

The October Offensive on Petrograd and the Causes of the Campaign's Failure: Notes of a White Officer

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Yaroslavtsev had risen through the ranks in the Great War, and then joined the Pskov Volunteer Corps almost at its formation in late 1918. He went on to rise through the NWA army initially commanding the Ostrov Regiment. During the Autumn offensive, related in this book, he commanded the 2nd Division.

That meant he was fighting in the key sectors of the battle for Petrograd around Gatchina and was a personal witness to the decisions and actions of the White commanders.

I cannot actually read Russian, so this translation should not be relied upon for anything important. Making it worse, the book was originally published in 1920, in what is now quite archaic Russian, and the copy I have was poorly scanned, resulting in some very dodgy OCR which I had to fix manually.

I had the usual issue of place names. I have generally put them in the form on modern maps. Places outside modern Russia have their current names, so Tallinn not Reval, and I have used common English names for very well-known cities, so Moscow not Moskva. If their name has changed form entirely, then I have indicated that the first time it is mentioned in the text, then left the period name.

Readers trying to place the smaller locations will need maps from the period, especially anywhere near the edge of St Petersburg, as many have changed name, been absorbed by nearby towns or fallen into disuse due to WWII or Stalin's security obsessions regarding the border.

Mostly I was able to locate the places of interest, but towards the Pskov area it seems that Yaroslavtsev may have been working from incomplete second hand information, as some of the places named seem to be wrong.



The curtain is down. The unfortunate population of Petrograd had a tragic fate, matched by the tragedy for those who moved forward to liberate their brothers, with the final act the complete liquidation of the North-Western Army and the North-Western White Russia. You cannot blame the army for that. It launched an offensive on 28 September last year, on the orders of its Commander-in-Chief, with selfless courage and fierce love for the Motherland. The army believed in its just cause; knowing that the population of Petrograd was awaiting its arrival with anxiety and faith, the army sacrificed itself for the sake of its brothers, for the sake of saving its Motherland.

Future historians will be able to truthfully depict all the moments of that tense struggle for Petrograd's liberation, and will give a faithful description of the reasons why the campaign was not successful. At the moment the political situation does not permit us to use all the documents necessary for that purpose, and we cannot study General Yudenich's last operation in detail.

But here, right beside the former theatre of war,¹ the facts of the offensive are completely unknown; and the reasons for our failure are portrayed in the most misleading light. This has prompted me to give a brief sketch of the final offensive as it really happened, and with the reasons for its failure explained from the perspective of a regular officer in the White Army.

I.

A month and a half offensive by superior enemy forces against our troops, who were exhausted by the endless fighting, had forced the North-Western Army's command at the beginning of August to give up the idea of continuing the defence on the former Yamburg² positions, and they decided to withdraw the army across the Luga River. According to the White Staff's plan, our forces were to abandon Yamburg and withdraw to positions along the Luga River, and then from Bol'shoi Sabsk along the Saba River, to reach contact with the Estonian troops at Sala Station, with their right flank resting on Pskov. This shift in position significantly reduced the length of the front, enabling the commanders not only to condense the units, but also to deploy both strategic and local reserves. Moreover, the left flank and the centre, being covered by the Luga River and its marshy approaches, could be expected to reduce the intensity of the attacks of the Reds, as the terrain slowed down the enemy's movements and regrouping considerably.

However at the end of August, under the onslaught of the stronger enemy forces we were forced to retreat from the suburbs of Pskov. The right flank moved back significantly to the north, and the front of our forces was along the line of the Berezovka River³, Kalashnikovo, Rylovo, Goroncharovo, Brod, the Yanya river, Berezno, Ryasinet, Pustyn'ko, Yur, Mikhalka, and further along the Saba and Luga rivers to the railway line.

The enemy did not leave our units in peace, even after capturing Pskov. Already by the end of August it began to press on our centre in the direction of the Samro, Spass-Kotorsk and Dolgoye lakes, and after a series of fierce battles it reached as far as Chekhlovo – Ishma.

The need to halt these losses to the Reds forced the White Army General Headquarters to give up the idea of giving a well-deserved rest to the forces of our centre, and to eliminate the enemy that had broken through. On 1 September units of the 2nd Division under General Yaroslavtsev counterattacked. This counter-offensive was so successful that the Reds not only gave up our former positions they had taken on the Saba River, but in a short period we reached the line of Lake Syabero, Bol'shie Sabitsy, Krasnye Gory, Kleskushi, Gostyatino, Redezha, Malyy Sabsk.

