudenich, not wanting to rely solely on his own forces, sent his representative to Jelgava at the very beginning of October to negotiate with Colonel Bermond-Avalov about moving his units to the Narva front for joint operations. Colonel Bermond agreed in principle and promised his support; but, as is well known, Bermond's adventure was liquidated and he could not support the White Guards of the North-West Volunteer Army. On the other hand, the British provided Yudenich with considerable

¹ The 6th Division is often referred to by its previous title of Independent Brigade.

² Now called Kingisepp.

help from their battle ships (cruisers and destroyers) and air squadrons, which had their base at Seyvisto on the Finnish side of the Gulf of Finland, facing Kopor'e Bay. (See map 4).

To reinforce and replenish his troops, Yudenich came to an agreement with the Estonian government, which mobilised men up to 37 years old, and in the Narva area all Russians under 45 years old.

According to the plan of attack, the main strike, along Yamburg – Krasnoye Selo road, was to be by the 1st Corps, reinforced with some other units and groups. The strength of this attack group, concentrated between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Syabero, was brought up to 18,000 bayonets and 500 sabres by 8 October (according to the Russian newspapers circulating in Estonia; whereas according to one of his comrades-in-arms, Malyavin, Yudenich had only 15,000 men).

A secondary strike was planned for Luga, and in case of success of the main operation, on to Novgorod. The group assigned this was a much smaller one, deployed west of Luga, between Syabero and Chernoye Lakes. This group was made up of only eight regiments, some of which were subsequently allocated to reinforce the Petrograd group. (See Map 4).

The left flank of the army was supported by a British squadron that mined Kopor'e Bay and kept a watchful eye on the part of the Gulf of Finland to the west of Kronstadt. The right flank was covered in the Pskov area by Estonian regiments and partisan units.

From the front, the army was covered by a group of lakes to the north, then in the middle course by the Luga River and its tributaries: the Saba, Verduga and Plyussa Rivers; to the east past the line of the named rivers stretched vast forests, cut through by highways only to the north of the Baltic railway line.³ A railway line and main road ran along the front of the Northwestern Army from Narva to Gdov and Pskov, which greatly facilitated the transfer of the 2nd Corps units to the Narva area in preparation for the operation.

Both munitions and food supplies for the North-Western Army were supplied mainly by the British, who demanded the capture of Petrograd by 1 November and delivered two transports of arms, munitions and food supplies to Narva in the beginning of October.

Such was the general strategic situation of General Yudenich's North-West Volunteer Army before its daring raid on Petrograd, which cost him his entire army.

Our forces. The situation of our Red Army was less favourable. The 7th Army (Comrades Kharlamov, Matyasevich and Nadezhniy) was defending the approaches to Petrograd. According to the Commander, at that time it was "a conglomeration of various small units, separate detachments, not united into brigade or even regimental formations, drawn from different armies".

It had defeated the attempted breakthrough to Petrograd in the summer and driven the enemy back to Yamburg after six weeks of fighting, at the cost of leaving itself weakened, and the continuing fighting weakened it further still. Meanwhile the peace talks with Estonia, which began on 17 September, made it less vigilant and inefficient. To the left of the 7th Army, units of the 15th Army (Comrade Kharlamov⁴) were deployed.

Before the beginning of the operation the Seventh Army consisted of the 2nd, 6th, 10th and 19th Rifle Divisions. Units of the 6th Division (Comrade Shatov) occupied the area from Kopor'e Bay to the town of Yamburg; those of the 2nd Division (Comrade Odintsov) were located to their left along the Luga river from the town of Yamburg to Lake Syabero; the 19th Division operated in the Luga district and to the south, while the 10th Division was situated near Pskov. (See map 1).

³ The "Baltic" line is the one running from Petrograd to Tallinn via Gatchina, not the coastal one.

⁴ Kharlamov is thus listed being in two places at once, but actually by this time he had moved from the 15th Army:

31 July 1919 to 26 September 1919	Chief of Staff, 15th Army
26 September 1919 to 17 October 1919	Commander 7th Army
17 October 1919 to 14 November 1919	Commander of the Tosno-Kolpino Shock Group
14 November 1919 to 31 December 1919	Chief of Staff, 7th Army



Yudenich's main blow was delivered at the 6th Division near Yamburg. So to assess the operation we need to dwell in some detail on the disposition of that division's units just before the enemy offensive.

On its right flank, near the Kopor'e coast, the 4th *Vsevobuch* Regiment took a 20 km stretch of the coastal area up to Sisto Palkino. From Sisto Palkino to Lake Glubokoye, about 15 km, was covered by the 50th Regiment; the next section, 10-12 km, to the gulley near Babino, on the eastern shore of Lake Babinskoye was covered by the 40th Regiment; from that gulley the 51st Regiment had a 10 km stretch to the junction of the Tararayka River with the [Zhuralev] Stream; for about 15 km from Tararayka River to the railway line west of Yamburg and southward of Novopyatnitskoe village was covered by 46th Rifle Regiment; the 47th and 48th Regiments were south along the Luga river to Klënno village. The division headquarters were at the village of Korchany.

The line was then extended by the 2nd Division, which on top of ten rifle regiments (10th-18th and 54th), included a sailor detachment, which occupied the central area along the Luga, near the villages of Gostyatino and Koryacha. The headquarters of the division was placed at Izvara manor.

The garrison of Petrograd consisted of the Bashkir Brigade (1st and 2nd Cavalry Regiments), the 1st and 2nd Rifle Regiments, the 54th Rifle Brigade and the Tula Fortress Regiment.

The 6th Division of Comrade Shatov, who was not a military man, was placed in forests and marshy ground, and did not have any natural defensive lines or boundaries, behind which it could put its disorganised units in order if forced to retreat. To the east of the division's front there were only two highways: one ran from Kopor'e to Petrograd via Gostilitsy and the other went Yamburg – Korchany – Begunitsy – Vitino – Krasnoye Selo. There were only two railway lines in the area of the 6th Division: the [main] line from Yamburg through Gatchina to Petrograd and [a spur] Veimarn – Kotly – Luzhky – Krasnaya Gorka (the Kopor'e line).

To assess the situation of the sides it should be noted that on the stretch from Kopor'e Bay to Yamburg against our four regiments (40th, 46th, 50th and 51st) Yudenich concentrated a strike group of nine regiments of infantry and one of cavalry; in addition, he had at his disposal several British light cruisers and destroyers.

From the engineering point of view the Petrograd theatre was not sufficiently prepared; there were no strong defensive positions on the roads to Gatchina and Krasnoye Selo.

Our Red Army was supplied with neither combat supplies nor foodstuffs by foreigners, everything was delivered to it by the workers and peasants of Soviet Russia; the Entente blockade prevented anything that could serve to strengthen the Red Army.

CHAPTER II

Yudenich's Offensive on Petrograd

Yudenich's plan. Having concentrated two attack groups, one around Yamburg and the other around Luga, Yudenich had two points to break through the front of the Seventh Army and move rapidly eastwards to cut the railways connecting Petrograd with the cities of Soviet Russia, and thus avoid a frontal attack on the former capital to force it, together with all its defenders and supplies, to surrender to his victorious army. To fulfil his intended plan he had to move swiftly to reach Gatchina – Tosno and Luga – Batetskoe – Veliky Novgorod to prevent the delivery of reinforcements from the Western and Moscow Military Districts to Petrograd.

For the success of such an operation it was necessary to start it suddenly, with total surprise, catching our units unprepared. For that purpose, fighting along the front of the 1st Corps of the NWA was at a standstill at the end of September and beginning of October. In the operational reports of the 7th Army from 27 September to 10 October we have only two reports of artillery firing at Yamburg, cavalry attacking the Pskov railway⁵ in the sector of the 19th Division and several flights of bombers flying over Yamburg, Fort Reef (Kronstadt) and Petrograd.

Start of the Yudenich Offensive, 11 October. At 7 a.m. on 11 October the enemy opened heavy fire at the 2nd Battalion, 46th Rifle Regiment, near the villages of Bol'shoi Lutsik and Yurkino, 5 km north of Yamburg, and against the village of Novopyatnitskoe, on the left bank of the River Luga, west of Yamburg. After the artillery preparation, under the cover of three tanks, the enemy launched large forces in a vigorous attack.

Bloody fighting ensued. The forces were far from equal; the enemy units broke through our position and occupied Yamburg. Units of the Red 6th Division's left flank got confused and began to retreat to a second defensive line, set about 15 km to the east near the Kapor'e railway, at the villages of Mally, Zapol'e, Yamskovitsy, Pustomerzhskoye and Vyspolzova. Immediately an order was given: "Units of the 6th Division are to put themselves in order and launch a counter-offensive. The right flank of the 2nd Division is to move to the flank of the defeated enemy, with the aim of liquidating the defeat."

However, our forces were not disciplined enough, the enemy outnumbered us, and the flank attack was ineffective; the situation was not restored, and panic spread among the units. The 2nd Division remaining on the Luga River needed to be put in order to launch an immediate offensive.

Meanwhile the enemy, emboldened by its first success, launched an offensive on the entire front in both the Gatchina and Luga areas. Breaking through the left flank of the 6th Division, Yudenich rushed Estonian regiments along the Yamburg road towards Volosovo. Our troops, offered no resistance to the enemy, retreating in a kind of panic, which passed from one unit to another. On 12 October the retreat had already extended over the front of the entire 6th and 2nd Divisions, and the enemy continued to pressure our retreating units, not giving them enough time to regain any sort of order.

Communication with the right flank of the 2nd Division was lost. The left flank of the division retreated and some of its units in two days retired about 50 km back from Yamburg. Units of the 6th Division's right flank retreated slowly, while the Special Purpose Regiment (the 4th Vsevobuch Regiment) stayed at its position on the bay of Kapor'e. The 46th, 47th, 48th and 51st Regiments retreated particularly quickly. As a result of this uneven retreat and the concentration of units of the division's left flank to the north of the line of the Baltic railroad, the division changed from facing west to south-west and, in places, even to the south, opening the way towards Gatchina for the enemy.

To counter the enemy onslaught the then 7th Army commander, Kharlamov, ordered the reserve units to advance from south of the Baltic railroad to the line of the villages: Lisino, Raglitsy⁶ and Glumitsy, situated on the road from Volosovo Station to Siversky Station, on the Pskov rail line. The aim of that advance was to attack the enemy concentrated at Volosovo Station from the south, and also to fill the

⁵ Generally the original book calls this the "Warsaw" line. Since it is not obvious to a casual reader which line that is, I have chosen to refer to it as the "Pskov" line.

⁶ Kalitino.



breach between the 6th and the 2nd Divisions. However, as a result of the panic in the army, the manoeuvre failed, and Whites continued their offensive towards Gatchina, meeting almost no resistance.

The next day, the enemy's offensive continued to develop; it was obvious that it intended to take advantage of the confusion and disorganisation in our troops and break through to Tsarskoye Selo and Tosno, thus cutting off the Red Army from the rest of the Republic. This would mean that the 7th Army could not be reinforced, which would ensure the success of the planned operation.

We had to take hurried countermeasures – if not to repel the enemy, then at least to delay its advance until the units deployed by the General Staff from Moscow, Tula, Smolensk, Novgorod-Seversk, Tver and Novgorod via the Nikolaevskaya⁷ railway had arrived. In view of the advance of Yudenich's 2nd Corps at Luga, sending trains along the Vindavskaya⁸ railway was considered risky.

Because of these considerations, on 13 October the commander of the 7th Army gave the following operational order.

“The enemy has pushed our army units to the line: Kernovo Station (see Map 3) – Petrovskoe – Martynove – Tsvikova – Ozhogino – Kolodezi – Elizavetino Station (Baltic line) – B. Zarech'e – Lyady – Kemsk – Sorochkino – Luga Line – Lake Beloye – Dolgovka Station (near Preobrazhenskaya⁹ station, Pskov line) – Turova – Lake Klobutitskoye – Bykovo – Vyalki – Skovorodka – Gochegoshcha – Safronova Gora – Lake Tvershchikovo – Porozovo – Dudino – Volchiy Ostrov – Saldo – Linyao – eastern shore of Lake Pskovskoe – Gorki – Priozer'ye – Krivoshino – Pod-dub'e – Sityaeva – Nikolitsyana – Oparina – Usadishche – Vasilyevo – Turok Vymorskiy – Sergina – Volodkina – Maksimovka – Popadina and continues to press towards Gatchina and Luga.

To put the disorganised army in order and consolidate their current positions, I order:

- 1) The 6th Rifle Division is reinforced with a Naval Expeditionary Detachment and the 2nd Bashkir Rifle Regiment. It is to establish itself firmly on its right, and with its left advance to the Kempolovo – Volosovo line, where it will gain a foothold.
- 2) The 2nd Rifle Division is to withdraw the regiments of the 3rd Brigade to Gatchina, to be the army reserve where it will be replenished. The 3rd Brigade commander and his staff are to take over command of the Gatchina detachment. After the replenishment of the 1st and 2nd Brigades, the division will take the offensive and move to the line of Volosovo – Sosnitsy – Vyaz – Krasnye Gory – Sabitsy.
- 3) The 19th Rifle Division will withdraw its right flank from Luga and immediately take the offensive, advancing to the line of Sabitsy – Temnye Vorota – Ostrovno – Vyazhishche 1 – Dolzhitsy – Zelenska and Borki.
- 4) The 10th Rifle Division will continue to implement its previously set task.
- 5) The *Kursant* detachment is to deploy according to a separate order.
- 6) The enemy is intoxicated by its unexpected success, and our units, having lost contact with their command, are in a panicky mood and are retreating merely from the appearance of enemy cavalry.

I order you to immediately establish communication with all your units and explain to your subordinate units the general situation.

7th Army Commander Kharlamov;
RMS member¹⁰ Shatov;
Acting Chief of Army Staff Lyutov.”

⁷ The line that runs directly to Moscow.

⁸ So-called as it ends at Vindavskaya St in Petrograd. It is the line that runs through Detskoye Selo south to Batetskii.

⁹ Now Tolmachëvo.

¹⁰ Revolutionary Military Soviet, so a commissar for the army.



This order perfectly describes the mood of our units and the confusion which overtook them at the first White push. But it also shows that the army staff had not failed to act and had taken all the counter-measures that were possible before reinforcements could arrive, The worst units of the 2nd Division were sent to the rear to be reinforced, the 6th Division was strengthened by units of the Petrograd garrison; and a special shock detachment was formed from *kursants*. Our units were ordered to launch a counter-offensive to detain the enemy west of Gatchina and Luga, i.e. the points where the enemy was advancing towards us and where it had planned its main strikes, with the aim of seizing the three railway lines.

But this order did not change the situation at the front of the 7th Army for the better and our units continued their chaotic retreat under the attack of a defiant enemy. In a secret operational summary of the 7th Army for 14 October we find the following information about the situation:

“6th Division. Advancing along the whole front, the enemy has forced the division’s units to retreat to the line of the villages: Kernovo – Luzhki¹¹ – Slepino – Ozhogino – Kolodezi – Luiskovitsy – Rotkovo – Men’kovo [i.e. to the east on the left flank of the position indicated in Comrade Kharlamov’s order quoted above]. Parts of the Gatchina detachment advanced to Kikerino station west of Elizavetino, occupied it and are advancing further towards Volosovo.”

By evening the situation had taken a turn for the worse.

“The enemy, having broken through our position, occupied the area of the villages of Mochino – Rebolovo [12 km to the west of Gatchina], from where it is trying to spread in the direction of Voyskovitsy and Gatchina. Reserve units were sent from Gatchina to restore the situation. Under enemy pressure the enemy forces retreated from Kikerino village and our units withdrew to the east from Shpan’kovo [14 km south-west of Gatchina], where they mounted a counter-attack and took the Tarovitsy – Shpan’kovo – Natalievka line; to the south the enemy attacked Zarech’e village and forced our troops to retreat to the villages of Poddub’e – Vyra – Rozhdestveno [south-west of Severskiy]. On the left side of the 2nd Division, the enemy continued to advance and occupied the village of Yashera and the village of Nizovskaya [south of Divenska], then moved to the village of Luga and presumably to the Vindavskaya railway [towards Chashcha and Cholovo railway stations]. Units of the 19th Division continue to retreat.”

From this report we see that enemy attacked Gatchina in two columns: a northern one coming from Volosovo broke through our position in the Kolodezi – Elizavetino sector and began to move along the Baltic railroad towards Gatchina; a southern one, coming in contact with the left flank of the 6th Division, attacked Severskiy station on the Baltic railroad in order to cut the connection between the 6th and 2nd Divisions. The enemy’s plan showed that it knew in detail the disposition and strength of our units and was definitely operating towards Gatchina.

On 13 October the enemy captured some villages in front of our 19th Division, 5 to 10 km west of Luga, which caused our units to retreat to the western outskirts of Luga. Next, units of Yudenich’s 2nd Corps drove us out of Toloshchnitsy village, west of Serebryanskii village. Here the enemy was using the same method as at Gatchina, i.e. advancing from the front in one column and at the same time advancing another column to flank the Red units from the south.

Along the 7th Army’s front almost all our units hastily retreated, avoiding a decisive clash with the enemy. Only in a few sectors did our units remain combat-ready, showing some activity on that day: units of our Gatchina detachment advanced to the west of Gatchina and took Kikerino station on the Baltic railway. They attempted to advance further, but the withdrawal of nearby units forced them to retreat as well. Units of the 19th Division continued to press with their right flank on the Yudenich 2nd Corps, covering it from the south from Plyussa station, on the Pskov line, and pushed the 9th Chudsky and 1st Revel Regiments out. However, this success did not affect the overall strategic situation, which was worsening and complicating with each passing hour.

¹¹ Luzhki Mustovo.

The situation compelled the commander of the Western Front, on 14 October, to issue orders to try to stop the panicked retreat of the Red Army units and, if possible, throw the enemy back to its initial positions.

“Judging from our reconnaissance data, the enemy forces advancing on the front of the 7th Army are not large. There is reason to believe that Estonian units are not taking part in this offensive [which, unfortunately, was not correct]. The uninterrupted offensive of the enemy units along the operational direction creates suitable conditions for delivering a crushing blow in the enemy’s most vulnerable areas. A skillful and vigorous advance of our units on the Pskov front, from Batetskii station to the north-west, could not only halt the enemy offensive, but also force the enemy to roll back to its Narva-Gdov base with the same speed with which it is currently following our retreating units. I order:

- 1) Immediately restore revolutionary discipline in the units where sectarian interests prevail, by the severest measures;
- 2) send officers of the General Staff from army headquarters and Petrograd Military District headquarters to the divisions and detached groups to establish immediate communication between the command and the troops;
- 3) continue, as the combat situation allows, to withdraw to the rear any disorganised units, which you should undertake to bring to order.

Commander of the Western Front: Gittis.

Members of the RMS: Berzin, Potyaev.

Chief of Staff of the Western Front: Petin.”

The order of 14 October outlined a plan for the defence of Petrograd by attacking Yudenich’s forces on their south-eastern flank from the Pskov area. But it could not be realised because of the strong pressure exerted by Yudenich’s 2nd Corps at Batetskii station and the retreat of the 19th and 11th Divisions towards the line of the Vindavskaya railway.