Following Trotski's order to eliminate Yudenich's White Army at any cost and to capture Gdov, which at that time was the only city in North-West Russia in White hands and the sole base for our army, the Reds did not cease their active operations and continued to attack along the entire front. Having amassed two strike groups, one around Luga – Strugi Belye⁴ and the other near Yamburg, on 5 September the Red Army launched simultaneous assaults against the centre from both sides. However, the southern (Luga) group

¹ The book was written in Finland.

² Now called Kingisepp.

³ I could not find this river, but from his maps it clearly exists about modern Spitsino. I could also not locate Kalashnikovo, Rylovo, Ryasinet, Pustyn'ko, Yur or Mikhalka.

⁴ Now Strugi Krasnye.

was defeated and pushed back right at the start of its concentration, and only the northern group managed to achieve temporary success. This Red Army group succeeded in crossing the Luga River at Redezha and was so successful, that it occupied the village of Lychno Lipy on the Saba River. Any further advance by the Reds was delayed by White reserves, which soon defeated the enemy, forcing it to retreat to its starting position.

At about the same time (10 September) the Reds launched vigorous attacks towards Gdov and Pskov, and our troops were also pushed back there. Only after the tanks arrived were they able to regain the ground and push the enemy over the Zhelcha river.

In parallel with these combat operations of the North-Western Army – needed to repel the Reds' persistent attempts to take Gdov, from one side or another – the army was reorganising itself internally. Long-awaited transports had arrived from England, thanks to which it became possible to properly clothe the undressed and tattered men, and to arm the infantry with new English rifles and to set up transport facilities. The food supplies were increased to a daily ration for the fighters of 2 pounds of bread and a pound of fat per day.

A special committee of formation commanders reorganised the army. Men from the rear reinforced the ranks of the front line units; smaller units and partisan detachments were consolidated into a larger ones; some senior commanders were replaced. Some units that had proved to be unbattleworthy were disbanded and new units were created in their place, to meet the needs of the moment. Six tanks that had arrived from England were repaired and dozens of Russian officers were trained to operate them. British guns were organised into batteries, and spread across the *divisions*. Reserve regiments were organised and the crews of armoured trains and armoured cars were replenished.

The strong in spirit, but poorly organised and poorly equipped army of General Rodzianko's time gave way to the new army of General Yudenich. It was significantly inferior in all respects to the old Russian and European armies. It did not even meet its own regulations, but it was no longer composed of random units and partisan detachments – those who had risen against the Red terror as "Greens" – but was made up of well-equipped and decently armed units, united by a common purpose and ideal, and while weak nevertheless disciplined.

The spirit of the army was also boosted. After the endless summer battles, at beginning of August the White soldiers had become very despondent, having seen no outside help or support. They often refused to believe that England and France were helping the White armies at all, and that the long-promised tanks, much needed boots and uniforms would never come to the North-Western front. The arrival of the transports with the promised cargo changed that. Seeing with their own eyes the material aid coming to them, the soldiers came to believe in the alliance of White Russia with their old allies against Germany – that England and France really did want to help the White Army in its struggle against the Bolsheviks. With anticipation and impatience they looked forward to a new offensive against Soviet Russia which, with the support of powerful allies, would be nothing less than a triumphal march.

The combat leaders generally also thought the same. Seeing the disposition of their soldiers, they knew full well that the cheerful militant spirit could only be maintained by taking the offensive – by giving up the active defense that the army was then conducting out of necessity, which would only weary the fighting units and lower their combat effectiveness.

The army's high command was aware that the general state of the home front and the political situation did not yet fully meet the requirements for an immediate offensive, but other major considerations forced it to finally agree to open active operations against Petrograd. The main reasons why it was considered undesirable to postpone the offensive were:

- 1) Estonia, under the influence of its socialist parties, was intent on starting peace negotiations with Soviet Russia. If the Estonians did indeed conclude a peace, that would tie up all future operations of the North-Western Army to a major extent, depriving it of any military support from the Estonian Army and also making it impossible for them to continue to use Estonian harbours and Estonian railways for military purposes.
- 2) The timeliness of active operations towards Petrograd in connection with General Denikin's advance towards Moscow. Denikin at that moment had attracted the full attention of the Red Command; all Soviet

forces were being mobilised to repel his approach towards Moscow, and a threat to Petrograd at that time would help Denikin to a considerable extent.