Relatively passive up to that time on its left flank, during the night of 15 October the enemy tried to advance along the coast of the Gulf of Finland, as it is clear from the telegram of the chief of naval forces, who reported at 12 o’clock:

“Under enemy pressure we abandoned Ust’e; the 6-inch Kane¹² battery in Ust’e was blown up. At 23:30 o’clock on the 14th of October we abandoned Lipovo, where the bridge, 8 light guns and an anti-aircraft battery were blown up. On the morning of 15 October we left Kandikiulya [4 km north-east of Ust’e and 14 km west from Krasnaya Gorka]. The enemy attack was conducted by two regiments without artillery, but with a large number of machine guns. The enemy has mounted reconnaissance units. The forts of Krasnoflotski and Peredovaya opened fire at night on the advancing enemy.

During the day the enemy offensive around Krasnaya Gorka continued to develop, and in the evening, our right flank, under pressure, retreated to Shepelevo village (10 km to the west of Krasnaya Gorka).

In such a threatening situation and with the danger to Krasnaya Gorka, the naval commander ordered the 622nd Regiment, reinforced by two thousand sailors, to occupy the blockhouse line from Shepelevo village to Kuznetsy (south-west of Petergof), sending forward outposts and reconnaissance. These units covered the retreat of the disorganised 6th Division and courageously held the line entrusted to their defence until our attack. Not a single White unit went beyond this blockhouse line.

On the next day, 16 October, the enemy occupied Krasnoye Selo (25 km from Petrograd), Luga, Novosel’e and approached Detskoye Selo¹³ and Gatchina. The threat to Petrograd became apparent and

¹² Presumably a naval gun of the Canet system.

¹³ Then Tsarkoye Selo.



real. Therefore the commander of the Western Front gave an even more decisive and determined order to crush the enemy utterly and not give it Petrograd at an cost.

The plan for the defence of Petrograd. The commander of the front wrote on 16 October:

“The enemy North-Western Army, breaking through the front of the 7th Army, taking advantage of the exhaustion and instability of our troops, is developing its success along the general line of Yamburg to Petrograd, with the clear goal of capturing Petrograd. The enemy has occupied Krasnoye Selo, Luga and Novosel'e.

Units of the 7th Army are fighting on the line of Shepelevo, B. Kuznetsy, Veligonty, Yuvaya, Khebrola, Taytsy, Pudost', Malye Kolpany (near Gatchina), Pizhma, Lake Bel'e, Lake Mervo, Berig, Rastovo, Novosel'e, Serzha, Usadishche.

The Western Front's main task is to completely defeat Yudenich's North-Western Army, which is aiming for Red Petrograd, using all possible means. The rest of the front is to actively defend, while completing urgent refitting and restructuring and planning, after defeating Yudenich's army, to go onto the offensive.

Order:

a) The 7th Army, after transferring the 19th and 10th Rifle Divisions with attached units, the 2nd Brigade of the 53rd Rifle Division, the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Rifle Division and the 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Division to the 15th Army, is to defeat the enemy who have broken into the Gatchina sector: then push back the enemy from the Petrograd fortified district to the line of Kernovo, Begunitsy, Volosovo station, Mshinskaya station and establish contact with the right flank units of the 15th Army, with the further objective of advancing in the general direction of Yamburg – Volosovo.

b) The 15th Army, together with the attached units of the 7th Army, is to defeat the enemy at Strugi-Belye¹⁴, the mouth of the Chernaya River¹⁵ and move to the line of Preobrazhenskaya station, the Verduga River (tributary of the River Plyussa), Podberezhe, the Zhelcha river (running into Lake Chudskoe¹⁶, south of Gdov) to clear the Petrograd to Pskov railway and link with the left flank units of the 7th Army. On the remaining sections of their front it is to defend actively.

c) The demarcation line between the 7th and 15th Armies is: the source of River Narva, Lake Krasnogorskoye, 30 km to the north-west of Luga, Spasskaya Polist station (on the Novgorod line), the town of Valday, all inclusive for the 15th army.

This order illustrates vividly the difficult, almost tragic situation, in which the units of the 7th Army were facing by 16 October. The front of the army was broken, the link between the units was lost, the enemy was heading quickly towards Petrograd, meeting almost no resistance on its way from the Red units – exhausted by a fast retreat – and fresh troops had not yet arrived; the 3rd and 19th Divisions were separated and hanging in space, left to their own devices, without higher guidance and without properly understanding the situation as it was.

The front commander resorted to heroic measures. Under the onslaught of the enemy he regrouped and reinforced the 15th Army with units detached from the neighbouring 7th Army; he ordered that the 7th Army must go on to the offensive, restoring its links with the neighbouring units and defeat the enemy towards Volosovo and Yamburg; while the 15th Army, reinforced by the neighbouring army units, was to strike the enemy in the direction of Luga – Mshinskaya and Novosel'e – Gdov.

The situation in front of 7th Army was indeed extremely difficult. The 6th Division had already withdrawn to the line of the Valdai Hills (west of Krasnaya Gorka), the Kovashi River and from there to Veligonty village 10 km south of Petergof; the left flank of the division withdrew to Gorelovo station and

¹⁴ Now Strugi-Krasnye.

¹⁵ This flows from Lake Gorneshenskoye, before joining the Verduga.

¹⁶ Usually known in English by its Estonian name of Peipus.

Sosnovka village near Ligovo station. The 2nd Division occupied the line from Taytsy, Pudost' (on the Baltic railroad between Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina), Rezina colony, Kolpany (2 km southwest of Gatchina), Khalyuzi, forming a right angle with the 6th Division near Ligovo station. In Kopor'e Bay there were 11 big enemy ships, presumably transports, and 5 destroyers.

By this time, the staff of the Western Front had worked out two possible plans for the defence of Petrograd. The first, which was later adopted, consisted of a simultaneous offensive of the 7th and 15th Armies, from the north and south. The alternative was a passive defence of Petrograd, absorbing most of the enemy's forces, with the 15th Army attacking into the rear of Yudenich – in which case only the 15th Army would have an active role. Both variants had their positive and negative sides; the second variant was vigorously defended by 15th Army Staff because it gave them a more prominent role, reducing the activity of the 7th Army to the thankless and unprofitable role of a magnet attracting the enemy forces and attention. The first option was supported by the 7th Army Commander as it gave him greater operational freedom. Controversy then erupted over which to chose.

The arrival in Petrograd on 18 October of Comrade Trotski, Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic,¹⁷ came in these difficult days. He ascertained the situation on the spot and immediately appointed Comrade Nadezhniy of the General Staff as commander of the 7th Army, ordered that Petrograd be made ready to meet the enemy in street battles, and renamed the Directorate of the Petrograd Fortified Region as the Directorate for the Internal Defence of Petrograd. He improved the supply of the army with technical means and foodstuffs – rations were doubled – and streamlined transport.

On the evening of 17 October General Nadezhniy took over command of 7th Army. He sent to the Front headquarters a report, in which he drew particular attention to the need to prevent the enemy's advance towards the line of the Moscow railway, which would isolate Petrograd, and requested that reinforcements be sent to the Tosno area (on that line).

The report ran:

“By order of the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Comrade Trotski, I have taken temporary command of the 7th Army.

The units of the Army are positioned:

6th Division: Shepelevo, Petrovskoe, Gorelovo, Podgornoe Pulkovo (6 km north-west of Detskoye Selo, west of the line of the Pskov railway);

The 2nd Division left Gatchina at about 23:00 on 16 October and moved to a line of Kondakopshino – Tsarskaya Slavyanka (5 km south of Detskoye Selo, near the line of the Vindavskaya railway);

19th division: Pokrovskoe manor, Zarech'e, Gorodets, Berezhitsy, Lake Pesno, Zagor'e;

10th Division: Serzha, Linna, Priozershe, Shochinty, Kostyri. The 89th Regiment took Novosel'e station on 16 October.

On the front from the Gulf of Finland to the Vindavskaya railroad (near Vyritsa village) the enemy attacked with about 7,000 bayonets, with the main thrust in the Krasnoye Selo – Gatchina area. On the night of the 17th, the enemy occupied Gatchina and Vyritsa station, while on the rest of the Army's front we note increased pressure on the right flank.

Under the present circumstances, the units of the 2nd and 6th Divisions put up almost no resistance to the enemy and leave their positions, which has a demoralising effect on the reinforcements sent to support them.

We can expect that in the very near future the enemy will cut the Moscow railway. Taking into account that extremely grave threat to Petrograd, I request that capable reinforcements of at

¹⁷ That is, effectively, the supreme military position.

least two brigades be sent to the Tosno region to halt the enemy's advance from Gatchina towards Tosno and thwart its intention to capture Petrograd.

The Army HQ is moving to Petrograd today."

On assuming command of the Army, Nadezhniy first of all began to reform the staff, which was in a very weak state: there was no chief of staff, the operational section was run by a young, inexperienced officer, and the staff had no precise information about the location of the troops. The condition of the units was also unsatisfactory: the reserves, according to Comrade Nadezhniy, were of dubious quality and the ones sent by the Commander-in-Chief's order were not yet up to scratch. All this distracted the attention of the Army Commander from the purely operational work, which he needed to plunge into completely; nevertheless he energetically set about the execution of the tasks given him.

On 17 October Comrade Kamenev, the Commander-in-Chief, gave the key operational order to form a strike group, which was to play the decisive role in the forthcoming battle for Petrograd.

Strike Group.

"Yudenich's army is in trouble. His strike on Petrograd is clearly supported by neither Estonia nor Latvia. I find it necessary to use the situation to decisively and definitively defeat Yudenich's army and thus remove the permanent threat to Petrograd. For that I am concentrating in Petrograd a strike group consisting of the 3rd Brigade of the 21st Rifle Division from Tula and a *Kursant* Brigade from Moscow.

I forbid the use of these troops in small packets for passive purposes. Please inform me immediately of the area you have chosen for the concentration of the strike group. To cover the group's concentration area, it would be ideal to use the cavalry regiment of the 21st Division coming from Tula to Tosno and to assign it the task.

Besides that, two battalions of railroad guards from Moscow, two batteries of *Cheka* from Novgorod and from Tver and one battery of *Cheka* from Moscow are being sent to Tosno today. It would be good to include the Bashkir regiment, which is moving from Novgorod-Sivers'kyi in the shock group, and then that group would have 7,000 bayonets, 470 sabres and 12 guns.

It would be desirable to reinforce it with other units previously sent to you for support, as well as with artillery. Task a responsible person within the group's area of concentration to supervise the dispositions until you place it in the hands of a single commander.

Commander-in-Chief O. Kamenev, Member of the Revolutionary Military Soviet
S. Gusev, Chief of Staff of the Revolutionary Military Soviet
Lebedev, Military Commissar"

This order gave the commander of the Western Front general directives without limiting his initiative. It also implicitly made Tosno the concentration area for the strike group; but Comrade Gittis himself indicated the Kolpino to Tosno area as the most convenient area for the formation of that group. Further events showed that we could not have chosen a better area from which to strike at the flank of the arrogant enemy. Command of the strike group was given to Comrade Kharlamov, a young member of the General Staff.

The strike group included the following units in addition to those mentioned in the order of the Commander-in-Chief: the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Rifle Division, the 5th Latvian Rifle Regiment, an internal defence detachment and armoured trains.

This group, made up of fresh forces, was to decide the battle near Petrograd. The intention was to strike at the right flank of the 1st Corps of Yudenich, which had become too far to the east in its enthusiasm for success and had lost contact with the 2nd Corps.

The operational summary of the 7th Army on 17 October pointed out that the enemy was passive on the front of the 6th Division, which is why the 3rd Bashkir Regiment could move to the line of Koyerovo –

Venerazi¹⁸ – Rekolova (to the south of Ligovo station) to cover the Volkhonskoye highway (which connected Petergof with Detskoye Selo). Meanwhile, the 2nd Division, having abandoned Gatchina (see map no. 7), retreated to the line Aleksandrovskaya – Detskoye Selo, thus opening the way to Tosno for the enemy and hence the Pskov rail line via the stations at Vladimirskaya and Lisino. In order to break through to Tosno, the enemy concentrated about 3,000 bayonets in the Gatchina region.

In the area of Luga, at the front of our 19th Division, the White forces continued to advance, pushing our units to the Vindavskaya railway, and making their main attack in the direction of the junction at Batetskoe, 25 km south-west of Luga.

Having allowed its units a rest, on 18 October the enemy launched an offensive at the 6th Division's sector with the obvious aim of breaking through to Petrograd. The 7th Army order of 19 October stated:

“In the evening of 18 October the enemy broke through the front of the 6th Division in the area of Strelna and Finlandskaya Colony¹⁹; we discovered that its intention was to capture the Vladimirskaya half-station (east of Gatchina, on the Gatchina-Tosno line).

The 6th Division immediately regained the position, assigning it to the 7th Moscow *Kursant* Regiment and the 3rd Rifle Regiment. The right flank of the 2nd Division aided the 6th Division's left flank and established communication with it.

The Chief of Naval Forces appointed a group of destroyers to assist in the liquidation of the breakthrough in the area of Gazbechay and Podstavka.

Divisional commanders took measures to impose discipline and internal order.

The enemy is pushing back our units with comparatively weak forces thanks to its boldness and enterprising spirit. We must beat it in the same way, attacking without fear of being flanked or by-passed.

Commander of the Army Nadezhniy”.

It is seen from the above order that the enemy broke the Red positions in the most vulnerable place, in the immediate proximity of Petrograd, almost reaching the headquarters of the 6th Division, located in Ligovo, and attacked in the direction of the Petrograd – Oranienbaum – Krasnaya Gorka railway, which served the whole position up to Shepelevo. The situation was extremely threatening; a member of Revolutionary Military Soviet, Berzin, telegraphed to Commander-in-Chief on 19 October.

“Moscow to the Commander-in-Chief.

The situation near Petersburg since 18 October has again become more difficult. In the evening, Lieven's regiment, with two armoured vehicles, attacked a battalion of the 1st Reserve Regiment in the area of Vladimirovka and Mozikayzi. The battalion dispersed and withdrew to Strelna near the capital. The 479th Regiment, in reserve in the village Aleksandrovka, scattered in the direction of Ligovo and Strelna; at 20:00 on the 18 October the enemy captured Finlandskaya Colony (Sergievo Station). The 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Reserve Regiment retreated from the village of Gorelovo to the village of Novo-Panovo (near the village of Ligovo), 13 km from Petrograd. The HQ of the 1st Division moved from Ligovo to the Baltiysk railway station in Petrograd. The Moscow *kursants*, 1300 men, were sent to restore the situation. The trouble is that the regiments are ill-fed and unstable.

Member of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Berzin”

¹⁸ Now under Pulkovo Airport.

¹⁹ In the area of modern Volodarskaya.

By this time it was possible to start the strategic operation chosen and completed by the commander of the Western Front in his order of 14 October – to bypass the right flank of Yudenich's army from Batetskoe – Pskov to Gdov – Yamburg and thus help the 7th Army to advance from Krasnoye Selo to Yamburg (see Map 4).

When all the preliminary planning had been worked out, Comrade Gittis reported the following to the Commander-in-Chief in Moscow:

“The commander of the 15th Army has decided to first defeat the enemy Luga group using the 19th and 10th Divisions and the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Division with attached units. Being transferred to the Novosel'e²⁰ – Lapino area are the 11th Division and the 8th and 9th Regiments of the 1st Division.

The total number of troops assigned to the operation will be about 15,000 bayonets, 1,000 sabres and 200 guns [sic]. The regrouping is to be finished by the evening of 25 October, concentrating the 19th Division in the vicinity of Batetskoe – Peredol'skaya, the 11th Division in the Novosel'e – Lapino – Sitny area and the 10th Division west of Novosel'e. The main strike is entrusted to the 11th Division in the Luga – Mshinskaya area and an auxiliary one to the 19th and 10th Divisions in the areas of Peredol'skaya – Mshinskaya and Novosel'e – Gdov.

Front Commander Gittis”

Bearing in mind that the regrouping would be completed only by the evening of 25 October and, consequently, the 15th Army would only be able to begin the operation on the morning of the 26th. As we shall see, the 7th Army was ordered to take a simultaneous strike on 26 October, as a decisive offensive in order to finally break Yudenich's stubbornness. We will say more about that later, but now we return to an overview of the events on the front on 19 October, when the counter-offensive was not yet possible.

The Chief of the 6th Division, having received the order from the Army Commander to restore the situation, immediately ordered preparations for an offensive. The first to move was the valiant Bashkir group to the Krasnoye Selo sector, i.e. on the left flank of the division. After a brief artillery preparation, supported by armoured trains, it went on to the offensive. Parts of the 1st Reserve Regiment, which had been scattered the previous day, were collected, order was restored, and they attacked from Novo-Panovo village, advancing along the Krasnoye Selo road and even took Nikkorovo, 2 km to the south-west of Gorelovo.

On 19 October the 2nd Division repulsed an enemy attack on B. Karlino village, halfway between Krasnoye Selo and Detskoye Selo, but the units of the 2nd Vsevobuch Regiment, which covered the approaches to Detskoye Selo from the Gatchina side, could not resist the enemy's pressure and left for Bugry and Verevo villages, situated on the Gatchina – Detskoye Selo road. The approaches to Detskoye Selo needed to be covered from the west, so the commander of the 2nd Division advanced a detachment of *kursants* under Comrade Ezhov to Alexandrovsky station on the Pskov rail line. He ordered it to take up a position to the left of the retreating 2nd Vsevobuch Regiment, i.e. to cover the approaches to Detskoye from the west and south-west, and also a section of the Vindavskaya railway from Detskoye Selo to the junction with the Gatchina – Tosno line, all in all 20 km.

The 15th Army had also withdrawn under enemy pressure. The units of the army were demoralised and, according to a report of the Army Commander, extremely unstable – which was also noted in the 7th Army. In some cases machine guns were even used to fire at the fleeing units to hold them in place, and only in that way were the units brought back to a relative order.

By that time the general impression was that the enemy had reached Vindavskaya railway without any difficulties and in some places had already seized its line. As a result Petrograd would have been cut off from the rest of Soviet Russia, our units were panicking and retreated along the Northern railway, there

²⁰ In Pskov Oblast, not the one near Petrograd.



seemed to be no force that could stop it and launch attack against the defiant enemy. The days of Petrograd seemed numbered.

Comrade Trotski's visit to the front. It was at this time that the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic, Comrade Trotski, appeared at the front. He drove round the troops, showing up in the most dangerous places, speaking to the Red Army men and igniting them with his passionate, fiery revolutionary words. He said that the fate of the world revolution, the fate of the proletariat depended on the outcome of the fighting near Petrograd, that the Red troops in the fields of Petrograd should show maximum strength and crush the enemy, that they should not and could not give up Petrograd, because they had nowhere to retreat. If they gave the enemy the city, then after the restoration of Soviet power – which would be inevitable – the Petrograd proletariat would not let them into the city. It ignited the hearts of the Red Army men with revolutionary ecstasy and they vowed to die or defend the cradle of the Russian revolution – Red Petrograd.

The result of Comrade Trotski's review of the front lines was the end of the panicked retreat. Troops stopped, and strengthened their positions. The possibility of going onto the offensive began to emerge. It took some time, however, and the enemy kept pushing our units back.