3) The need to capture Petrograd before the onset of cold weather. The main objective of capturing Petrograd was relieve the terror, and save the miserable population of the capital from cold and hunger. Importing the necessary food and living essentials was possible only before navigation was halted, which for Petrograd meant before its port froze up at the end of November.

4) the promised support for the British fleet, whose actions were also dependent on the onset of the sea freezing.

5) The spirit of the army. The high spirits of the White soldiers, torn from their fatherland and their families, could not hold the exertion until spring, and in winter it would be replaced by despondency and despair, which would drive the Army to desertion.

6) The Red Army command had not recognised the revival of the morale and power of the North-Western Army, and continued to regard it as entirely unworthy for combat, remaining unconcerned by it. As a result, many Red units were transferred to other fronts, which made the balance of forces on the North-Western front at that moment quite favourable for a White offensive.

The Red Army troops defending Northwestern Russia on the line between Yamburg and Lake Peipus was the 7th Soviet Army. During the various periods of fighting with the Whites the structure of that army changed beyond recognition, both in quantity and in quality. Throughout the summer it was steadily increased and improved, to counter-act the Northern Corps' May offensive, incorporating various shock Communist detachments. But beginning in August, with the retreat of Whites from the Yamburg area, there had been a tendency to take the most experienced units from the front. Prisoners reported that they were being sent to the Denikin front, which represented a serious threat to Moscow at that time.

When we began our attack on Petrograd at the beginning of October, the Soviet 7th Army had:

1. Pskov – Strugi Belye group

10th Rifle Division

82nd Rifle Regiment	600 bayonets
83rd Rifle Regiment	550 "
84th Rifle Regiment	360 "
88th Rifle Regiment	350 "
89th Rifle Regiment	350 "
19th Independent Battalion	200 "
1st Red railway battalion	400 "
Latvian regiment	700 "
1st Sailor Detachment	400 "
2nd Trotski Communist Regiment	700 "
Balashov's Cavalry Squadron	120 sabres
6 light guns, 4 heavy guns	
Armoured train <i>Trotski</i>	

19th Rifle Division

162nd Rifle Regiment	1200 bayonets
163rd Rifle Regiment	600 "
164th Rifle Regiment	400 "
165th Rifle Regiment	800 "
166th Rifle Regiment	600 "
167th Rifle Regiment	600 "
168th Rifle Regiment	800 "
160th Rifle Regiment	500 "
170th Rifle Regiment	700 "



171st Rifle Regiment	700	"
16th Rifle Regiment	200	"
4 light guns		
Armoured train <i>Kerenski</i>		

Total in the group: 18 regiments, 2 independent battalions, 1 naval detachment, 1 squadron, 12,700 bayonets, 120 sabres, 14 guns, 2 armored trains.

2. Luga group

7th Samara Regiment	900 bayonets
47th Rifle Regiment	250 "
52nd Rifle Regiment	700 "
168th Rifle Regiment	100 "
16th Estonian Regiment	250 "
Shatov Communist Detachment	130 "
<i>Kursant</i> Detachment	150 "
Luga Communist Detachment	150 "
"Water Transport" Detachment	120 "
2nd Cavalry Regiment	240 sabres
18 light guns, 4 Hotchkiss guns ⁵	
Armoured train <i>Stenka Razin</i>	
2 armoured cars	

Total in the group: 5 regiments, 4 detachments, 1 cavalry regiments, 2,750 bayonets, 240 sabres, 22 light guns, 1 armored train, 2 armored cars.

3. Mshinskaya – Yamburg Group

2nd Rifle Division

10th Rifle Regiment	500 bayonets
11th Rifle Regiment	400 "
12th Rifle Regiment	150 "
13th Rifle Regiment	250 "
14th Rifle Regiment	300 "
15th Rifle Regiment	500 "
17th Rifle Regiment	500 "
18th Rifle Regiment	500 "
Sailor Detachment	300 "
1st Expeditionary Detachment	150 "
Smolny Detachment ⁶	350 "
Sapper Command	100 "
3rd Cavalry <i>Divizion</i>	200 sabres
1st Petrograd Horse Regiment ⁷	400 "
6 heavy guns, 18 light guns	

6th Rifle Division

48th Rifle Regiment	600 bayonets
46th Rifle Regiment	900 "

⁵ These are likely small calibre swivel mounted guns, of naval origin.

⁶ Likely a Communist unit, the Smolny being a Petrograd building made famous during the October Revolution.

⁷ "Horse" units were often used to indicate part mounted, part foot, so all the "sabres" may not have been mounted.

54th Rifle Regiment 500 "
2 armoured cars

Total in the group: 11 regiments, 4 detachments, 1 cavalry regiment, 1 cavalry *divizion*, 6,000 bayonets, 600 sabres, 24 guns, 2 armored cars.

At the moment our offensive began the Soviet 7th Army consisted of 34 regiments, 2 independent battalions, 9 detachments, 2 cavalry regiments, 1 cavalry *divizion*, 1 cavalry squadron, 21,500 bayonets, 960 sabres, 60 guns, 3 armoured trains, 4 armoured cars.

At the same time the North-Western Army had the following composition:

1st Division.

1st St George Regiment 1000 bayonets
2nd Revel Regiment 700 "
3rd Kolyvan Regiment 650 "
4th Gdov Regiment 900 "
2 guns, 4 light guns

2nd Division

5th Ostrov Regiment 500 bayonets
6th Talabsk Regiment 1000 "
7th Urals Regiment 450 "
8th Semenov Regiment 500 "
2 heavy guns, 4 light guns

3rd Division

9th Volyn Regiment 1200 bayonets
10th Temnitsk Regiment 300 "
11th Vyatsk Regiment 250 "
12th Krasnoye Gora Regiment 450 "
2 heavy guns, 8 light guns

4th Division

13th Narva Regiment 800 bayonets
14th Litovsk Regiment 750 "
15th Velikaya Ostrov Regiment 1000 "
16th Lithuanian Regiment 300 "
4 heavy guns, 5 light guns

5th (Prince Lieven's) Division

17th Libava (1st Lieven) Regiment 450 bayonets
18th Rizhsk (2nd Lieven) Regiment 450 "
19th Poltava (3rd Lieven) Regiment 350 "
20th Chudski Regiment 300 "
2 heavy guns, 6 light guns
2 armoured cars

Separate brigade

21st Pskov Regiment 800 bayonets
22nd Denikin Regiment 800 "
23rd Pechersk Regiment 600 "
Kachanovski Battalion 180 "
4 light guns, 4 piston guns

Not belonging to the divisions

Horse Jäger Regiment	500 sabres
Bulak-Bulakhovich Horse Regiment of	100 "
	500 bayonets
Tank Shock Battalion	350 "
Naval Landing Detachment	130 "
1st Reserve Regiment	850 "
2nd Reserve Regiment	900 "
Armoured trains <i>Admiral Kolchak, Admiral Essen, Talabchanin, Pskovitainin.</i>	
6 tanks	
2 armored gunships	
2 heavy guns, 4 light guns	

In total the North-West Army at the beginning of the October offensive against Petrograd consisted of 25 regiments, 2 independent battalions, 1 detachment, 2 cavalry regiments, 17,300 bayonets, 600 sabres, 6 tanks, 4 armored trains, 4 armored cars and 53 guns.

The White Army, like the Red Army, was divided into three groups according to their distribution on the front. The first, Pskov – Strugi Belye Group, was General Arsen'ev's 2nd Corps, which included the Independent Brigade, the 4th Division and Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse Regiment. The Luga Group had General Dzeruzhinski's 1st Division and General Vetrenko's 3rd Division (part of 1st Corps). The 2nd Division (also part of General Count Palen's 1st Corps) and the 5th Division of Brigadier General Lieven (led by Colonel Dydorov) was part of the Mshinskaya – Yamburg Group, and was our left flank. The other regiments and units had no defined position at the beginning of the offensive and were used by the command staff depending on the situation and tasks of each particular moment.

2.

The North-Western Army's active operations against Petrograd could proceed in two manners. Most of the older generals, especially those who had recently arrived at the front, insisted that the success of the whole operation required taking Pskov, to secure the army against enemy counter-maneuvres, then starting the move on Petrograd only after this had been achieved. However the Army Staff who had been in the ranks of the North-Western Corps from the very first days of its existence, firmly insisted on a different plan of action. "In a civil war," they maintained, "it is far more important than in a real war to be swift and active. Here and now everything depends on the mental and psychological aspects. If we manage to take it quickly, neither our exposed flanks nor any flank movements by the Soviet regiments will be able to save Red Petrograd."