By the evening of 18 October the units of the 6th Division under enemy pressure withdrew to the line (see Map No.7) of Sergievo station on the Baltic railroad to the ravine 2 km east from Sergievo; *kursant* detachments and units of the 1st Reserve Regiment were south, from the ravine to the village of Konstantinovka Novaya, then Chukhonskoe Koyerovo to the village of Veneryazi.²¹

Units of the 2nd Division, under enemy pressure, retreated on 18 and 19 October to Tsarskaya Slavyanka, south of Detskoye Selo near the Vindavskaya railway line. They could not hold there, and after an attack on Tsarskaya Slavyanka from the west and south there were a number of unsuccessful battles, as a result of which the 2nd Division withdrew to the line of Tuypola – Kuz'minskoye – Shushary – Moskovskaya Slavyanka and Fedorovskiy (see Map 5). On 20 October the commander of the 2nd Division asked the commander by telephone for permission to withdraw from Detskoye and Pavlovsk, as he could not hold those places, and if they were captured by the enemy its units would retreat back to Petrograd and further defence would not be possible. Permission was granted and divisions withdrew to the Pulkovo heights.

Preparations for the active defence of Petrograd. While the above events were taking place, the Staff of the 7th Army was preparing a plan for the transition to the attack and drafted orders to stop the retreat and push back the enemy, who was preparing to conquer Red Petrograd, onto the defensive. On 20 October the following order was given to the 7th Army:

“The enemy has grouped the main part of its forces between the [Pskov] and Vindavskaya railways, pushing back the units of the 2nd Division from Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk. Tomorrow, on 21 October, we will undertake a decisive offensive on the front of the 6th and 2nd Rifle Divisions and with Comrade Kharlamov's group (near Tosno Station).

The 6th Division (Comrade Shatov) is to attack the enemy on the Konstantinovka – Novosel'e – Razbegay front, with the aim of reaching Ropsha and Krasnoye Selo.

The 2nd Division is to firmly defend the Tuypola – Shushary positions.

The Kharlamov Group, which consists of Comrade Ezhov's Petrograd *kursant* detachment, the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Rifle Division, the 21st Division's Cavalry Regiment and Comrade Sharonov's Tosno Detachment, is to attack the enemy on the line of Detskoye Selo – Vangamyza half-station²² on the Vindavskaya line to reach Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina.

The Chief of Internal Defence of Petrograd is to bring the city defences to full readiness by 1 o'clock on 21 October.

²¹ These villages have largely been obliterated to make way for Pulkovo Airport.

²² Where the Vindavskaya line crosses the Izhora River.

The Chief of Naval Forces is to prepare the Baltic Fleet to support the 6th Division with naval fire.

The offensive of the 6th Division and the Kharlamov Group is to commence at six o'clock on 21 October.

Inform your units that Red Petrograd is waiting the outcome of the battle tomorrow with full faith in our success.

The head of air defence of Petrograd to send air reconnaissance to Detskoye Selo, Gatchina and Krasnoye Selo, and bomb the Krasnoye – Detskoye area.

Commander of the 7th Army, Nadezhniy.”

The order stated that the 6th Division was to strike from north to south and the Kharlamov Group from east to west, engaging the right flank of General Yudenich's 1st Corps at Detskoye Selo. The operational target for both attacking groups was Krasnoye Selo, which was also taken under fire from the warship *Sevastopol*, stationed at Gutuzhevo port at the mouth of the Neva.

The divisional commanders had been informed of the forthcoming attack even before the order was given, and on the 19 and 20 October had begun to prepare for it, putting their units in good order. At this time two tanks made by the workers of the Obukhov factory were delivered to the front.

Preparing Petrograd. Petrograd had already begun intensive preparations to repel the enemy in the event it attempted to storm the city. On 16 October, on his way from Moscow to Petrograd, Comrade Trotsky gave the first order for the internal defence of the city from his train. He wrote:

“The task is not only to defend Petrograd, but also to put an end to the North-Western Army once and for all. From this point of view it would be most advantageous for us, in purely military terms, to let Yudenich's gang break through the very walls of the city, for it is not difficult to turn Petrograd into a great trap for the White Guard troops. Petrograd is neither Yamburg nor Luga; the northern capital of the workers' revolution occupies an area of [100 square kilometres]. Petrograd has nearly twenty thousand Communists, a considerable garrison, and huge – almost inexhaustible – engineering means and artillery defence. Breaking into that gigantic city, the White Guards will find themselves in a stone maze, where every house will be a mystery, a threat, or a mortal danger to them. They could be attacked from the windows, from the attics, from the cellars, from around the corners. We will have machine guns, rifles, pistols, hand grenades everywhere. We can drape some streets with barbed wire, leave others open and turn them into traps, it only takes a few thousand people to decide not to surrender in Petrograd. What are the forces of the enemy? Suppose five thousand, suppose ten thousand. On the streets, they can not maneuver in compact masses, or deploy into chains; they will have to break up in small groups and squads, that will get lost in the streets and alleys of Petrograd, without proper communication with each other, surrounded by danger around every corner. The entire apparatus of internal city communications would remain entirely in our hands. By occupying a central position, we would be operating along radiuses from the centre to the periphery, directing each strike in the direction which would be most important to us. The possibility of continuous transfers and an abundance of transports would support our forces; every fighter would feel a well-organised base and abundant mobile reserves behind him.

If the White Guards even manage to bring up artillery to a sufficiently close distance before our reinforcements arrive, that would still achieve nothing. An artillery bombardment of Petrograd might, of course, cause damage to individual random buildings, killing some inhabitants, women, children, but a few thousand Red fighters, positioned behind the wire fences, barricades, in basements or attics, would be exposed to extremely negligible risk in relation to the total number of residents and the shells fired. On the contrary, every White Guardsman who entered the city would be in personal direct and immediate danger, for the defenders of Petrograd would direct blows at the attacker from windows, from around corners. It would be most difficult for the White Guard horsemen to do much, as the horses would soon become a heavy burden for each of them. Two or three days of such street fighting will be enough to turn the breaching gangs into a



frightened herd, or into cowards, who will surrender in groups or individually to unarmed passers-by or women.

The whole point is not to give up at the first moment. It has long been said that a great city is a great panic, and there is no doubt that in Petrograd there are many bourgeois lackies, remnants of the old regime – without will, without energy, without ideas, without courage; a human pulp not capable of anything in itself, but at a critical moment it often swells greatly, absorbing the smell of petty fears and herd panic.

Fortunately for the revolution there are people with a different spirit in Petrograd: they are the advanced proletarians, and above all the conscious youth of the working class. These elements are charged with the internal defence of Petrograd, or, more precisely, the extermination of the White Guard gangs, should they race into the walls of the proletarian capital. Of course, street battles are fraught with casualties and the destruction of cultural values: that is one of the reasons why the field command is obliged to take all measures to prevent the enemy from reaching Petrograd. But if the field units are not able and let open the way to Petrograd to the enemy, it would not mean the end of fighting at Petrograd front, but the battle would be more concentrated, more fierce and more decisive. Innocent victims and senseless destruction would be entirely the responsibility of the White bandits – and we would have achieved the complete annihilation of the North-Western gangs by means of a resolute, courageous and fierce struggle in the streets of Petrograd.

Get ready, Petrograd. The days of October have more than once been great days in history for you. In October, fate is calling you to write a new, perhaps, most glorious page in the history of the proletarian struggle.

L. Trotski. Bologoye
10 October 1919”

Petrograd began to prepare for defence of the city. But on 15 October, even before the arrival of Comrade Trotski, the Defence Committee – formed under the chairmanship of Comrade Zinoviev – declared Petrograd in a state of siege and resolved: 1) to prohibit all traffic in the streets after 8 p.m., 2) to close all amusement places, theatres and cinemas, 3) to stop private trade, cafés, sausage stalls, fruit stalls, etc., 4) to establish checks of cars, trams and carriages throughout the day and night, 5) to switch off all private subscribers from the telephone network.

On 16 October, by order of the Petrograd provincial military commissariat, a mobilisation of all workers born between 1879 and 1901 was announced. Partisan detachments were formed at factories and plants to be sent to the front. By decree of the Petrograd Soviet, reliable outposts of Communist Party and Soviet members were set up in the Petrograd, Neva and Vyborg districts. The Defense Committee appointed an emergency revolutionary troika, made up of Comrade Blagonravov (chair), Comrade Prokhorov and Comrade Kaplun, to lead the armed forces for the protection of the railway stations and railways at the Petrograd Junction. Chiefs of internal defence were appointed for the districts. The workers formed units to meet the enemy in the streets and squares; arming themselves with rifles, pistols, hand grenades and machine guns and positioned themselves in the defence hubs. The District Soviet of the Vyborg side decided to arm all male members of the Soviet; the Petrograd district was totally mobilised. Field fortifications were hurriedly erected near railway stations, in squares and on the outskirts of the city, and guns and machine guns were positioned.

On 17 October the following proclamation from Trotski and Zinoviev to the Communist and Soviet organisations and to all the workers and peasants of Petrograd and the neighbouring provinces was published.

“Comrades, the danger from Yudenich and Rodzianko’s White gangs is looming over Red Petrograd. The Petrograd proletariat has decided to fight to the last drop of blood. The Central Soviet authorities are rushing to Petrograd’s aid, sending new regiment after regiment to the Petrograd front. If necessary, the workers of Petrograd will also fight in the streets and squares of Petrograd itself, and defeat our enemies. We appeal to you to come to your assistance in this

decisive hour. Send armed detachments and groups of Communists in haste. Send only tried and tested comrades who will not falter.”

The sailors of the Baltic Fleet issued an appeal to the Petrograd proletariat, calling for victory over the enemy. The proclamation said:

“In that fateful hour, the 12th hour of the revolution, Red sailors of the Baltic fleet marched in double ranks to the battle lines. In the two years since, in the unprecedented struggle of the workers for their liberation, the Red Fleet has joined with the workers of Petrograd and the Red Army to stand steadfastly at the post of social revolution. They have appeared more than once on the outskirts of Petrograd under a proud red banner, to defend the first city of the proletarian revolution from White gangs of the eternal enemies of the working people. The Petrograd sailors instilled fear and terror into the ranks of the enemy. To accept battle with them meant to accept a fight to the death for the White mobsters. And now, taking advantage of the diversion of our forces to the south, the enemies of the workers are trying to penetrate into our revolutionary quarters.

We, the Baltic sailors, take an oath to win under the walls of Petrograd. Those who still hesitate, if there are any, must now cast aside their doubts. No one is neutral. You are either with us or against us. For the workers or for the fighters. The sailors of the Red Baltic Fleet call out to all workers, to all those who, like us, hate slavery, gold-chasers and bourgeois vileness; they are called to the final victorious battle. All to arms to the battle line, to the granite outskirts of Petrograd. Petrograd can not and must not fall. With strong and mighty sailor’s hand we hold up our banner of the workers’ and peasants’ country. The White Guards bring death to the workers. They want to flood the streets of Red Petrograd with the blood of the workers and peasants. The landlords, the unbridled plundering, the restoration of Tsarist power ooze in their every step forward. Everyone knows this, and everyone knows where, at least for a time, the mercenaries of global capital have gone. The sailors of the Baltic will stand at their posts until their last cartridge, until their last breath. The powerful guns of our dreadnoughts will be able to finish off their gangs. And let not the Whites dream of entering Petrograd. In the last resort, only ruins can be left for the White Guards on the site of the Red capital. The revolution is calling you to battle. The revolution demands an iron revolutionary discipline from you, a firm belief in victory. All workers, join us in the Red victory with the battle cry ‘Proletarians of all countries, unite!’ We will win!

Sailors of the Baltic Red Fleet”

Then on 19 October a new proclamation was issued by Comrades Trotski and Zinoviev.

“Workers and Red Army men. The working population of Petrograd is still not fully aware of the danger hanging over us. The enemy is negligible in numbers, but is cunning and brazen. If we don’t increase our efforts, the Whites will break into Petrograd. And if the Whites are in Petrograd even for one or two days, they will slaughter hundreds and thousands of Petrograd workers and citizens. The enemy is now in Gatchina, and in Krasnoye Selo, and aims to capture Strelna. There can be no room for carelessness. The alarm must be sounded. Everyone must understand the seriousness of the situation. Comrades, all those mobilised must report immediately. All honest workers should join the factory and district militias. Those who sow panic and false rumours should be subjected to merciless terror. We must arm ourselves. We must prepare to defend ourselves without delay even for a moment, if the White gangs manage to break into its walls. Let’s do it. Everyone into the ranks. Sound the alarm at the gates!

Trotski, Zinoviev”

On the same day, an emergency meeting of the Petrograd Soviet unanimously adopted the following resolution, proposed by Comrade Zinoviev:

“The Soviet resolves: the situation of Petrograd is formidable. There can be no room for carelessness. The danger is great. We must be on our toes. We need to show all the workers how great the danger is. We must raise the entire working population to its feet, we must arm ourselves. We must prepare to defend every inch of our land, every house and every street in

Petrograd. The Petrograd Soviet approves the establishment of the Petrograd Internal Defence Soviet, to which all military power is to be transferred in Petrograd.

The Soviet demands that the railwaymen move the troop trains as quickly and as energetically as possible. The Soviet proposes that the Internal Defence Soviet immediately establish a special tribunal for the railways, and that all those guilty of delaying the transfers be brought before this tribunal. The Soviet demands that the entire working population of Petrograd must deploy all its forces to help our Red Army: intensify the production of overcoats and boots, intensify the mobilisation and intensify the guard. Every single one of you must rise up!

Deeply confident of our victory over the White Guard gangs that roam around Red Petersburg, the Petrograd Soviet calls on all workers to give everything to the cause of the defence of our great city.”

These proclamations and appeals to the workers had an effect – Red Peter sprang into action and sent all the tried and tested comrades to the front, to raise the spirits of the troops; the rank and file energetically set about barricading the city; in one day the city was covered with a network of trenches, machine-gun nests, and batteries on the roofs of houses; machine guns and anti-aircraft guns were mounted on the roof-tops. The city feverishly prepared to meet the enemy. People felt the decisive moment was approaching. That moment came on the night of 20/21 October. That the enemy was confident in its victory can be seen from the fact that on 20 October the Entente’s military agents sent a radio message to London from Detskoye saying that Yudenich had captured Petrograd, and that General Gzenkampf, commander of the Petrograd group, on being asked to observe the capital with binoculars answered that he would see it the next day without binoculars.



CHAPTER III

Breakthrough

According to the reports of defectors and other intelligence information, it was established that the NWA 1st Corps had been ordered to dislodge the Red Army from the last fortified positions in front of Petrograd and seize the Pulkovo heights on the night of 20/21 October. The 7th Army could not delay and retreat any longer; the strategic situation demanded an offensive. The troops were sufficiently prepared for it, the units had been reordered and replenished, reinforcements had been brought up and deployed; the Kolpino and Tosno shock groups had been formed. Comrade Trotski had visited the front and the arrival of experienced party agitators to the units raised the Red Army morale to a proper, high level. The plan of attack had been worked out and it remained only to give the command in order for the troops of the 7th Army to rush forward.

The Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic gave the order:

“Red Army men, commanders and commissars. Tomorrow will decide the fate of Petrograd. While in the south the army has taken the offensive, regained Orël and defeated Mamontov’s twelve regiments, but in Petrograd a series of setbacks have forced our troops to retreat to the Pulkovo positions. No further retreat is possible, Petrograd must not be surrendered – for even the temporary surrender of Petrograd means the loss of thousands of workers’ lives and incalculable cultural treasures. Petrograd must be defended at all costs. All measures have been taken. Fresh units have been raised, which gives us a huge advantage, refreshing and renewing the command staff. The best battle-hardened proletarians are engaged. All the conditions for victory are in place. It is only necessary that you, yourselves, want to win and vow to ensure this victory. Remember, you have the great honour of defending this city where the great workers’ and peasants’ revolution was born. Let’s go! Onto the offensive. Death to the mercenaries of foreign capital! Long live Red Petrograd!

Trotski. 20 October 1919”

Battle for the Pulkovo Heights. At 6 a.m. on 21 October, the 7th Army began its offensive. At that time fresh army units had started to reach Kolpino, which facilitated fulfilment of the plan.

To have a clearer picture of our plan and the disposition of the forces at the moment of the offensive, we will cite the text of the report of the 7th Army Commander sent to the Commander-in-Chief on 21 October, which explains the intention of the manoeuvre undertaken and the disposition of the shock groups.

“On 18 October, when I took command of the 7th Army, it was defending Shepelevo, Gorelovo, Podgornoe Pulkovo, Kondakopshino, Tsarskaya Slavyanka and under the pressure of the enemy the 2nd Division was gradually receding towards Gatchina – Tsarskoye Selo. In the light of this I decided to send suitable reinforcements of the 3rd Brigade of the 21st Infantry Division, the Latvian Regiment, the artillery *divizion* of the 21st Infantry Division, the Composite Bashkir Regiment, the light *Cheka* battery, the heavy *Cheka* battery and the 3rd *Kursant* Brigade to be concentrated near Kolpino and Yam-Izhora, and the 59th and 60th Railway Regiments, the Novgorod and Tver *Cheka* battalions, the light Moscow reserve battery, a detachment of Smolensk communists, and armoured train No. 67 in the area of Tosno station, for an attack towards Gatchina – Volosovo.

At present almost all the units earmarked for an offensive are concentrated near Kolpino – Fëdorovskoye post (on the Vindavskaya line).²³

Today units of the 2nd Division, under the enemy’s assault, withdrew to the line of Tuypola (3 km south-west of Pulkovo, on the Petergof – Detskoye Selo road) – Kuz'mino – Kuzminka – Shushary – Moskovskaya Slavyanka – Fëdorovskoye post – Raykolova (see Map 5).

²³ The 2nd Brigade of the 21st Division joined the battle straight from the train.



Thus it is possible to strike the enemy's the right flank with it so positioned."

The commander then went on to give directives to the army's divisions:

"On reaching the line of Detskoye Selo – Gatchina, due to the reduction of the front, continue the offensive along the railway towards Yamburg with simultaneous pressure from the 6th Division with the approach of the other reinforcements.

Because of the extreme instability of the units of the 2nd Division covering Petrograd, we have to confine ourselves to the grouping as presented, due to the need to concentrate suitable reserves in the area near to Petrograd."

This report shows us the plan of the offensive operation, which began in the morning. The main strike was to be led by the Kharlamov Group from the east, in the direction of Kolpino, to hit the right flank of Yudenich's army, with a secondary strike being led by Comrade Shatov's 6th Division from the north; the operational target for both was Gatchina, i.e. the army units were carrying out the tasks as given in the attack order of the day before.

The Kharlamov Group, hastily formed from the units arriving in Kolpino and Tosno, left their trains and went straight into the to fight, and inflicted crushing blows on the Whites.

By 6 o'clock in the morning of the 21 October the 6th Division was forced out of Ust'-Ruditsa village, 15 km south of Krasnaya Gorka on the right bank of the Kovashi river; but that was the last step back.

The operational summary of midnight on the 21st already noted the successes in the first hours of the new phase of the Petrograd operation. In that document we read:

"Krasnaya Gora sector. The enemy, supported by machine-guns, led an attack at on the San Galli post, but was repulsed by machine-gun and rifle fire.