The plan proposed by these commanders consisted of the North West Army making a brisk advance from where the Reds' front was to be cut towards Gatchina and Luga, allowing the enemy no chance to reply, then heading rapidly towards Petrograd. The speed of the advance would cause confusion among the Red Army command staff, awaken the dormant hopes of the anti-Bolshevik element in the Soviet army and in Petrograd, create favourable conditions for a rising in the workers' and peasant masses and contribute to the disorganisation of the Red Army.

The North-Western Army's High Command agreed to this plan of attack, particularly because not including Pskov in the zone of operations meant the front was not unnecessarily spread out. Taking into account the small size of the White forces, that was very desirable. In addition, the NWA command was counting on the assistance of Estonian troops who, if they moved on Pskov at the same time as the NWA was moving on Luga, would have deprived the Reds of any chance of mounting operations from the Pskov bridgehead.

As a result of a series of military conferences at the army headquarters, the following plan of action was drawn up: the right flank of the army would launch a disguised general offensive against Petrograd only after a surprise attack towards Pskov. Developing the success achieved, with the help of tanks, the White Army would threaten Pskov and force the Red Army command to strip its Luga and Gatchina fronts considerably to protect it. Then the centre and the left flank of our army would simultaneously launch a

general offensive, aiming to break the enemy front in several places and move together towards Luga, Gatchina and Krasnoye Selo.

By breaking through the front towards Luga, and then capturing Luga itself, the Soviet 7th Army would be split into two parts: the southern one, would be thrown back to Novgorod and Dno station, cut-off from the Warsaw⁸ and Moscow – Vindavskaya – Rybinskaya⁹ railway lines. They would be completely isolated from their higher command structure, in Gatchina, and without leadership would wander in the forests of Novgorod and Pskov provinces. In such a situation the demoralisation of those units could not but increase, to the detriment of their combat effectiveness. We therefore were not afraid of those Red units, and would not take any serious actions towards them.

It was assumed that the Northern Group of Reds, shattered by the first vigorous White onslaught, would be assembled by their commanders near Gatchina and give battle to the advancing White units there on the Gatchina – Krasnoye Selo positions. The result of that battle would decide the fate of Petrograd, as the Soviet troops, crushed at Krasnoye Selo, would have been unable to delay their enemies anywhere – all the more so as a corresponding attack on the rear of the Red Army was planned for that moment.

Swiftness was the basis of the plan. In contrast to the tactics of the Great War, the Petrograd Operation had the character of a raid which, by breaking the first resistance of the Reds, was to create a psychological moment in which the terror-stricken masses would throw off the tyranny of the minority and openly take the side of their liberators.

To implement this plan, on 28 September the 2nd Corps moved to active operations in the Pskov area. On that day, the regiments of the 4th Division under the personal leadership of division commander, Prince Dolgorukov, with the help of two tanks, advanced along a broad front of their sector and by evening took the villages¹⁰ of Korytkino, Dubyagi, Yakov, Iva, B. and M. Zaozer'e, and Nizy manor. The enemy, which was stunned by the first tank attack, did not offer serious resistance during the day, and our units, having taken a significant number of captives and trophies, sustained almost no losses. Coordinating their actions with the advancing column of Prince Dolgorukov, the 1st Division of General Dzerozhinskiy on the same day moved slightly east on the front of Lake Anotnoye – Lake Syabero, to flank the 4th Division's offensive.

The next day the White forces continued to build on the success achieved the day before. The Kolyvan Regiment made a vigorous strike on Gnezdilovaya Gora – Lake Samotnoye front, throwing back the Reds from Lukovo village and then holding the captured position. The 4th Division moved forward towards Strugi Belye. The tanks could not take part in the assault any longer due to the bad roads and issues with their engines, and so went back to Gdov. The right flank of our position, the Pskov and Denikin Regiments, also commenced active operations that day, advancing significantly southwards and occupying Polna and the Zhelcha River line.

On 30 September the combat that had started the day before between the lakes Zaozer'e and Gozero, was resolved by the fact that our regiments of the 1st Division broke through three fortified lines of trenches and took the village of Zhiloye Boloto. To eliminate this success by the White Army, the Red Army command threw in the reserves that had just been brought up to counterattack. Under the cover of hurricane fire the Reds charged Zhiloye Boloto. A hot bayonet fight took place, which however ended with the defeat of the Reds and their final retreat into the forest.