6th Division, right sector. Enemy tried to advance on Uzigonty, Veligonty and Nastolovo villages (10-12 km south of Petergof), but was cut down by our machine-gun fire.

At Molikaisi – Razbegaevo – Pastolo – Pavkulia villages (on the Strelna river, 6 km to the south-west of Strelna station) the enemy tried to attack but was repulsed. Pavkulia was taken by our units,

Krasnoye Selo sector. The 7th Regiment took Strelna – Krasnoye and Volkhonskoye (on the Petergof – Detskoye road); units of the 2nd Reserve Regiment occupied up to the village of Vladimirovka (see Map 6).

The 2nd Division (which KomDiv Odintsov took command of on 21 October) right sector. Units of the 6th Regiment took N. Susary village (5 km south-west of Podgornoe Pulkovo and west of Detskoye Selo).

Left Sector. Units of the 2nd Regiment fought their way into the village of B. Kuz'mino (3 km north of Detskoye); the enemy left panic-stricken.

Kharlamov Group. Kolpino sector. *Kursant* detachment took Novaya village (2 km to the east of Detskoye), but was forced to retreat to the east because of the strong resistance of the enemy.

The 13th regiment was at half way between Novaya village and Moskovskaya Slavyanka (3-4 km north-east of Detskoye).

The 14th Regiment was operating south of the village of Lipitsy (3 km east of Detskoye Selo) and near the brickworks. The 189th Regiment, having occupied the villages of Kattelevo and Voyskorovo, was delayed in this sector due to heavy artillery fire.

Left sector, 5th Latvian Regiment continues to advance in the direction of Edyup' and Glinka (i.e. towards Pavlovsk).

Tosno sector. Units of the sector have attacked Vladimirskaia station, the enemy is resisting."



Despite its laconic nature, almost like a telegram, it is not difficult to see from it that the beginning of the operation was clearly successful. By the evening the operation had progressed even more (the information about the evening fighting was included in the morning report of 22 October).

In the Ligovo sector, on the right side of 6th Division, units of 7th Reserve Regiment took control of the villages of Sosnovka, Gorelovo and Konstantinovka and reached the crossroads of the railway with the highway from Ligovo to Krasnoye Selo, 4 km north from the latter, and B. Pikko village, advancing 3 to 4 km in the direction of Krasnoye Selo.

On the left section of the division, units of the Bashkir Brigade occupied the line of Storozhevoy post – D. Tuypola.

On the Kolpino sector the units of the 5th Latvian Regiment, which was a part of the Kharlamov Group, took the village of Yam-Izhora and captured three machine-guns and pursued the enemy. The Tosno detachment occupied the villages of Pogi, Lorvilovo and Kos'e in the area south of [Novo]Lisino.

As noted before, the battleship *Sevastopol* contributed a lot to our offensive on the day: it fired twice with three-gun salvos from 12-inch guns: from 5:30 to 6 o'clock it shelled the region of Krasnoye Selo, Pavlovsk and B. Pikko, and from 17:30 to 18 o'clock it shelled Krasnoye Selo.

The 15th Army which, as already said, was situated on the left of the 7th Army, keeping contact with its left flank, also advanced a little and occupied a number of villages.

On the 19th Division's sector, south-eastward of Luga, units of the 166th Regiment, a company of Communists and a sapper company took Zapolzhe, Peredol'skaya and Golubkova villages; the 163rd Regiment took Katorska and Penkova villages; the 7th Samara Regiment took the villages of Pogorelovo and Kirilkovo; the 162nd and 164th Regiments took Bukina, Zaborovie and Komandrino villages and continued to advance along the Pskov railway.

On 21 October Yudenich had planned to capture Pulkovo heights, the tactical key to the Petrograd defensive positions. From there they were to open fire at the southern outskirts of the city, smash the Putilov and Obukhov factories with their workers settlements, and then move along the highway to Moskovskaya Zastava and enter the Red capital.

But it was not to be. On the day our units resolutely and bravely took the offensive on the most dangerous sectors of the front: not only did they prevent the enemy from seizing the Pulkovo heights – our last defensive positions in front of Petrograd – but almost encircled its units at Detskoye Selo. Our offensive that day was supported for the first time, on the 2nd Division's sector, was supported by the tanks built by the Obukhov plant workers.

Result of the Pulkovo Fighting. The results of the first day were properly assessed by the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic in the order he issued that day.

“Today was a critical day. Our troops had withdrawn to the Pulkovo heights, that is the last line before Petrograd. A retreat from there would mean that the fight would then be within the walls of the city, i.e., it would turn into internal defence.

Testimonies of defectors and other information showed that the enemy ordered the capture of the Pulkovo heights on the night of 20/21 October. But that task was not completed by the White Army. Not only we did not hold the important line, but more than that, the whole front advanced against resistance.

We took prisoners, machine guns and other trophies. Even the weakest units showed resilience and strength. The first tanks made in Petrograd took part in the battle with undoubted success.

The Red Army enthusiastically welcomed the appearance of the first armoured caterpillar.

The outcome today can be assessed as quite favourable. Thanks to the fresh reserves, on the one hand, and thanks to the high spirits of the commissars and commanders, the 7th Army has certainly undergone an internal revolution – the units have regained their composure and are



moving forward. The supply is more than satisfactory. The mood is quite confident. The *kursants* are especially eager to reward themselves after the series of failures.

Nevertheless, the situation remains tense overall. The enemy is only one day's march away from Petrograd. Consequently, to insure ourselves against mishaps, we need to tirelessly continue to strengthen Petrograd, organising its internal defence. Secured from the inside, Petrograd is at the same time an excellent rear for our reborn front. The turning point has happened. In the coming days even the ever-lying Anglo-French radio will have to acknowledge this.

L. Trotski. Petrograd, 21 October”

The success achieved made it possible to set some serious new tasks for the 7th Army to solve on 22 October. Those tasks were stated in the operational order for the army of 21 October, No 74, which states:

“Tomorrow, 22 October, the Army will continue the offensive: the 6th Division, having transferred the Bashkir Brigade to the 2nd Division, will take the line between Modikayzi and Peski (5 km north of Krasnoye Selo), knock out the enemy from the area between those villages and Kol. Strel'ninskoye; the 2nd Division is to dislodge the enemy from its positions from Pikko (5 km north-east of Krasnoye Selo) to Detskoye Selo, then assault Taytsy manor (southeastward); the Kharlamov group is to take over Detskoye Selo, Pavlovsk, Tsarskaya Slavyanka and Vladimirskaya station, with a chain taking Gatchina. After artillery preparations at dawn, begin the execution of the above tasks no later than 8 a.m.”

Noticing our move to the attack, the enemy immediately began to regroup its forces and concentrate mainly in the area of Krasnoye Selo, Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk, aiming to put up solid resistance to us there. Despite that, on the afternoon of 22 October, units on the left flank of the Odintsov group (two divisions) approached the Vindavskaya railway station in Detskoye Selo from the north, while units of the right flank of the Kharlamov group approached it from the south. They were to capture Detskoye Selo and thus eliminate the threat to Petrograd from the south and clear the Vindavskaya line of the enemy. The enemy did not manage to reach the Nikolayevskaya line, although they kept it under artillery fire for some time.

To solve the problem, on 22 October the commander of the 7th Army gave Operational Order No. 75.

“On 23 October the army shall continue the offensive: the 6th Division is to reach the line Ropsha – Krasnoye Selo; the Odintsov Group is to reach the line Krasnoye Selo – Detskoye Selo; the Kharlamov Group is to capture Detskoye Selo, Pavlovsk, Tsarskaya Slavyanka, Vladimirskaya half-station and Vyritsa (on the Vindavskaya railway line). The 6th Division and the Odintsov Group, while advancing on Krasnoye Selo, is to achieve its capture by moving around the flanks.

If we look at a map, we can see that the plan was to encircle the main enemy forces in the Taytsy – Gatchina area from three sides, that a trap was being set for them. But the enemy was still strong enough and its thirst to capture Petrograd, from which it was only a few km away (Ligovo, 13 km away, Pulkovo, 11 km from the city limits), was pushing it to risky ventures, and to stubborn resistance. In view of this, it took several more days for the 7th Army to fulfil its task.

By 6 o'clock in the morning of 22 October, units of the 4th Expeditionary Detachment of the Baltic Fleet from the 6th Division occupied Raikuzi and Modikayzi villages, one km southeast of Raikuzi. The same day the 2nd Division, after artillery preparation, went on the offensive. On the right flank the Bashkir group took the hamlet of Khamyalayne, 5 km east of Krasnoye Selo; in the centre and on the left flank our units advanced successfully, being supported by the fire of an armoured train on the Pskov line. Throughout the day in the Kolpino sector units of the Kharlamov Group fortified the lines reached the day before and prepared for an offensive. Units in the Tosno sector fought around the village of Annolovo, 7 km south of Pavlovsk, and at Vladimirskaya station.



The Baltic fleet during the night of 22 October suffered a heavy loss. In the Kopor'e bay our destroyers *Gavriil*, *Svoboda* and *Konstantin*²⁴ hit the enemy's mine blockade and sank with only a few of the crews surviving.

Units of the 15th Army moved slightly back that day, to the line of the Vindavskaya road.

Capture of Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk, 23 October. The situation on the Petrograd sector on 23 October can be seen by Order Number 76 of the 7th Army for that date:

“After two days of bitter fighting on the line of Krasnoye Selo – Detskoye Selo – Pavlovsk – Fëdorovskoye, and having broken the enemy, we have reached the line: Skachki (near Krasnoye Selo) – M. Pikko (4 km to the east of Krasnoye Selo) – B. Karlino (6 km to the west of the northern outskirts of Detskoye Selo) – Babolova – Koshelevo (2 km to the south of Detskoye Selo) – Pavlovsk railway station – Edyup' – Glinka – Fëdorovskoye post – Annolovo.”

By evening Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk were occupied. The order carried on:

“The *kursants* and units of the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Division, achieved significant strategic success on the third day of stubborn fighting by units of the 6th and 2nd Divisions.”

In the same order CommandArm Nadezhniy gave directions for 24 October, instructing the army to continue the offensive begun so successfully.

“The 6th Division, having captured Krasnoye Selo, is to reach the Ryudemyullu – Villozi line (on the western shore of Lake Dudergofskoye); the Odintsov group is to capture Krasnoye Selo and to reach the line Kavelakhta – Taytsy – M. Vereva (5 km north of Gatchina); the Kharlamov Group is to send cavalry units in the direction of Vyritsa and Kurovitsy; the head of Petrograd air defence is to send reconnaissance units to the districts of Gatchina, Vyritsa and Krasnoye Selo to ascertain the enemy groupings.”

Intelligence showed that the enemy had concentrated considerable forces in the regions of Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina and did not seem to have lost hope of advancing from there and repulse our attacks. Its units, which had occupied Detskoye Selo till the evening of 23 October, were withdrawn to Gatchina, and the rearguard fortified in Tsarskaya Slavyanka, south of Detskoye. Our plan was as follows: the Odintsov Group, advancing from the east towards Krasnoye Selo, was to reach the railway at Detskoye Selo. At the same time the left flank units of the 6th Division advanced on the Ryudemyullu – Villozi line into the rear of the Krasnoye Selo group to cut off its retreat along the road to Yamburg. The successful execution of that manoeuvre would have put the enemy in a hopeless situation. It understood that and undertook a counter manoeuvre which, although it did not remedy the situation, delayed for some days its ultimate defeat; the essence of the counter manoeuvre consisted of another desperate attempt to break through to the Pulkovo heights, but the loss of Detskoye Selo doomed this attempt to a total failure. But more about that later.

Now here are the orders that Trotski, issued on 23 October, in order to outline the current situation on the Petrograd front and indicate the next tasks for the 7th Army.

In the first of the orders we read:

“Up to the 21st Yudenich was advancing, meeting weak resistance. On the 21st, the 7th Army entrenched itself on the Pulkovo line and fought back. Yudenich's offensive continued. On the 22nd the Red Army took the offensive. The White Army put up a very persistent resistance. During 21 and 22 October, when Yudenich's advance of was halted, he managed to pull up his reserves and thus thicken his line. The fighting became fierce and chaotic. By the evening of the 23rd we captured all of Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk. It was a major success. Not only have we stopped the offensive, but also inflicted a very large blow to the enemy. Our units are reborn. The communication and control apparatus is functioning without interruption and disruption. Thanks to the efforts of the best Petrograd workers the proper supplies are being sent. The units, caught

²⁴ Gabriel, Freedom, and Constantine.

by surprise by Yudenich's offensive and suffering a series of setbacks, are now competing in self-sacrifice and heroism.

A breakdown in the enemy ranks has begun. In previous days there had been hardly any prisoners and the number of defectors was in single figures. Now the number of defectors and prisoners of war has sharply increased. They are arriving in dozens and will soon be arriving in hundreds and thousands. Our success is substantial, but the task is far from over. We must crush Yudenich, wipe him off the face of the earth and thus once and for all ensure the peace of Petrograd. In the mean time we have dealt the White gangs their first blow. The danger hanging over Petrograd has receded, but has not disappeared. The enemy is still only two marches from Petrograd. The work to fortify the city must, therefore, proceed at full speed. The work in providing for the field army must be equally energetic, providing it with horses and all the necessary supplies.

It would be unforgivable if our first success became a reason for complacency. On the contrary, it should be a signal for a new strain of energy. The enemy is shaken, but not defeated. We have wrestled it from an important position, now we must pursue it relentlessly. We need to put all the forces and means of attack into motion, not to give Yudenich's gangs any rest or time to recover, we must improve the army's equipment, strengthen our communications, increase our discipline, so we can advance, pursue, fight until the end – until total victory. Then the last blow will quickly follow the first.

L. Trotski. Petrograd, 23 October”

The second order, No. 161, was issued to the 7th Army, and called for the utmost effort to definitively destroy the enemy.

“The first task of the 7th Army is completed: the enemy has been driven away from Petrograd. The proletarian Red capital is out of danger. Everyone from the commander of the army to the youngest Red Army man has fulfilled his duty and earned the gratitude of the Socialist Fatherland. Now we need to carry out, with equal success, the second half of the task – to annihilate the enemy. There is only one way to do that – not to give it any rest, to drive it on, and beat it until it is completely destroyed. The situation of Yudenich's army is essentially hopeless. Delay on your part might temporarily save it. Therefore, it is the duty of the 7th Army to bring together and concentrate its forces in pursuit of the half-defeated gangs. You must advance and drive the enemy back, you must overcome your fatigue, to pursue the reeling enemy. Every hour lost now, will have to be made up for in the future at the cost of extra heavy casualties. So there is no time to lose. The success of the mission depends on its speed.

Red Army men! Commanders! Commissars! The Soviet nation desires your utmost effort. Let's do it! Surround the broken enemy. Cut off its escape route. Let's do it! Give the enemy no respite, chase it, choke it, beat it helplessly. Our hour of rest will come when the viper has been killed.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic, People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs L. Trotski.

Petrograd, 23 October 1919”

These orders encouraged the Red Army to make further advances; it was to seize Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina, which was the second task, and then force Yudenich to give up the idea of seizing Petrograd and withdraw to his initial positions, which was the next task.

On 24 October units of the 7th Army, following operational order No. 76 of Commander Nadezhnyi related above, were instructed to carry out the second task. The operational report of 6 o'clock gives that units of the 2nd Division had since passed to the offensive and advanced from Detskoye Selo on the Krasnoye Selo road to Aleksandrovskaya station (Pskov line) on the left flank. The units in the Kolpino sector of the Kharlamov Group had also advanced to the west of Detskoye, they were entrenched on the line of Babolova – Krasnaya Slobodka – Koshelevo villages; the Tosno sector had advanced to Vladimirskaya half-station while a mounted detachment had been sent to the left flank, at Vyritsa

station and Kurovitsy village, to maintain contact with the right flank of the 15th Army, that is the 19th Division.

During the day the offensive developed rather slowly as the enemy, as on the previous day, put up a bitter resistance, concentrating nearly five divisions (1, 2, 3, 4 and part of the 5th) in the region of Krasnoye – Gatchina, but by the evening we had managed to take a number of villages. To the right of the 6th Division, south-west of Petergof, near the villages of Gostilitsy and Zaborod'e, our offensive met stubborn resistance; to the left in the Ropsha area we took Kraevaya manor, the villages of Olike and Sibilevo, but while advancing further towards the villages of Lipitsy, Rumboli and Lottolovo our units were met by the enemy, reinforced by reserves, with an armoured vehicle and artillery fire and fell back. But a second attack restored the situation. Understanding the seriousness of the 6th Division's advance into the rear of the Krasnoye Selo group, the enemy placed a defensive line on the heights north-west of Krasnoye Selo in the area of Kempelevo and Kaporskoe villages (on the Krasnoye to Strelna road), so the left wing of the 6th Division could not complete its task; it retreated to the eastern outskirts of Konstantinovka, Gorelovo and the Volkhonskoye highway between Sosnovka and Koyerovo-Chukhonskoe. On the 2nd Division's sector, in the area of villages B. Karlino and Nikolaevka (on the Detskoye to Krasnoye Selo highway) the enemy attacked the Bashkirs, who could not resist the attack and retreated. The 162th Rifle Regiment, which was near the Bashkirs, was also forced to retreat to Vittolovo. Our tank and Communist battalion were sent to support these units and they stopped the retreat, The left side of the division was more successful and units moved to take the line Nurkobori – Karlino – Tolpola – Khebrola[?], west of Detskoye Selo. The Kharlamov Group was more successful on that day; troops of the 13th Regiment occupied the village of Kiskisary situated by the highway connecting Detskoye and Gatchina, units of the 8th Rifle Regiment took the village of Pyazelevo in the Gatchina area, then units of the Kolpino group occupied Novo Katlino, Gukkolovo, Popova and Pastorat'. Under strong enemy fire, units of Tosno detachment took control of the railway crossing between Lisino station and the Vladimirskaia half-station across the Chernaya river; the detachment sent to the left flank at Vyritsa took the village of Gorki, 6 km to the east of Vyritsa.

It is not hard to see that the results of the battles of 24 October were not brilliant: the troops did not show the necessary energy in the fighting and did not develop the decisive attack that the strategic situation demanded. Meanwhile the 15th Army had now finished regrouping and was ready for a decisive offensive. Therefore the commander of the Western Front, Comrade Gittis, gave a categorical order that the 7th Army together with the 15th move to that decisive offensive. We present in full this extremely interesting order, which compelled the 7th and 15th Armies to take the path of exceptional successes, defeat the North-West Army and put an end to Yudenich's adventure.

Orders to launch a general offensive by the 7th and 15th Armies.

"I order:

- 1) The 7th Army on its entire front and the 15th on the Luga – Pskov sector is ordered to launch a most determined offensive on 26 October.
- 2) The objective of completely defeating Yudenich's army is to be carried out at all costs, using the full strength of the Red Army, commissars and command staff.
- 3) In the Petrograd – Luga – Pskov area we are sufficiently superior to the enemy in terms of numbers; it is the moral duty of the commanders, commissars and political officers to inspire a spirit of courage and confidence in victory in the ranks of the Red Army men by word and example.
- 4) The blow must be absolutely shattering, and success must come with the first shock, so I prohibit any fancy allocation of units to the army reserves; all units should be on the field of battle.
- 5) As the offensive develops any regrouping required by the situation should be carried out by moving forward, not by withdrawing units to the rear.