During that day the 4th Division regiments heading towards Strugi Belye took the important villages of Lyady and Skvorets-Vysokaya, Matveevo, Pogost' Lyakhty, Turets, Gorka-Zales'e, Berezitino, Yukhnovo-Peski, having crossed the Plyussa River.

On the front of the 3rd Division, at Guzhi-Krokol, attempts of the Reds to take the offensive were planned, but our fire immediately dispersed all the concentrating enemy columns.

⁸ The "Warsaw" line was the one that ran Petrograd – Luga – Pskov.

⁹ This line was the line from Petrograd to Tsarskoye Selo [now Detskoye Selo] – Vryitsa – Batetskii – Dno

¹⁰ The places named in this paragraph are confusingly hard to locate – none of them seem to be anywhere near where this occurred.

On 1 October our offensive towards Pskov continued somewhat, with the enemy being driven out of the villages of Sokolt, Kheymas' and Politsa. During these days our drives on Strugi Belye and Pskov met no serious resistance; tired with incessant fighting the enemy became confused upon our first onslaught and did not show any attempt to regain the initiative into their own hands. It was only on 2 October, for the first time, that enemy columns began to gather against the Denikin Regiment on our right flank, on the left bank of the Zhelcha River. It seems that the Red command wanted to threaten the advancing 4th Division by attacking its right flank and breaking through the front of the Independent Brigade. The staff of our 2nd Corps tried a counter-strike to prevent that attack, but that move prevented the units of the 4th Division from advancing further.

By this time the advance had started to slow down. The enemy managed to bring up reserves and concentrate them in the path of our advancing units. Prince Dolgorukov's attempts to reach his objective of Strugi Belye station were somewhat delayed. At Skovorodka village the 4th Division met very serious resistance: all the assaults of our regiments were repulsed by Soviet troops, and it was only when the Veliki Ostrov Regiment reached the railway north of Strugi that the Reds abandoned their resistance and retreated behind the railway line.

By reaching Strugi Belye station our troops cut the Luga to Pskov communication line, threatened unprotected Pskov from the north, and put the enemy units concentrated in front of our Independent Brigade in a difficult position.

The Bolsheviks were hastily bringing in as many reinforcements as possible to defend Pskov, withdrawing troops from both the Estonian and Latvian fronts, while for a counter-strike on Prince Dolgorukov's division they used their 19th Division. That division had been heavily damaged during the fighting at Gdov on 13-14 September and since then had been in the reserves, in the Pskov Fortified Area. After receiving significant reinforcements, it concentrated in the district of Novosel'e to strike the 4th Division, which was spreading out around Strugi Belye. However on 6 October, Prince Dolgorukov prevented the enemy's strike, attacking the regiments of the 19th Division and destroying them in a decisive blow. Encouraged by their success achieved and intoxicated by the speed of our advance, the regiments of the 4th Division were not behind their division commander in the display of bravery and valour, and the Red soldiers of the demoralized 19th Division were no match for them. The latter was completely defeated and left in the hands of Whites a great number of trophies in the form of 2 guns, 20 machine guns, 3 convoys and masses of prisoners.

The enemy did not stay calm, even after this, and continued to make attempts to eliminate the success achieved by our units – but all these attempts were neutralised by the spirit of our troops. Despite the fact that the units of the 4th Division had been fighting for more than a week without interruption, they did not allow the enemy to come to its senses, and manoeuvred to deal blow after blow to the Reds. The Soviet 19th Division had just been repelled on 6 October to south of the main Luga – Pskov rail line, when on the dawn of the 7 October the 4th Division was threaten with a strike in their rear from the vicinity of the village of Mazover', where two Red regiments had congregated. Prince Dolgorukov hurriedly turned his front to the north, preventing a possible attack by the Reds. While the enemy were still preparing to attack he struck first, and exposed both of the Red regiments to the same rout as the regiments of the 19th Division had suffered the day before.

That day the Reds also tried to advance in the northern Luga district, where their columns appeared in front of Perevolok, but a number of repeated attacks on this village were repelled by our artillery and machine-gun fire.

The next day in that area our 3rd Division launched a vigorous offensive and immediately achieved success on a broad front, occupying the villages of Sabitsy, Dobrovitsy, and Sluditsy.