6) Commanders of armies and divisions are not to limit themselves to the issuing of combat orders, but follow the development of combat operations closely throughout, so as to feel the pulse of the battle in each combat area, and respond to any strike move of the enemy with their own resolute and energetic counter-blow.

7) Commanders and Commissars are to take personal part in the victory and check the placing of field, brigade and division staffs as suitable points of collection, processing and distribution of orders and reports.

8) Acknowledge receipt of the orders given in this telegram by telegraph.

Commander of the Western Front, Gittis
Member of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Yurenev
Chief of Staff of the Western Front, A. Peremytov”

This order is very characteristic of the era in question. It is an actual order of the leader of a revolutionary army; the leader calls on everyone from the commanders of the armies down to the Red Army men to take an active part in the battle: “all units should be on the field of battle”, “commanders and commissars are to take personal part in the victory”, “commanders, commissars and political officers [are] to inspire a spirit of courage and confidence in victory in the ranks of the Red Army men by word and example”.

The front commander did not constrain the operational freedom of the soldiers with his order. He ordered a particular task, giving them complete freedom in the solution of the problem, but explicitly demanded their active participation in the fighting – this ensured success and inspired the Red Army.

The order of the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Trotski, was also of great importance. He, on the same day, gave an order to the 7th Army for prisoners to be spared and treat to any men crossing over in a friendly way, as their numbers were increasing noticeably. That humane and welcoming attitude towards them increased their number in our ranks and strengthened the units of the 7th Army.

“Order of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic to the troops of the 7th Army.

Yudenich’s gangs have been dealt a heavy blow. The boastful and false telegraphic reports of the imperialists reported that Yudenich had occupied Petrograd, but the heroism of the soldiers, commanders and commissars of the Red Army will put an end to this crooked scheme of the international predators. Petrograd is not and will not be surrendered.

The 7th Army is advancing. The Whites are retreating. The number of defectors from the White camp is increasing by the hour. Comrade Red Army men, spare the prisoners and greet the renegades in a comradely manner. In the White Army only a tiny minority are the dishonest, corrupt, venal enemies of the working people. The overwhelming majority of that army is made up of the duped or the involuntarily mobilised. Even amongst the White officers a considerable part of them fight against Soviet Russia only because they are forced, or deceived by the agents of the English, French and Russian landlords and capitalists.

Against those Whites who attack us and threaten Petrograd we act, and will continue to act, ruthlessly. We shall pursue them with fire and sword until we have wiped them off the face of the earth. But workers’ and peasants’ army will spare any prisoners from senseless bloodthirstiness. The renegades who come to us shall not be threatened in the slightest. Those who have understood the dishonour of the Whites, those in whom the conscience of the working people has been awakened, shall go freely into our ranks, they are our friends and brothers.

This applies not only to ordinary soldiers, but also to officers.

On the eastern front many hundreds of officers have come to us from Kolchak’s army, imbued with a great respect for the organisation, cohesion and heroism of the Red Army, they now serve in our ranks. There is no doubt that the impending disintegration of Yudenich’s army will push into our ranks the best part of the White officers, who are still tied down by Yudenich.

Whoever sincerely and honestly wishes to serve the workers' and peasants' government will find a place in our ranks. Woe to the unworthy soldier who would take a knife to an unarmed prisoner of war or to a defector. Long live the conscientious Red Army soldier, ruthless to the enemy, generous to the captive defector!

Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic, Trotski"

This order prepared the troops for the new operation, making them revolutionary soldiers – ruthless to the enemy in battle but friendly to those captives ready to join the Red ranks.

With the decisive offensive scheduled for 26 October, the army had to complete its earlier tasks on the 25th – which was to get a foothold in the previously occupied sectors and capture the most tactically important points, in the Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina areas.

In accordance with this, the commander of the 7th Army issued operational order No. 78 of 24 October prescribing:

“On 25 October the Army is to continue to implement its tasks. The 6th Division is to take the village of B. Pikko and firmly secure itself on the line of B. Pikko – Saveloy, then take active operations in the area of Kaporskoe, Ryudemyullu and Glyadino. The 2nd Division will consolidate its right flank firmly in the area of M. Pikko and advance to M. Taytsy. The Kharlamov Group will take Tsarskaya Slavyanka, Antropshino, Vladimirskaya, Vyritsa and reach the Izhora river on its right flank. The head of the 6th Division and the commander of The Odintsov Group are advised of the possibility of a strike at the junction of the units.”

Our units could not fulfil their tasks: the enemy had reinforcements and forced us to cede some villages at some points.

So, in the Krasnaya Gorka sector, our units that attacked near Ust'-Ruditsa and Mishelovo (on the river Chernaya, 20 km south-west of Oranienbaum) were met with hurricane fire from 600 paces and after a fierce battle, taking heavy losses, retreated to their starting positions. On the 6th Division's front the enemy pushed back our patrols on the line of Modikayzi and Kempelevo, taking the latter, while our units took Kuttuzi and Kaporskoe villages, where they captured five prisoners and a machine gun. Under enemy's pressure our units withdrew to the cross-roads of the railway and the Petrograd highway, which is 2 km to the south-west of Gorelovo; to the left, near height 35, the Whites attacked after heavy artillery fire and threw back the Bashkirs, which exposed the flank of the 6th Division, so we had to leave the villages of B. and M. Pikko. On the Tosno sector the Kharlamov Group also failed: the attempt to cross the Chernaya river west of Lisino failed; the enemy defended the river with rifle, machine-gun and artillery fire, and its heavy artillery bombarded our units at Lisino station, knocking out Armoured Train No. 60²⁵ and one six-inch gun.

On the 15th Army's right flank our units did not succeed either, and the 19th Division, advancing towards Batetskii station, was forced to temporarily abandon its occupation of Batetskii railway junction.

However, on the thorny day of 25 October we managed to regain the initiative and had significant success by introducing fresh forces from the reserves and restoring the defective tactical position on all the sectors. It was clear now that the 7th Army units would not panic – local setbacks and temporary areas with enemy numerical superiority created no confusion in their ranks – and only some of the less conscious units retreated without fighting. But they were quickly put back in order and boldly moved forward.

We achieved the most significant success on that day on the Krasnoye Selo sector, where the 6th Division managed to advance into the rear of the Krasnoye Selo group (Yudenich's 2nd Division), taking Ropsha, 15 km west of Krasnoye Selo, and the villages of Rydemyullu, Kameryazi and Rimmolovo. At the same time, units of the 2nd Division were taking B. and M. Pikko and continuing their offensive against Krasnoye Selo from the east. The Kharlamov Group, namely the 189th Rifle Regiment and 5th Latvian

²⁵ “Named for Karl Liebknecht”.

Regiment took Popova, lying to the west of Pavlovsk and to the north of Tsarskaya Slavyanka. South from Tsarskaya Slavyanka the attack failed: the enemy's armoured forces broke into the area of Antropshino – Vangamyza (near the Vindavskaya railway) and opened heavy fire at units of the 9th and 21st Regiments, which could not resist and fell back 3 km to the east of the railway line, but it did not stop the Tosno detachment from advancing to Vladimirskaya half-station.

On 26 October the 7th Army received a remarkable order – remarkable in its simplicity, clarity and precision – arising from Comrade Gittis's order to launch a decisive offensive. Here is the literal text of this historic operational order, No. 59:

“The enemy is holding the Krasnoye Selo – Tsarskaya Slavyanka line having launched a counter-attack.

On 26 October, you will continue to carry out the tasks set.

The 6th Division will occupy Krasnoye Selo.

Odintsov Group – Bolshoi Lager' and Taytsy.

Kharlamov Group to take Tsarskaya Slavyanka and Vladimirskaya.

CommandArm Nadezhniy” (See map 4).

With this order the second period of the Petrograd operation ended and the third, the most interesting from the historical point of view, began: The enemy, richly supplied with arms, clothing, food, money, who outnumbered us, and who had his allies in our rear, flush with his recent brilliant victories, standing just a few miles away from the goal of his operation, was forced by the Red Army onslaught to retreat, first slowly, then more and more hastily, quickly reaching its starting positions and finally collapsing like a massive sand castle. A review of the military operations of the third period will form the subject of the next chapter of this essay.

CHAPTER IV

Retreat of Yudenich's army from Petrograd

General offensive of 26 October. The Red Army did not let Yudenich and his volunteer army near Petrograd. The army stopped it firmly at the last line, a Red cordon was set up on the Pulkovo heights, which the insolent enemy could not pass. The first victory was won. The reinforcements arriving at the Petersburg front, in the form of experienced party workers and fresh tough units, strengthened the 7th Army, infused it with powerful energy and it was completely reborn: it became capable not only of defense, but also of attacking. Comrade Gittis, the Western Front Commander, noticed this important change and ordered a decisive offensive to annihilate the enemy be launched. The offensive was to begin on 26 October, and a new phase of the battle for Petrograd began. On that day the 7th and 15th Armies started the decisive offensive, which ended in the complete defeat and destruction not only of Yudenich's army but of the whole North-Western government as well.

It is true that during this offensive our troops faced a lot of stubborn resistance from the enemy, the enemy would press in one sector or another against our fragile units. But nevertheless, it was clear that strategically Yudenich was defeated. He defended Gatchina with particular energy, but from the moment it was captured by the Kharlamov Group, the Northwest Army started to move to the border of Estonia, increasing the tempo of the retreat as time went on.

So, let us now review the third and last phase of the Petrograd operation.

At the beginning of the operation the 6th Division's right flank ran from Ust' Ruditsa, on the Chernaya River, through M. and B. Gorlova along to Porolava. The centre went from Gorlova to Porozhki villages. On the part of the sector east of the Petergof to Gostilitsy road, the division's units continued their earlier mission, pushing their advance into the rear of the enemy Krasnoye Selo group and took the villages of Khaboni, Gostilitsy, Dyatlitsy, Glyadino, Vitino, Lottolovo, Ushkyla, Rappulovo, Kipen' and Rydemlyu (see Map 5), cutting off the enemy's retreat to the west. The left flank units fought hard for the whole day towards Krasnoye Selo, and achieved great success – they occupied the Bratoshinskaya suburb, located on the Krasnoye Selo road, 2 km north of the forward Krasnoye Selo base and the Krasnoye Selo railway station. Thus, the mission given to the 6th Division on the 26th – “to crush the enemy” and “take Krasnoye Selo” – was largely fulfilled. The enemy at Krasnoye Selo had been crushed, the only things left were to take over B. Lager' and the village of Fabrikantskaya, but that did not represent any great difficulties, as the White Army, seeing themselves beaten from the west, began to retreat southwards along the Gatchina road, in the direction of Villozi, B. Taytsy and Gatchina.

If the Odintsov Group had also succeeded in its task that day and had taken Taytsy, the enemy group would have been surrounded by a Red ring and would not have been able to escape; but unfortunately, the 2nd Division had not yet regained its strength and was only able to capture the villages of Solozi and Morozi, which were situated to the east of B. Lager'.

As for the Kharlamov Group, there were unsuccessful battles on 25 October on the Gatchina road near the village of N. Katlino (6 km south-west of Detskoye Selo), where the enemy attacked with three tanks and forced us to withdraw to Sofia; near the village of Antropshino (10 km south of Detskoye Selo, near the Vindavskaya railway line), where our units were pushed east of the railway by the enemy's armoured train; Vladimirskaya railway station, where the enemy showed strong resistance and forced us to abandon the villages of Gorki and Kaushta. The required forceful offensive tasked in the operational order No. 79 of 7th Army was delayed to 7 o'clock on 27 October. However Kharlamov still managed to take Tsarskaya Slavyanka and regain Antropshino village on the 26th.

The breakthrough to Chudovo. It should be noted that on 26 October the Whites were able to break through at the junction of the 7th and 15th armies to Chudovo station, on the Moscow line, and take Apraksin Bor, 12 km south-west of Babino station, to destroy railway tracks and bridges; but the enemy was detected in time and a strong reconnaissance was sent from the Kharlamov Group.

Parts of the 15th Army and the 7th Army (10th, 11th and 19th Divisions) started to attack, the 10th Division occupying Plyussa station, on the Pskov line and some villages west of the railway.

The task for 27 October was given in the 7th Army order No 80, which reads:

“The enemy is defeated and retreating along our front to the south-west. The 6th Division has occupied Pereles'e, Gostilitsy, Dyatlitsy, Vitino, Pereyarovo. The Odintsov Group has advanced to the line Aropakkozi (south-west of Lake Krasnoye Selo) – M. Verevo (near the Detskoye Selo – Gatchina highway); the Kharlamov Group, having occupied Tsarskaya Slavyanka and Antropshino, advanced to the line M. Verevo – Sabry (west of the Vladimirskaaya half-station).

The Army is to pursue the enemy on 27 October. The Krasnaya Gorka Division is to advance to the line of Ust'ye, St. and Nov. Kalishche, and Ust'-Ruditsa. The 6th Division to the line of Vyarepol', Voronetskaya manor, Kchskovo, Nyazkovitsy (30 km to the south-west of Krasnoye Selo). During the pursuit of the enemy, some detachments in trucks are to be sent along the Krasnoye Selo road to Begunitsy and Volosovo. The Odintsov Group is to reach the Nizko – Vitsy – Tarovitsy line (4 km north-west of Voyskovitsy Station of the Baltic Railway). The Kharlamov Group is to reach the line: Tarovitsy – Sivoritsy (on the Pskov road west of Suida station) – Siversky – V. Sluditsy (on the Oredez River, north of Novinka station, Vindavskaya railway). Divisional and group chiefs are to organise detachments to pursue the enemy in trucks.”

This order shows how important the success of 26 October was, “The enemy is breaking up and retreating” and we pursued on trucks because there was not enough cavalry. Of course, the order set large and difficult tasks to the army's units, but the strategic situation allowed and even demanded such daring tasks in order to fully develop the success of the first strike. If in the first stages of these tasks we met enemy resistance, failed in some places, and were delayed in others, the final result showed indisputably that our command had chosen the shortest and most correct way to achieve their final objective – the complete defeat and destruction of General Yudenich's Northwestern Army, which had promised the Allies that they would capture Petrograd by 1 November, at all costs.

Despite the increased activity of the White Guard spies in our midst and despite the deception of General Lyundekvist, who had aided Yudenich by informing him of the state of our 7th Army and worked out a plan of attacking Petrograd, Yudenich was defeated. While taking heavy losses, the Red Army achieved a decisive victory, having within two to three weeks eliminated the North-West theatre of the war.

Information gathered by that time showed some regrouping of Yudenich's forces: the 23rd Pechora²⁶ Regiment was found in Strelna, near Kaporskoe village, as part of the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division; the 1st Revel²⁷ and 3rd Kolyvan regiments were near Krasnoye Selo. At the beginning of the operation these regiments, which were part of the 2nd Corps, were operating in Luga sector. The Balakhovich Detachment and the 6th Estonian Regiment had been relocated to the north-west from the Pskov area. Prince Dolgorukov's Division was relocated there to replace the units of the 1st Division, which had left Luga. This regrouping of the forces showed that the centre of gravity of the whole operation had shifted to the region of Krasnoye Selo, where the fate of the whole adventure was to be decided.

The fighting on the Petrograd front led to the mobilisation of all Russian citizens in Finland, who were to be grouped in the Vyborg – Rayoki area within three days, from where, following an inspection, English transports were to transport them to Narva, to replenish the seriously depleted units of the NWA 1st Corp. There is no information about whether this transportation took place or not.

In the morning of 27 October the commander of the 7th Army gave the following operational order, Number 81

“The enemy is located along the line Lopukhinka – N. Burya (west of Gostilitsy) and on Muld'ya – Skvoritsy – B. Taytsy – N. Bugor – Villozi – Yakkala, where it is resisting. Contact with the enemy was established on the sector Gostilitsy – Pereyarovo (i.e. on both sides of the Yamburg road).

Today, the 27th, you are to dislodge the enemy from the positions covering Gatchina.

²⁶ The Pechora Regiment, which was transferred to the 1st Division, was numbered the 24th.

²⁷ The 1st Revel' Regiment had by this point been renamed the 2nd. (The 1st was now the St George Regiment.)

The 6th Division is to entrench on the right flank up to Pereyarovo and send a strong reconnaissance force to Slepino (15 km south-west of Gostilitsy) and Begunitsy; on the left flank: it is to attack the enemy from Colony Kipen' and Aropakkozi (south-east of Kipen' village) on the flank in the Muldyya – Skvoritsy area, and from Pereyarovo to Vokhonovo cut the Gatchina – Yamburg railway (at the Voyskovitsy station). (See Map 5).

The Odintsov Group is to dislodge the enemy from the Skvoritsy – Taytsy manor area and contribute to the advance of the right flank of the Kharlamov Group towards Gatchina.

The Kharlamov Group is to knock the enemy from the Taytsy water pumping station – N. Bugor – Lukashi – Raponi (west of the Vladimirskaya half-station) and take Gatchina.”

So, the task for 27 October was given by two operational orders of the Commander: No. 80, given the night before, and No. 81, given early in the morning on the basis of new information received by the army staff during the night. Events developed so quickly that it became necessary to change the evening assignment somewhat and to revisit the details for the Odintsov and Kharlamov Groups.

Let's see how the units of the 7th Army fulfilled the orders during the coming day and what they managed to achieve, as well as what measures were taken by the enemy.

The operational summary, compiled by 16:00 on the 27th, gives the following picture.

“Krasnoflotsky Fort was shelled by large calibre shells, up to 20 shells fell in the area of the fort. On the bottom of an unexploded shell was found the inscription “15 dm” and an English mark.

6th Division. Right sector. Units of the 49th Regiment stormed Pereles'e village (3 km north-west from Gostilitsy).

Krasnoye Selo Division: no information.

2nd Division. Left sector. The 2nd Regiment attacked Taytsy manor and was met with strong enemy fire. The 3rd Reserve Regiment moved to the west to take the village, the 479th Regiment to the east (Taytsy manor is to the east of the railway and the Krasnoye to Gatchina road). The 479th Regiment took Komolovo village (12 km north-east of Gatchina, on the Pskov rail line).

Kharlamov Group. Kolpino sector. Units fought on the line of the villages of N. Bugor – Villozi and Lukashi (10 km north-east of Gatchina). The enemy put up resistance. The 188th Regiment moved from Pavlovsk to Pokrovskaya suburb (south of Tsarskaya Slavyanka). 8th and 9th Regiments moved from Vyarlevo village (5 km north-west of the Vladimirskaya half-station)”.

The operational summary at 22:00 of later that day noted an active White defence on the flanks of the 7th Army. By this time the enemy had concentrated five divisions of the NWA and an Estonian division against our 6th and 2nd Divisions.

“6th Division. Right sector. The enemy has broken through our front near Vitino (on the Krasnoye Selo – Yamburg highway) and is moving towards Gostilitsy (through Dyatlitsy to the north). Measures have been taken to eliminate the breakthrough. By 20:00 our division occupied the line from Ust' Ruditsa – Mishelovo – Gostilitsy – Dyatlitsy – Kipen'.

The Odintsov Group (2nd Division). Right sector. Units of that sector reached the line of the villages to the west of the main railway to Gatchina. A battalion of communists was sent to assist the left column at B. Taytsy. A battalion of Bashkirs was ordered to advance vigorously on Staritsy village. Left sector. Units in that sector continued their offensive. The 479th Regiment took the village of B. Vereva (6 km north-east of Gatchina, near the Pulkovo to Gatchina highway).

Kharlamov Group. Vyritsa area. Under an enemy push our composite units advancing on Kaushta village (on the Tosno – Vyritsa – Siversky road) retreated; a naval detachment and units of Kotelniki Regiment retreated with two machine guns lost because the enemy killed the horses.”

Fighting for Gatchina. From the 7th Army reports given above we can see that pursuing the enemy retreating south from Krasnoye Selo, units of Comrade Odintsov's 2nd Division raced forward, seized the Baltic railroad line at Taytsy station and attacked Gatchina from the north-east and the east, aiming to

capture it from three sides. To encourage the enemy to leave Gatchina, its last stronghold near Petrograd, the 6th Division wanted to cut through the Baltic railway at Voyskovitsy station with two deep detours: a movement to Nizkovitsy village, near Volosovo station, and a movement by truck via Begunitsy. Fearing the seriousness of the threat, the enemy launched a counter-offensive near Vitino. Yudenich understood well that leaving the Yamburg highway, with branches to the towns of Volosovo, Vruda, Tizengausen, Moloskovitsy and Weimarn, in our hands exposed his connection with his bases in terrible danger, and therefore knew that until his main forces left Gatchina, he would need to keep the Yamburg highway and the Baltic railway in his possession. The same need caused the enemy's attack on our combined units at Kaushta; that village lay on the Tosno – Siverskiy road, i.e. on the route to the Pskov railway line. The enemy had to hold on to the main line in the Gatchina to Luga sector, so that in case of failure on the Baltic line with Red units cutting the line, it could withdraw from Gatchina to Luga, and even to Gdov. These considerations caused Yudenich to become active on those two sectors of the front, with little resistance from the rearguard units on the other sectors.

The very fact of Yudenich's activity in those areas clearly showed that he had decided not to complete the venture he had started and would hold on in the Gatchina region only inasmuch as it was necessary to supply the main forces of the 1st Corps with transport columns. Yudenich realised that he had to abandon another attempt to approach Petrograd and threaten it, but it was essential for us to seize the Gatchina junction in order to further our own success. That was how the commander of the 7th Army looked at the strategic situation, and in accordance with that, on the morning of the 28th he issued order No. 82.

An enemy counter-attack pushed back the right flank of the 6th Division from Gostilitsy, and it is putting up a dogged resistance on the line B. Taytsy – Taytsy manor and also in Novy Bugor – Villozi – Lukashi area (north and north-east from Gatchina) and pushed our detachment out of Kaushta village.

Today the army, entrenched on its right flank, seized Gatchina junction.

The 6th Division's right flank, consolidated on the line at Pereyarovo and advanced on its left flank towards Kastino (5 km southeast of Pereyarovo) and Vokhonovo (8 km northwest of Voyskovitsy station) and the railway, and attacked the enemy in the Muldyya – Skvoritsy area.

The Odintsov Group took hold of Taytsy and Taytsy manor, reached the Izhora river from Skvoritsy to Reizino (5 km northwest of Gatchina, near Pudost' station, on the Baltic Line). Its aim was to assist the left flank of the 6th Division and surround Gatchina from the west.

The Kharlamov Group is to take possession of Gatchina and firmly gain a foothold in the area of Vyritsa and Tosno."

Despite the bravery of the Red Army men, the commissars and the command staff, it was not possible to capture Gatchina in the following few days. The enemy put up stubborn resistance, in some places attacking us, damaged the railway tracks and tried every method to delay our advance. The Army Commander had to probe the enemy in different sectors of the front, regroup to wait for reinforcements to arrive and even reinforce the front at the expense of the Karelian sector, where the Finnish refusal to support Yudenich put us in quite a good situation.

By 28 October the army had still not succeeded in capturing Gatchina, so on 2 p.m. of 28 October a new operational order was given to the Army. That stated that the intention was no longer to capture Gatchina from three sides simultaneously, but by breaking through the enemy front to the south-west of Skvoritsy village and encircling it from the west.

"The enemy launched a counter-attack near Gostilitsy and on the Dyatlitsy – Ratgiel sector, where it pressed our units. On the rest of the front it is resisting stubbornly.

On 29 October the army will take a central offensive to break the enemy's position in the area of Skvoritsy and M. Tuganitsy and seize Gatchina.

The 6th Division is to seize Kipen' Colony (which we have left) and launch a main attack in the direction of Skvoritsy and Tuganitsy to encircle the Gatchina area from the west.

The Odintsov Group is to advance in the direction of Saluzi (6 km northwest of Gatchina) – B. Reizino to seize Gatchina.

The Kharlamov Group is to dislodge the enemy from its position on the line of Novy Bugor – Vyarlevo – Raponi – Vladimirskaaya half-station (between the Detskoye Selo highway and the Gatchina to Tosno line). The attack is to start no later than 9 a.m.

The 6th Division is to include the 160th Rifle Regiment and a machine-gun command.”

The slowness of the operation was of great concern to the Field Staff of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic, and on 29 October the 7th Army commander was called to a conference to report about the state of affairs near Petrograd.

Here is the full report of Comrade Nadezhniy to the Commander-in-Chief.

“The enemy, having concentrated in the area of Vitino and Skvoritsy, has pushed the 6th Division to the line of Dyatlitsy – Gorki – Vysotskoe – Kaynalazi – Aropakkuzi. Odintsov’s right flank has advanced and occupied the villages of Malkina, Purskova, B. and M. Taytsy, and Taytsy manor. There is no change with the Kharlamov Group. Today the 162nd Regiment, with 1,100 bayonets, has moved to Krasnoye Selo and I ordered the 6th Division, having taken Kipen' colony, to advance on its left flank towards Skvoritsy and B. Tuganitsy. Meanwhile the Odintsov Group, in connection with that advance, is moving on Salitsy and B. Reizino to take Gatchina. The 161st Regiment is being moved into the Army reserve. The units engaged in the fighting are taking daily losses of over 1,000 men in total. Nadezhniy.”

This report convinced the Field Staff that the 7th Army was systematically fulfilling its task, albeit slowly; and if it was not able to achieve its objective rapidly, it was solely because of the enemy’s stubbornness. More resolute action on our part would simply have increased our losses and would not have accelerated the outcome. Instead, by weakening our forces, it would have given the enemy a numerical advantage. The lack of the supply transports for the 7th Army also greatly hampered the development of the operation as we had to keep close to the railways.

On 29 and 30 October the situation on the front remained unchanged. This stalemate inspired the Whites with hope and they took a new gamble – they decided to break through to Petersburg by capturing the town of Krasnoye Selo. In view of this, on 30 October, Comrade Trotski issued an order to the 15th Army calling for an immediate offensive:

“Comrades of the Red Army, commanders and commissars!

The defence of Petrograd lies not only with the 7th Army, but also with the 15th Army. By pressing on Yudenich’s troops from the south, you will thereby secure Red Petrograd. You need the greatest energy in the offensive. You are tired. You are fatigued. But there are days and hours when you must overcome all difficulties, applying the highest effort of will, overcome exhaustion, and give the highest possible effort to your efforts. The whole situation demands it. We can finish off Yudenich now with coordinated strikes of the 7th and 15th Armies.

Don’t waste a day or an hour!

Attack!

Go forward!

Yudenich’s end is near, which means a well-deserved rest is near.

Long live the 15th Army!”

By 31 October the enemy’s pressure on the right flank of the 6th Division was getting stronger, so Nadezhniy was ordered to take more decisive action to cool Yudenich’s momentum.

“The 6th Division is to repel the enemy from Ropsha and Vysotskaya.

The Odintsov Group is to break through the enemy’s front in the area of Saluzi and attack Gatchina.

The Kharlamov Group is to push the enemy from the hills on the Novy Bugor – Lukashi – Ropani line, and capture Gatchina.

The 6th Division is to include the 160th Rifle Regiment (from the Army Reserve) and shall exclude the sector of the commander of the 8th Regiment, Ernold, who shall be included in Odintsov's group. The 161st Regiment is assigned to the Army Reserve and is to leave the Karelia sector."

On the left sector of the 6th Division, the enemy began to group its forces near Ropsha and between Purskova village and the Baltic railway, in order to retry to take Krasnoye Selo. Wanting to divert our attention from that, on 31 October it attacked from Gostilitzy towards B. Gorlova and Petrovskoe on the Chernaya River, on the right flank of the 6th Division. We repulsed that attack, and the enemy grouping south-west of Krasnoye Selo was discovered in time, and the Army was ordered to repel the forthcoming enemy attack. The right flank of the 6th Division was told to restore the position in the Ropsha – Vysotskaya area. The Odintsov Group was to vigorously continue its offensive near Novopudost' and M. Vereva (on the Baltic railway line from north to south) towards Gatchina. The 6th Division Commander and group commanders were ordered to allocate strong sector reserves. The army reserve (161st and 7th Regiments and other attached units) was to concentrate at Krasnoye Selo.

The concentration of the Army reserve in Krasnoye Selo points to the fears of the Army Commander for that strategically important point. Indeed, Krasnoye Selo was threatened, and the slightest mistake might entail a new danger to Petrograd. The enemy had grown bold and persisted in trying to break through to Krasnoye.

Capture of Luga on 31 October. To help the 7th Army at this difficult time, the neighbouring 15th Army acted: at 15:00 on 31 October, the 93rd Rifle Regiment seized Luga after street fighting, capturing 18 machine-guns and 250 prisoners. The enemy began to retreat to Gatchina and Gdov. Our occupation of Luga made a strong impression upon the enemy and it decided to recapture Krasnoye Selo to paralyse our success at Luga. Thus on 1 November it exerted increased pressure upon Odintsov's group and drove it to a line running 2 km south-west of the villages of Lampelovo²⁸ (6 km west of Dudergofskoye Lake) and Istinka (near the village of M. Taytsy) i.e. almost reaching Krasnoye Selo.

Offensive of the 15th Army. The 15th Army, meanwhile, took advantage of the enemy strengthening its Gatchina sector, so weakening the Luga – Pskov front. It launched an attack, and on 1 November took the line stretching westwards from the Luga to the Verduga river and down the river to its confluence with the Plyussa. This north-facing position, threatened the rear and right flank of Yudenich's army.

Given our favorable strategic situation emerging, at 02:00 on 2 November, the 7th Army commander gave the operational order to attack and regroup. It recommended following the enemy's tactics – to attack in small groups.

"1) The enemy is active, operating in small groups.

2) The army is to take the line of Mikhailovskaya (north of Ropsha) – Kipen' Colony – Skvoritsy – B. Pudost' – Romanova (on the Pskov railway, 10 km north-east of Gatchina) – Sabry (west of Vladimirskaya), seizing those settlements by advancing in small parties, as the enemy does.

3) The army reserve – 161st Karelian Regiment, 7th Rifle Regiment, Moscow *Kursant* Regiment, 21st Cavalry Regiment – is under the command of the 161st Regiment Commander, Comrade Bessonov, at Krasnoye Selo – where we will immediately send the units detached from the Kharlamov Group, using trucks for that purpose.

4) All armoured trains on the Baltic and Pskov railways are to report to Comrade Odintsov.

It is clear from that order that we were preparing to repel the enemy attack on Krasnoye Selo, meanwhile launching an offensive along the whole army front. Our preparations and expectations were not in vain. On 2 November, the enemy broke through our front vigorously, at the junction of two regiments to the west of Krasnoye Selo near the village of Vysotskaya, and captured the entire staff of the 2nd Reserve Regiment, along with its commander and commissar – but the latter two escaped

²⁸ Lagola?

thanks to the disorder that reigned in the White units at that time. That breakthrough did not have any disastrous consequences for us and was soon eliminated. The similar White attempt to advance along the road from Skvoritsy to Aropakkuzi, in order to approach Krasnoye Selo from the south-west, was thwarted by Odintsov's group. The enemy was very close to Krasnoye Selo, but did not manage to take its hills. Meanwhile our 15th Army continued to deal it a major setback, which had a huge impact on the development of the operation in the north, which we will see later, For now let us see how our command reacted to the attempts to seize Krasnoye Selo.

On receiving information about the breakthrough at Vysotskaya on 2 November, the Army commander ordered for 3 November:

- “1) The enemy is active in the Vysotskaya area.
- 2) Units are to make attacks by reconnaissance parties on the enemy's location, not allowing the enemy's scouts to penetrate our line. The 6th Division is to firmly secure Vysotskaya and prepare for an offensive with its left flank.
- 3) The 6th Division commander is to immediately put the units of its left in order, restoring their organisation and resupplying them by the evening of 3 November.
- 4) Comrade Vagramov is appointed Commander of the Army Reserve.”

So, on the night of 3 November we prepared for an offensive on the left flank of the 6th Division, with the aim of pushing the enemy away from Krasnoye Selo. It looked like we were temporarily abandoning the idea of occupying Gatchina, concentrating all our attention on the Krasnoye Selo sector. However, the rapidly developing success of the 15th Army created a threat for Yudenich from the south, around the Plyussa River. White forces were forced to change their front a hurry, to move some forces south-westward to the Gdov sector. In the absence of any reserves they could only do that from the Gatchina sector.

Information about the enemy's regrouping, which started in the morning of 3 November, was received at 7th Army Headquarters. So it was possible to change the missions given and considerably enlarge them. In the 7th Army operational order issued at 13:00, that task was given very specifically to Odintsov and Kharlamov.

- “1) The enemy, under pressure from the 15th Army, is changing positions on its front.
- 2) The army is to attack the enemy on the front of Gostilitsy to Gatchina. The 6th Division is to seize the line of Gostilitsy – Volkovitsy – B. Tuganitsy (12 km to the west of Pudost' station) – Syas'kelevo (10 km west of Gatchina) today. The Kharlamov Group is to take the line Syas'kelevo – Il'kino (near the Voyskovitsy station on the Baltic Railway) – Suida (Pskov line station). The Odintsov and Kharlamov Groups have Gatchina as their first objective.
- 3) The demarcation line between the 6th Army and the Odintsov Group is Kaina – Lazi – Pereyarovo – Ozhogino. Between the Odintsov Group and Kharlamov Groups is Lagonovo – Tarovitsy – B. Reizino.
- 4) The Army reserve – Moscow *Kursant* Regiment and Bashkir Brigade, under the commander of the Moscow *Kursant* Regiment, Comrade Tarasov – is to place itself in the area of Krasnoye Selo and Myza Elizavetino. It is to keep in touch through the headquarters of the Vagramov Brigade in Krasnoye Selo.
- 5) Divisional and group chiefs are to allocate reserves, bearing in mind that the enemy is completely broken.
- 6) Units should never lose contact with the enemy. If lost, restore it immediately by sending out reconnaissance and by having the main forces converge. Pay special attention to maintaining communications between units.

Commander 7th [Army] Nadezhdniy”



Occupation of Gatchina on 3 November and Yudenich's retreat. That order was carried out. Yudenich's NWA trembled ... and fled, abandoning its positions at Krasnoye Selo, leaving Gatchina without a fight. The retreat was so rapid that the commander had no time to change his orders and both the Odintsov and Kharlamov Groups simultaneously, in Nadezhdniy's words, "reached Gatchina junction". During their retreat from Gatchina, Yudenich's troops spoiled both communication lines (telegraph, telephone), as a result of which Comrade Kharlamov's units lost contact with the enemy for two days, and they used that time to withdraw its main forces. Another reason was that Kharlamov's HQ could not keep in contact with its units because of the destruction of the telegraph and telephone system.

The Whites retreated quickly from the line of Zaborodie – Mikhailovka (4 km west of Krasnoye Selo) – Kainalazi – Ropani it had occupied and started to pull back, wrecking communications and the railway, as they went. We lost contact with the enemy and also communication between our units and headquarters.

At this time the 15th Army's cavalry group of made daring raid on Gdov. The group only made it to within 3 km of the town, but nevertheless caused the enemy much damage; 300 prisoners were taken, the artillery base in the village of Kherneve was blown up, the store of arms destroyed and the wires were cut, the staff of the 1st Reserve Regiment was crushed and its treasurer with 1.5 million rubles was taken; very important information about the disposition and strength of the enemy was extracted.

In view of the completely new strategic situation at the front of the 7th Army, at 21:00 on 3 November, its commander gave orders to the army to pursue the fleeing enemy.

"On 4 November, the army is to vigorously pursue the enemy and move to the line: Ust'-Ruditsa – Lopukhinka (10 km west of Gostilitsy) – Kas'kovo (35 km west of Krasnoye Selo) – Muratovo (6 km south-east of Kas'kovo) – Dylitsy (near Elizavetino station) – Severskiy station.

6th Division to the line Ust'-Ruditsa – Lopukhinka – Kas'kovo – Dobryanitsy inclusive.

Odintsov Group to the Dobryanitsy – Khyul'gizi line inclusive.

The Kharlamov Group to Khyul'gizi – Dylitsy – Severskiy.

The army reserve: the composite Moscow *Kursant* Regiment, a composite Petrograd *Kursant* detachment and the composite Bashkir Division in Krasnoye Selo; a composite Petrograd *Kursant* detachment in Gatchina; the ski unit in Petrograd.

From the 6th Division: the detachment of naval *kursants* to the Krasnaya Gorka sector; the 161st Karelian Regiment and a battalion of the 473rd Regiment to the Odintsov Group. From the Odintsov Group: the 160th Regiment to the 6th division, the 473rd Regiment to the Kharlamov Group.

At least two regiments are to be provided as a reserve in each combat area. The regrouping shall be completed by 24 hours on 4 November. The 6th Division staff will move to Petergof, the Odintsov Group staff to Krasnoye Selo, and the Kharlamov Group staff to Gatchina, upon establishment of communication with the army staff and units.

Aerial reconnaissance along the Yamburg highway and the Baltic railway, in order to find out the enemy's grouping.

Commander of the 7th [Army] Nadezhdniy"

Pursuit of Yudenich's Retreating Army. There began the non-stop pursuit of the enemy, who was running, wounded, demoralised, not able to resist stubbornly, but still not yet completely finished off. So the troops were advised to be vigilant and watch for signs of the enemy regrouping, so it could not organise himself and go on the offensive again. Such caution is always needed in pursuit of a retiring enemy, but not yet completely defeated – this was taught us by experience in the past war, when we were often caught during blind pursuit: for example, in October 1914 while pursuing the Germans retreating from Warsaw.

The operational summary of the Western Front headquarters on 4 November gives us a picture of the pursuit of the enemy in the following terms:

“6th Division. The villages of Zrekino, Pereles'e (50th Regiment) and Gostilitsy (49th Regiment) are occupied. The enemy is defending near the village of Dyatlitsy.

Odintsov's group pushed the enemy out of positions east of the village of Vitino (22 km west of Krasnoye Selo). Units of the 21st Cavalry Regiment reached the village of Vokhonovo. It captured 11 prisoners, who say that the enemy is retreating to Volosovo. The group headquarters is in Taytsy.

The Kharlamov Group headquarters has moved to Gatchina. A detachment has been sent to occupy the stations of Suida and Sivoritsy village (5 km to the west of Suida, on the Pskov line). The enemy is fortified in the village of Kurovitsy (6 km north-east from Siversky village on the height near the road junction); the enemy has destroyed the bridge across the Oredezkh river (near the village of Vyrzhatsa).

15th Army. The 19th Division has occupied Cholova (Vindavskaya railroad) and Preobrazhenskaya (Pskov railroad) stations. The 11th Division reached the railway 6 km north of Luga. The 10th Division has concentrated in Turova village (5 km to the east from Luga), breaking the resistance of the enemy, which occupied the northern outskirts of Luga. There was a battle in the city; two enemy regiments were defeated, 17 machine-guns and 250 prisoners were taken. The bravery of the soldiers, commanders and commissars was remarkable. The demoralised enemy is retreating towards Gatchina.”

Our attempt to take Luga was very costly for the enemy, and did not improve its position. It headed off to Gatchina, obviously unaware that not only Gatchina, but almost all the stations of the Pskov railway to the north of Luga and the Pskov highway had already been occupied by the Red Army. This detail testifies to the complete confusion of the Whites, the lack of communication between their units, and the beginning of the collapse of Yudenich's army.

The operational summary of 5 November shows the acceleration of the tempo of the enemy's retreat. So, by that time

“The 6th Division took Zherybyatki village (49th Regiment, west of Gostilitsy), Pokrovskoe manor (161st Regiment) and Mukhovitsy village (10 km west of Dyatlitsy, 46th Regiment), 10 prisoners, a machine-gun and some English rifles were taken. Odintsov's group reached the village of Kas'kovo. Units of the 21st Cavalry Regiment reached Volgovo, Gorki and Khyul'gizi (north of Elizavetino station). The headquarters of the sector was in the village of Vokhonovo. The Kharlamov Group advanced on the line of Torosovo (10 km to the north of Kikerino station) – Kikerino – Kolopovitsy – Glumitsy (20 km to the west of Severskiy station). Severskiy station was taken.”

The next day the Red Army, on the Krasnaya Gorka sector, took the following line: Kandikiulya (south-west of Shepelevo near Koper'e bay) – Kalishche (near the Krasnaya Gorka to Veimarn line) – Ust'-Ruditsa. Units of the 6th Division reached the line: Vyarepol' (4 km south of Ust'-Ruditsa) – Dolgaya Niva (8 km south-west of Vyarepol') – N. Medushi (4 km south of Dolgaya Niva) – Medushi station – Modolitsy (10 km to the south-east from Medushi) – O. Dobryanitsy (near the village of Modolitsy). The right section of Odintsov's group approached the village of Kas'kovo on the Yamburg road and occupied the Ozhogino (8 km to the south-east of Kas'kovo); on that sector Odintsov also took the villages of Rutelitsy, Slobodka, Sel'tso, Kandakiulya, Muratovo, Volgovo, situated to the south of the Yamburg highway and covering the highway to Kikerino station from Kempolovo village on the Yamburg highway. The Kharlamov Group reached Kikerino, Kholopovitsy (6 km southeast of Kikerino) and Yuganovy (see Map 5).

The enemy tried again to resist us on the line above, taking advantage of the forested terrain. Thus, the 21st Cavalry Regiment, while trying to break the enemy lines towards Kikerino Station, between the villages of Gorki and Khyul'gizi was caught in a cross-fire and had to withdraw each time. On 6 November, a battalion of 161st Karelian Regiment attacking Kas'kovo village was met with flanking rifle



and artillery fire and retreated to the north of Kivalitsy with heavy losses. But these were isolated episodes, which did not change the overall picture of Yudenich's retreat along the entire front.

On 6 November our air reconnaissance discovered enemy trains retreating along the railway from Kikerino and Vruda stations to Volosovo and Yamburg. Convoys were hurriedly leaving on the roads. Our pilots dropped literature to the retreating soldiers with Trotski's order to disband the NWA.

In view of the resistance of the enemy noticed at some of the important points, in the evening of 6 November the commander of the 7th Army issued the following operational order:

“1) Enemy rearguard units hold Savelynina – Slepina – Kas'kovo – Muratovo – Minkovo – Rogovitsy – Volosovo, offering especially stubborn resistance near Kas'kovo (i.e. on the Yamburg road). According to aerial reconnaissance, the Baltic railway is being evacuated to Yamburg.

2) The right column of the 15th Army, having occupied Zapol'e, is near Volosovo station, while other columns, having occupied Staritsy and Tverdyat' (on the Luga River, 25 km west of Mshinskaya station), are moving towards Volka village (on the Vruda river, 35 km south-east of Yamburg).

3) On 7 November the Army will strike its main blow on the right flank, and defeat the enemy. The Krasnaya Gorka sector is to take the line of Dolgovo (near Kopor'e Bay) to Gotobuzhi (15 km south-east of Dolgovo). The 6th Division to take the Kopor'e – Begunitsy (on the Yamburg road) line, assisting Odintsov's group in capturing Kas'kovo and aiming to advance in the direction of B. Vernitsy (6 km southwest of Begunitsy). Odintsov's group is to move to the Begunitsy – Cherepovitsy line (5 km north of Volosovo), developing the main attack in the direction of Kas'kovo and Knyazhevo. The Kharlamov Group should take Cherepovitsy and Volosovo, developing the attack in the direction of the railway to Yamburg, where it should concentrate its main forces to assist the right column of the 15th Army, which is heading towards Volosovo.”

The capture of Gdov on 7 November. If we look at the map, we will see that the right flank of the 15th Army was approaching Volosovo station on 7 November and advancing towards Volka village, cutting the enemy into two groups. That including the 1st Corps and 1st Division of the 2nd Corps was pushed towards the Baltic railway, while the rest of 2nd Corps was headed to the area of Lake Peipus and Gdov, which we captured on the 7th.

Now it remained to finish the breakthrough and beat the retreating enemy piece by piece – strategically the Petrograd operation was finished – with a vigorous strike on Yamburg being all that was needed to conclude it. Therefore, on 8 November, the Kharlamov Group was disbanded and its units transferred to Odintsov.

Before finishing this chapter we will mention one more document, in which the commander of the 7th Army, while stating that the operation was strategically completed, gives a general assessment and defends the 7th Army from some reproaches – this is a report to the front commander of 8 November.

“The 7th Army, which was a conglomeration of various small units, independent units – not united into brigades or even regiments, thrown together from various armies at the critical moment of the enemy's approach to Petrograd – was driven forward by an enormous effort of will and energy and smashed the enemy in a series of stubborn and bloody battles near Detskoye, Krasnoye and Gatchina, as its losses testify. The enemy had gathered against it three-quarters of all its forces, leaving only six regiments on a huge front against the 15th Army, which, of course, made it possible for the 15th Army to move so fast that it could not even change the direction of its right flank column, now unnecessarily entering Gatchina. At present the enemy is retreating towards Yamburg, but stubbornly holds on to rearguard positions, from which it still has to be driven out.

I do not expect at all to get any reserves, as they are arriving slowly and in a state unprepared for combat. I demand the full strength of the army, which is relentlessly pursuing the enemy in order to break through the enemy's front in the area of the Yamburg Highway, which we almost achieved today, capturing Begunitsy and Gomontovo.



I feel obliged to report that army is currently fulfilling its duty valiantly and honestly. If Yudenich's army is destroyed, which will be mainly due to its efforts, because of the decisive blow it delivered on 23 October near Petrograd, it will affect all the other operations. The occupation of Gdov and other secondary points would not have helped if Yudenich had captured the Red Capital.

Further executing your orders, I will continue to develop the breakthrough of the enemy's front towards Yamburg, in order to split the enemy into two.

Commander 7th Nadezhniy."

It must be said that the dispute for precedence between the 7th and 15th Armies during this period of the operation, sad to say, had already taken such an acute form that Comrade Nadezhniy thought it possible and necessary to divert his attention from the battle orders and purely operational work to making justificatory speeches and polemic to someone else. There is no doubt that this remnant of the old order should have no place in the conditions of the civil war at the time, when there was not and could not be individual victories; when success was achieved by the joint efforts of all collectively; when the struggle for primacy clearly harmed the common cause of the proletariat and had a pernicious effect on the struggle.

By that time, i.e. by 8 November, 7th Army units had reached a line 50 km west of Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina in pursuit of the enemy, capturing about 300 prisoners and six machine guns, while the 15th Army, advancing from Luga, reached the area 15 km south-east of Yamburg and occupied some villages 25 km south of Narva. Thus, the northern half of Yudenich's army was encircled. On the next day 7th Army units were 25 km north-east and 15 km east of Yamburg, pursuing the fleeing enemy without cease. On 10 November our troops were already 15 km to the north-east of Yamburg.

In 11 November the 7th Army reached the lake fronts north of Yamburg, along the coast of the Gulf of Finland, reoccupying the positions it had vacated on 11 October, exactly one month previously. Yudenich's army decided to resist our pressure around Yamburg, on a line 15 km east of the town, where it fought with units of the Odintsov group. However, it could not resist our pressure and was driven back to the villages situated 4-6 km east of Yamburg.

Capture of Yamburg on 14 November. On 14 November, at 14:30, our troops captured Yamburg after a fight.

Many officers were captured in Yamburg, including Englishmen, two of them wounded. About 500 of our prisoners were released. An officer company, which would not surrender, was surrounded by our troops and destroyed.

During the occupation of Yamburg the 6th Division took from Whites 20 machine-guns, three guns and over 600 prisoners. Two White regiments were completely defeated; one of them – the notorious Talabsk Regiment, which had sworn to die – did not surrender. The banner of Talabsk regiment was captured. The commander of the army, Comrade Nadezhniy, and member of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, Comrade Laskhevich, entered the town with the first chains of troops. Almost at the same time units of the 15th Army, disputing for the victory, entered it too.

With the loss of Yamburg, Yudenich had to leave Soviet Russian territory, and his forces crossed the Estonian border, where they were disarmed. Only part of the Northwestern Army was placed under the operational command of the Estonian High Command.²⁹ On 22 January those units were declared disbanded by the order of the NWA. That order was signed not by Yudenich, but by General Krasnov.

Thus ended Yudenich's adventure; having gained nothing, he lost everything.

²⁹ Some units of the NWA were Estonian, such as the Baltic Regiment, so naturally remained active.

CHAPTER V

A general assessment of the Petrograd operation.

Not only Petrograd but all of Soviet Russia experienced dreadful days in October 1919. Everyone's attention was riveted on those places where the Red Army was retreating for ten days under the onslaught of Yudenich's numerically superior Northwestern Army. The Entente was following the operation with the same attention, because it had pinned such colossal hopes on it, so much money and effort, and suddenly the collapse of all hopes, all expectations, all calculations. The Red Army, which at first was showing signs of weakness, demoralised, instead of retreating, was eager to destroy the enemy, and, indeed, after letting the Whites almost to the capital, it threw them back to the starting line, clutching them with the iron grip on the right bank of the Narva River and forcing them to flee to Estonia – where the remains of Yudenich's army were forced to disarm and recognise that they were no longer an army. The operation had completely unexpected results. Let us now analyse the reasons that were decisive in determining the outcome, and evaluate the results of that operation, which was not just a simple episode of the civil war, but an outstanding example of collective creativity in the field of modern military art.

The reasons why the Petrograd operation took an entirely unexpected form and ended in a way, which the parties did not expect at the start, are of three kinds: first – strategic, second – tactical and third – moral.

The role of strategy in the Petrograd operation. Let us first of all consider the strategic reasons.

The art of war aims at achieving victory over the enemy with the least possible expenditure of forces, means and time. In the domain of military art all operations must satisfy two main requirements: 1) to comply with the basic ideas of military science in its planning, 2) to present, in its performance, a complete whole in which all the particular episodes are the necessary consequence of the development of the general idea underlying the operation. To satisfy these requirements, apart from the individual personal qualities the commanders and fighters, it is also necessary to employ weapons, i.e. an army, properly organised, composed, tasked, and equipped with all necessary technical means and forces. The execution of the operation is dependent on the known elements, which in war have to be constantly reckoned with. These elements are of two kinds: natural and artificial; to the first ones belong the man with his physical and spiritual abilities, space, time, forces and means of nature; to the second ones – the different technical means of combat, which strengthen and sometimes replace the natural means of combat.

The most important element in the performance of any operation is undoubtedly man, with his physical and spiritual stock, and then the technical implements; therefore the strategy, i.e. the science expounding the methods of performing operations in the theatre of military operations, places three basic elements as the cornerstone of its guiding principles: 1) strength as a body of individual fighters, 2) the soldiers' spirit and 3) military equipment.

Considering the strategic causes of the outcome of the Petrograd operation, we will analyse it following these three basic elements, which constitute the plan of the operation. Let us begin with the forces.

The forces of the parties. At the beginning of the operation, as we pointed out in the first chapter, the balance of forces was such that White had no doubt of victory without much difficulty. Our 7th Army was numerically weaker than not only Yudenich's army, but just his 1st Corps. The Red Army was exhausted by previous operations, the army had been constantly at the front since its formation; some units were not numerous and not replenished to their regular numbers; the divisions of the army, were hastily replenished with units pulled from everywhere else during the operation. For example, the 2nd Division included: the 2nd, 162nd, 479th and 630th Rifle Regiments, some sailors, the Bashkir Brigade, 21st Cavalry Regiment and others; the command and commissariat staff was not up to the mark.

Yudenich, meanwhile, had manned his units to almost full strength at the beginning of the operation, and even had 3,000 men in the army reserve. The most battle-tested units, including the Estonian regiments, were sandwiched for fortitude between those formed from Russian POWs and volunteer units; the command staff was mainly composed of officers from the old Russian army (many were ex-



Guards officers), which he had in sufficient numbers, foreign officers were also present. There were units made up entirely of officers; Yudenich's staff had no shortage of experienced high-ranking officers, such as Rodzianko, Balakhovich, Gazekampf, Prince Dolgoruskiy, Bologovsky, Krasnov, Lieven, and others. In addition, Yudenich had secured a promise of troop support from Colonel Bermond-Avalov and counted on the support of Finland, which, apparently, expressed its agreement in principle to march in the event of success. Several British cruisers, destroyers and an air squadron supplemented his forces.

The advantage in strength was undoubtedly on the side of Yudenich, but only in the first period of the operation. Yudenich did not expect that, despite the damage to our transport network that the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic would be able to transport such a large number of armed troops to Petrograd at the right time, so that the numerical advantage would be on the side of the Red Army. Troops from Tula, Smolensk, Novgorod-Seversk, Moscow, Tver and Novgorod were transported with exceptional speed and by 20 October, i.e. on the ninth day of the operation, a fairly strong strike group made up of the new units was concentrated in the area of Kolpino and Tosno. Meanwhile, Bermond did not send a single soldier to Yudenich and Finland refrained from making any intervention, so the balance of forces had changed – the advantage was on the side of the Red Army, despite the losses it sustained in the battles at Pulkovo, Detskoye Selo, Pavlovsk, Krasnoye Selo and in the Gatchina area.

The spirit of the armies. Yudenich's plan, built on numerical superiority and speed, was "right only in the classroom" as Clausewitz had it, but it lacked vitality and inspiration, with no understanding of the actual situation and the spirit of the enemy. Yudenich, though an old experienced soldier, lost sight of one elementary rule of strategy, so insistently pointed out by the famous German military writer Friedrich Bernhardt – that numerical superiority alone cannot defeat the enemy, as the numbers are closely connected to the morale of the army, with its vital spirit.

If Yudenich had taken the latter into account, it is possible that he would not have launched his operation, as it should have been clear to him that although his commanding staff was inspired by the desire to capture the Red Petrograd, the soldierly masses did not see why they should die for it. When they found out what the Red Army was fighting for – from prisoners and from our literature, disseminated by air – the first burst of enthusiasm, the desire to crown themselves with laurels of victories in Petrograd's fields quickly cooled, their spirit fell, and a state of moral paralysis began. By the time they reached Krasnoye Selo, Yudenich's units were already so demoralised, in such a mess, that a commander and commissar taken prisoner with a Red Army regiment could escape without much difficulty.

On the contrary, at the beginning of the operation there was total demoralisation in the 7th Army, our units fled in panic, not stopping at the prepared positions and ran on and on. The appearance of the enemy tanks brought indescribable horror in the ranks of the troops. But after only 10 days had passed, and our army was spiritually reborn beyond recognition. The units of the 6th Division, which had abandoned its positions at the Luga River on 11 October without facing the enemy – having received news about the break in the front of the 46th Regiment near Yamburg – now fought the enemy blow for blow. The appearance of enemy tanks was met with heavy fire and they were forced to turn back and flee. The spirit of the Red Army grew stronger and stronger each day, despite the losses it took in combat with the enemy – and those losses were not small. From 20 October to 17 November, the 7th Army lost about 10,000 wounded, 500 people made infirm, 7,500 sick, and as a total with the killed more than 10,000 men from an army that never exceeded 20,000. So all the reinforcements simply made up for the losses.

Technical means. Below we will give some reasons for our improving strategic situation, but here we will mention one of them – namely the superiority of our artillery. Yudenich's troops were better equipped technically: they had machine guns in plenty; armoured cars, armoured trains, tanks, planes and seaplanes delivered to them by the English, together with shells, rifles and ammunition in sufficient quantity. But Yudenich lacked artillery, and his infantry often went on to the offensive without any artillery preparation.



Our army was also short of artillery at the beginning of the operation, but then with the arrival of the *kursants*, the *Cheka* batteries from Moscow and artillery units from the Karelia sector, the number of guns increased. Add in the battleship *Sevastopol*, the 200 guns of the 15th Army – which took an active part in the operation – and the artillery advantage on our side became quite considerable. It is interesting to note the consumption of shells during the operation: there were an average of 270 shells per gun per month in the 6th Division, and 500 shells in the 2nd Division, while the normal consumption was 180 shells. The consumption of cartridges in the units of the 6th Division was 60 rounds per man per month.

It should be recalled that during this operation we used a tank for the first time – the device which had terrified the Germans on the Western Front as well as our Red Army men. The Obukhov factory workers manufactured our Russian tank, which received its baptism of fire in the combats near Detskoye Selo. We also had armoured trains, two on each railway line. Our transport units were poor; some units didn't even have any, and as a result our freedom of manoeuvre was severely limited – we were forced to attack along the rail lines.

Aside from our superiority over the enemy in artillery, both sides were at an almost equal level technically, and therefore machinery did not play a decisive role in the outcome of the Petrograd operation. The important strategic role was played by strength and spirit, successfully combined by the talented Commander-in-Chief and his staff in the operational plan, which we will now proceed to examine.

At first, after the breakthrough of our front on 11 October near Yamburg, when the 7th Army units took to panicked flight, we did not have to think about any attacking in our plans. All our energy and will were directed solely at stopping the rolling avalanche and to hurriedly concentrate a strike group somewhere in the rear, which could cover the retreat and halt the enemy's fierce attacks. Such a strike group, consisting of newly arrived units, began to deploy in the Kolpino – Tosno area. Strategically, it would have been better to gather the whole strike group near Tosno, as in Kolpino the group only lengthened the 2nd Division's (Odintsov Group's) front. But the area west of Tosno is covered with forests and has no roads for large units to move on. From Tosno only a single-track railway line runs to the west and the Vyritsa – Severskiy highway. Because of that, the 7th Army's commander concentrated his strike group mainly in the Kolpino – Yam-Izhora area and a smaller portion in Tosno. It is possible that because of that concentration of forces it took us a comparatively long time to eliminate the enemy Gatchina group and it enabled all its forces to leave Gatchina.

Then, when the strategic situation became somewhat clearer and the possibility of launching an offensive began to emerge, an operational plan was drawn up.

The enemy was keen to take Petrograd as soon as possible, but meeting resistance from the strike group there and so concentrating most of its forces against the 7th Army, it let down its guard on the front of the 15th Army. The essence of the Red plan was that the latter would attack northwest towards Luga and Gdov, taking advantage of enemy weakness there, at the same time as a frontal attack of the 7th Army from the north and east (see map 4). This plan required a regrouping of units, which could not be accomplished before the evening of 25 October. Thus Comrade Gittis, the commander of the Western Front, set the date of the decisive offensive for both armies as 26 October. It should be emphasised that all the operational orders of the front and army commanders for this plan were only guidelines, giving flexibility to those carrying them out, and not orders, so harmful in modern war.

We have seen that the plan succeeded brilliantly; the 15th Army, by enveloping the right flank of Yudenich's army, forced it to retreat from Gatchina without having to fight for it, and finally to abandon the idea of capturing Red Petrograd. The 7th Army had only to pursue the retreating enemy and then finish it off. The execution of the operational plan required a considerable strain on the forces of the 7th and 15th Armies, requiring collective strength, both physical and spiritual, from all the participants of the operation, from the Commander-in-Chief down to the youngest Red Army man.

Part of the success of the operation was the lack of unity between Denikin and Yudenich. If they had begun their offensives at the same time, in a coordinated manner, it is possible that the outcome of the operation would have been different. But they acted strategically in such a way that one of the general

staff said, with good reason, that “Denikin, Yudenich and Kolchak strategically did everything required for complete failure of the campaigns against Soviet Russia; by not attacking simultaneously, they gave us full opportunity to transfer troops where they were lacking at the time”. But Yudenich was forced to start his operation in October, and not before, as he did not have time to gather enough forces earlier, and the Entente had not yet supplied him with equipment and ammunition. As a result of the enemy’s strategy, by 20 October we were able to concentrate near Petrograd so many forces from other fronts that all the most damaged units of the 6th and 2nd Divisions were replaced by fresh units in timely fashion, and in addition a strong strike group under Comrade Kharlamov was formed in the Kolpino – Tosno area.

To assist, we will indicate the composition of the 6th and 2nd Divisions at the start of the Yudenich offensive and then at our transition to the counter-offensive.

On 11 October the 6th Division had the 40th, 46th, 47th, 49th, 50th and 51st Rifle regiments; during the second half of the operation the division also included the 7th, 17th, 160th, 161st and 478th Rifle Regiments, the 1st and 7th Reserve Regiments, the Moscow *Kursant* Regiment, the Bashkir Brigade and some sailors. The 2nd division had the 10th to 18th and 54th Rifle Regiments and a detachment of sailors on 11 October; that division then was reorganised into a group under Comrade Odintsov, getting the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 36th, 62nd, 162nd, 479th and 630th Rifle Regiments, the 3rd Reserve Regiment, the Bashkir Brigade, a Western Front Revolutionary Tribunal detachment and the 21st Cavalry Regiment. Already from this we can see the freedom we had to regroup during the operation. It is unlikely that such a complicated regrouping would have been possible if there had been simultaneous offensives by the enemies of Soviet Russia on all fronts.

Another strategic mistake by Yudenich was that he was too keen on pursuing our retreating forces of the 6th and 2nd Divisions to the east, concentrating three-quarters of his forces against the 7th Army, thereby weakening his right flank and not having large reserves. As a result, while seizing Gatchina, Tsarskaya Slavyanka, Detskoye Selo and Pavlovsk it exposed its right flank to the Kolpino (Kharlamov) Group, which forced it to quickly evacuate Pavlovsk, Detskoye Selo and Tsarskaya Slavyanka and retreat to Krasnoye Selo under fire from the heavy artillery of the battleship *Sevastopol*. From 21 October the troops of Yudenich’s 1st Corps, as a result of that strategic mistake, had to defend on two fronts: to the north against the 6th Division in the Ligovo area and to the east against the Odintsov Group, Kharlamov Group and 19th Division, from Ligovo to Luga.

Yudenich’s plan was as follows: “The overall task is to attack the 7th Army and capture Petrograd; the 1st Corps is to smash the enemy troops on the approaches to Petrograd and seize it; the 2nd Corps is to prevent the Bolsheviks from getting into the rear of our troops acting against Petrograd.” As we have seen above, neither the Yudenich’s 1st nor 2nd Corps fulfilled their tasks, and the overall task was therefore not completed.

Our main strategic mistake was the antagonism between the 7th and 15th Armies – the absence of friendly teamwork and the need to eliminate any ambition with the desire to be first. Every Red Army commander should be imbued with a spirit of collectivism, not of individualism; it is not personal glory or success that should be the motive for his work, but a consciousness of participation in the collective work.

Now let us consider another factor, closely related to strategy, and which had a great influence on the outcome of the operation – the political aspect of the operation, which played a great role in raising the army’s morale. There is no doubt that word of mouth is of great importance in general, especially in the army; the psychology of an army is close to psychology of a crowd; it is not difficult to influence the crowd with words, you just need to ignite it, to inspire it, and it will follow its leader wherever he goes. Similarly, the army can be led to heroic deeds by inspiring it with intelligent, convincing and sincere words.

The role of agitation and propaganda in the Petrograd operation. With his visit to the front, his conversations with the troops, his fervent appeals and orders, Comrade Trotski raised the fallen morale of the army. However, Trotski by himself could not go round all the companies of the 7th Army in a

short period of time, nor could he talk to individual Red Army men – that had to be done by his Party comrades.

The best Party workers were sent to the front, were they joined different units and began to talk with the Red Army men, explaining to them the importance of the moment and the need to defeat Yudenich and his volunteer army at all costs. A huge quantity of literature, leaflets and posters were sent to the army, and all means of agitation were mobilised. As might be expected, the spirit of the army rose quickly, and the Red Army men became frantic to go into battle – they dreamed of launching an assault and annihilating the enemy. In the White camp our propaganda literature, thrown from airplanes, had the opposite effect: it demoralised and degraded Yudenich's army.

The role of tactics in the Petrograd operation. No matter how important strategy is in the theatre of military operations, no matter how important the army's morale is to defeat the enemy, nonetheless correct tactics are needed to make victory possible. We must always remember that a failure in one area quickly transmits to other areas, and if good tactics are not used, a local failure can easily turn into a strategic disaster. This rule is even more pronounced in a civil war than in a nationalist-imperialist war. The best example of that is the breakthrough of our front at Yamburg on 11 October; the tactical failure almost became a strategic defeat, a terrible catastrophe. That is why we need to discuss the tactical side of the said operation.

In battle, success is always on the side of the one who clearly outlines its desired goals, who places its troops better in relation to the enemy, who acts more decisively, courageously and skillfully, and who is able to show persistence in achieving the goal. The most effective way to defeat the enemy is to attack it. That is why at the beginning of the operation success was on Yudenich's side as, due to betrayal of our side, it was well informed about everything that was happening in the 7th Army. It was not a common soldier who betrayed us, but the head of the Army Staff!

A combat situation might require one to defend, but one must not only defend but, as tactics teach us, act in such a way as to undermine the enemy and to deal a decisive blow against it by vigorously attacking, with all possible forces. We especially often had to resort to defensive measures at the beginning of operations in the civil war. But we always tried to seize the initiative, which would then ensure our freedom of action, bend the enemy to what we wanted. Such was the situation of the Red Army during the Petrograd operation: it defended until 25 October and then, on 26 October, took the decisive offensive and seized the initiative. Following the basics rules of modern tactics, we won.

In the battle the efforts of all the troops should be directed to the same general aim and everybody, even the youngest Red Army man inclusive, should know this general aim as well as the particular objectives, concerning him. In view of this, all the operational orders we have quoted above have always stated the general objective and the private objectives for each individual group and unit. Every Red Army soldier knew what he was sent here or there to fight the enemy for.

Every commander, when fulfilling his tasks, has to know everything about the location and about the enemy; that is why so often in the orders we see establishing contact with neighboring units and reconnaissance specified to be undertaken. In the first part of the operation, when the 7th Army was in a panicked retreat, communication was lost and reconnaissance stopped being undertaken. But as soon as the panic stopped we re-established communication between neighbouring units, conducted air reconnaissance and then reconnaissance by the troops. However, it is necessary to say that quite often our communication was not at the required level; for example the loss of the communication between comrade Kharlamov's headquarters and his units after capturing Gatchina; also our air reconnaissance was not organised properly. These were our weak areas.

When attacking, one should strive to deprive the enemy of its freedom of action, and to undermine its morale. All the orders of the front commander, lower commanders and political workers in the second half of the operation were aimed at achieving that goal. All orders were imbued with the aspiration to seize and hold the military initiative, to stun the enemy with a decisive blow, to disorder its ranks, to demoralise it. That was greatly helped by our propaganda literature, the true ally of strategy in a modern civil war.

As tactical peculiarities of the operation we should mention strong fighting lines with very weak reserves, and also operating in small groups. Those two features were closely interrelated. When acting in small parties, as partisans do, with the task of attacking an equally small party of the enemy by surprise, there is no need for reserves. Partisans, operating in the rear or on the flanks of the enemy, do not have reserves, and yet their work is so fruitful. Further, the entire operation, except for the first period of our retreat, had the typical characteristics of the civil war, with fighting for the possession of some specific location and then pursuit of the retreating enemy, which did not require strong reserves. Finally, the 7th Army Commander had relatively small forces under his control, no more than 20,000 in all, so it would have been a criminal luxury to provide strong reserves. The enemy was the first to act in small groups, and we immediately followed its example in order to beat it using the same means. When acting in small groups, the troops suffer fewer casualties and it is easier for them to feed themselves with local resources. It provides more mobility and a small group is more likely to get into the enemy's rear and disrupt its ranks. In a civil war, when the population is not loyal to us, it is the best tactical method of fighting.

The Petrograd operation began with a breakthrough of our front, and so Yudenich believed in the power of a breakthrough from a frontal attack, resulting in almost all of his further maneuvering being of that type. He resorted to encirclement of the flanks only in those cases where frontal attack did not reach the desired goal. The Red Army tactics were different, and more consistent with the current state of the art of war. Almost all our offensive operations were a combination of frontal attack with outflanking movement – but it is true that they were not very daring, and so not always successful. To counteract such flanking moves was generally not possible for the enemy, because to do that required that reserves attack the flank of the enveloping unit, or to withdraw in an echelon formation. Yudenich had no reserves, therefore he could not use the first tactical counter move. As for the second method, it meant leaving a settled position or a populated area, which in civil war is not acceptable, as it would give us the advantage.

On numerous occasions we undertook deep detours of the enemy as its units retreated from Krasnoye Selo and Gatchina. But such are a complex manoeuvres, difficult to pull off tactically. To work a detour requires: the correct direction and orientation relative to the enemy, accurate timing, determination, rapidity, stealth, and firm communications with the units operating against the enemy front. Fulfilment of all these conditions in the conditions of the November was extremely difficult, and therefore the frequent bypasses by the 7th Army, such as the one at Volosovo, did not yield the expected results. Only the 15th Army's deep detour from the south had brilliant results and resulted in Yudenich's hasty retreat from Gatchina to Yamburg.

We shall not dwell for long on a tactical analysis of the actions of the sides in the Petrograd operation; the results show that in general they were correct, and complied well with the strategic objectives. However, both our side and Yudenich's committed strategic and tactical mistakes during the operation. There were significant omissions, but in general, the 7th and 15th Armies coped with the daring enemy by joint effort. I stress "by joint effort", because any objective detailed study of the operation clearly shows that neither the 7th nor the 15th Army could have successfully overcome the task that was facing them without the support of the other – only by working together were we able to defeat Yudenich and his volunteer army. In the first half of the operation, during its most difficult period, the 15th Army did not take part; the 7th Army retreated from 11 to 20 October, taking the first heavy blows of the enemy. It retreated not for tactical reasons, but for logistical ones, but because units did not assist their neighbours with the "mutual rescue" principle, but because of the panic in the units caused by the enemy's tanks. But then it took part in the offensive together with the 15th Army.

Tanks and their significance. A few words needs to be said about the tanks. Until 29 October 1919 the Red Army had no tanks, therefore the appearance of those monsters at the front always caused panic and confusion in our ranks, even, strange as it may seem, in the ranks of the *kursants*. But then our own tanks, built in Petrograd factories, appeared at the front. The Red Army men saw them up close; at the same time Comrade Trotski's proclamations made it clear to the unconscious masses that the tanks were not as terrible as people said. Trotski wrote:

“We are advancing and beating Yudenich. It is clear now to the youngest soldier of the 7th Army that we are stronger than the White Guard gangs, while only a few days ago the units of the 7th Army were retreating before Yudenich’s troops with extraordinary speed. For what reason? Because of panic. Taken by surprise, because of the carelessness of many commanders and commissars, the Red Army units had no time to stop, no time to look around, no time to think about the actual situation – they recoiled without a second thought.

Tanks played a major role in that temporary panic. Very few people were injured by them, few even saw them. But the very word “tank” made terrible impression on many simpletons. That was used by the traitors, Yudenich’s agents, and intimidated the young Red Army. “There are tanks on the left flank”, “we have tanks to our right”, “there is a tank in the rear”... it was enough to merely start such a rumour and entire units would retire.

The fear of tanks is a senseless fear. A tank is just a specially designed metal wagon to move machine guns and cannons. A tank has no special means to kill people. It works by machine gun and cannon fire. The machine guns or guns on tanks are no different from machine guns and guns in general.

A tank is a metal carriage, with the peculiarity that it can move across ditches. But on the Petrograd front there were many fine highways, on which armored cars could travel just as well as a tanks. And a tank is as powerless to crawl over rivers and swamps as an armoured car.

Tanks play a big role in positional warfare. When soldiers sit motionless in fixed trenches, tanks which can crawl over those trenches can do a lot of damage. It requires them to act together, in large masses – by the dozens, by the hundreds. But on our fields, two or three tanks should not play a serious role.

Why such fear? From the novelty. People are often frightened of what they have never seen before. And not only people, but also animals. Who of us has not seen how a village horse can be frightened by a car: when it sees the outlandish vehicle, it starts snorting, its eyes grow red, it rears up, turning it sideways, and often throwing itself into a ditch and causing it to be hurt.

The pointless fear of tanks is no better than the horse’s fear of a car. Maybe few men died directly from the tanks, but dozens and hundreds died from fear of them, because the easily frightened would run away even without seeing anything, and the enemy could shoot at them as they ran without retaliation.

Tanks are now being produced in our Petrograd factories. Some of our Russian tanks are already operating at the front and are as good as the English ones. But the tanks themselves, neither the British, nor ours can solve the problem. Everything depends on living men – on their courage, firmness, conscientiousness and dedication to the cause of the working class. Courageous, resolute men can work with any weapon. Nothing is good for panicky, easily frightened soldiers – they will surrender their rifle, machine gun or tank to the enemy.

Comrade Red Army men! When sudden and senseless fear seizes your heart at the word “tank”, remember the frightened horse in front of the car – remember and be ashamed: men do not have a mind or heart of a horse.

Panic is the mother of all trouble. That is why the enemy makes every effort to cause panic. If someone in the battle begins to frighten you with this or that, especially tanks, you must understand: he is a provocateur, one of Yudenich’s mercenaries, who wants to take by stealing your spirit because he cannot take you by force.”

The results of the defeat of Yudenich’s army. Having considered the reasons for the unsuccessful outcome for Yudenich’s Petrograd operation, let us dwell somewhat on the results produced.

Yudenich’s North-Western Army was pushed back by us into Estonia, defeated. We demanded that the Estonian government, which was willing to enter into peace talks with us, disarm it.

Our demand was based on the principles of that international law, recognised and repeatedly invoked by the Estonian government in its negotiations with the Soviet power. By that, the passage of troops of warring powers across neutral territory is prohibited, with only the right of asylum in the neutral territory if pursued by the enemy. Such was the situation in November 1919 for the whole of Yudenich's North-western Army. By the rules of international law, troops or even single soldiers who cross a frontier are to be disarmed and even moved as far as possible from the frontier of the theatre of war. A neutral government can even stop for a certain time artillery crews and transports that are attached to the troops.

Such a case was seen during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. General Bourbaki's entire army, pursued by the Prussians, marched into Switzerland, was disarmed and all of the army's property was withheld until the French paid compensation for the upkeep of the men. This precedent gave us grounds to demand that Yudenich's army be disarmed, to which the Estonian government, after lengthy negotiations, had to agree.

This finally put an end to the North-Western adventure and this was the primary result of the operation.

Estonia making peace with Soviet Russia was a closely related outcome of the operation. Similarly the elimination of the Finnish advance was a result of our success at Petrograd. Finally, defeating Yudenich's army gave us the opportunity to reorganize the 7th Army into the Petrograd Revolutionary Labour Army and use it not for destroying, but for working.

Who defeated Yudenich? We have examined the entire Petrograd operation in detail, analysed it in terms of strategy and tactics, and the reader is now entitled to expect that we will name the main character of the operation, who developed it in the way it went, who led the troops to victory ...

But we will not do this because of our deepest conviction that to ascribe the outcome of this or that operation, especially in the revolutionary time of the civil war, to individual people would be not only a delusion but a crime against history, which should be objective and unbiased. To name the hero of the operation is to deliberately distort the truth and to advertise an incidental name of a commander or commissar.

The Petrograd operation was so successful because Comrade Trotski encouraged the army with his fervent, passionate appeals; because the Party workers maintained that enthusiasm in all the units, throughout the operation; because the commissars managed to restore revolutionary discipline in the disorganised units; because the high command developed a sound strategic plan; because the command staff successfully implemented that plan, resolving all the tasks in full accordance with the tactical situation of the time; and because the sailors, Red Army soldiers and *kursants* selflessly went into battle and carried out their orders, risking death for the triumph of the cause. They are all the heroes of Petrograd collectively.

The heroes of the Petrograd operation, its main characters were everyone from Comrade Trotski down to the youngest Red Army man and Red Petrograd itself, who managed to organise its defence so that the enemy saw its buildings, but could not set foot within.

It is not without merit that by a decree of the commander-in-chief the Red Capital was awarded the highest award of all – the Order of the Red Banner. The same order was also awarded to the chief leaders of the operation and many of the combatant commanders, Red Army men, sailors and *kursants*.

The commanders were awarded for their skillful and expert leadership, but the executor was the morally reborn Red Army man of 20 October, to whom much of the credit for this glorious and instructive example of the collective proletarian military creativity in the civil war belongs.

The quarrel over which of the two armies defending Petrograd, the 7th or the 15th, takes precedence in defeating Yudenich's army and defending the cradle of revolution, should be considered a relic – an old imperial legacy, a failure to put aside personal interests for the common cause. Sadly such arguments have been brewing and have even penetrated the walls of the Red General Staff Academy. But it was collectivism, not one military specialist or another, that defeated Yudenich