That day our forces also had great success in the Pskov area. Enemy columns were again observed to be concentrating on our right flank. The Red Army command once again tried to launch an attack into the rear of Prince Dolgorukov's division and for that purpose concentrated their fresh 10th Division in the Zhelcha River valley. The staff of our 2nd Corps learned about it in time and its commander, General Arsen'ev decided to personally supervise the operations to remove the manoeuvring enemy. He hurriedly took a car to Strugi Belye at night and quickly created a plan of actions. The 4th Division changed its front again, turning sharply to the west, and vigorously attacked the Soviet troops in the flank, while the Independent

Brigade's regiments were attacking the enemy from the front, i.e. from the north to the south. With the combined action of these two groups General Arsen'ev achieved an immediate defeat of the Soviet 10th Division – which in panic returned to Pskov, leaving in the hands of the Voznesensk Regiment two guns, a huge number of prisoners of war and all kinds of trophies.

This first stage of the North-Western Army's offensive must be regarded as a preparatory one. Having considerably disrupted the enemy forces in the Pskov and Luga sectors, the right flank's indefatigable manoeuvres seriously disoriented the Red Army's commanders-in-chief. The latter was convinced that the main mass of White troops were concentrated in the southern sector of our position and that Pskov was the target of our offensive operations.

This delusion was also supported by the fact that rumours were circulating among our soldiers that any offensive on Petrograd would not begin until Pskov was taken. These rumours spread through the local population to the Bolsheviks, who as a result in that period withdrew a large number of their troops from the northern Yamburg front and sent them across to Luga and Pskov to replace their worn out divisions.

And at that very moment our left flank made a decisive strike. There, on 10 October, our 1st Corps units took the offensive, and immediately achieved great success. The troops attacked were divided into separate columns and they shall be listed in sequence.

From right to left they are as follows; the right-most was Colonel Lebedev's Independent Brigade (on 10 October taken over by Major-General Ezhevskiy); the second column was Prince Dolgorukov's 4th Division including Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse Regiment; the third was General Dzerozhinskiy's 1st Division; column number four was the 3rd Division under the personal command of General Rodzianko; the fifth was General Yaroslavtsev's Group¹¹; the sixth was Duke Lieven's 5th Division, commanded by Colonel Dydorov; and the seventh column consisted of the tanks, a tank strike battalion and small groups commanded by Colonel Khomutov. The Horse-Jäger Regiment, led by its commander Colonel Benkendorf, acted separately and performed independent missions.

Until 8 October, our left flank columns (Nos. 5, 6 and 7) did not take active action and only kept a watchful eye on the fighting on our right flank and the enemy's regroupings. During the night of 8-9th, the right flank regiment of column No. 5 went onto the attack, and the next day the general offensive began.

At midnight the Ostrov and Semenov Regiments (column 5) undertook a surprise attack on the enemy at the crossing of the Luga at the village of Bol'shoi Sabsk and the village of Redezha. After a short march they took the throw back the enemy, who had not anticipated the night attack, and captured the crossings. The Horse Jäger Regiment was immediately sent to the breach and received the task of a forced march from Sabsk through villages of Ust'e, Yablonitsy¹², Letoshitsy to Volosovo station. In Volosovo they were to blow up the rail lines, both the Baltic and Myshkino¹³, and give the larger forces of General Yaroslavtsev's division the opportunity to move to Gatchina without delays. At the same time, regiments of the Lieven Division repelled the enemy at the more northern crossing of the Luga, at Muraveino¹⁴, and fighting their way forward, by the morning of 11 October reached the Baltic railroad at Weimarn Station, along the way entering into a very serious fight with the enemy in Srednee Selo.

Colonel Khomutov's column was not left without action. At dawn of the same day, it quickly approached the crossing of the Luga near Yamburg itself, knocked back the Reds guarding it and, under the fire of the tanks that had stopped at the bridge, the shock battalion stormed into Yamburg and quickly took it – capturing an armoured vehicle, machine guns and prisoners. Unfortunately the tanks were to be delayed there for a long time and their absence during the first, most intense, phase of the offensive may have contributed to the unsuccessful outcome of the entire campaign.

The fact was that as early as 5 August the railway bridge across the Luga River had been blown up as we were leaving Yamburg. The Reds, during their two month stay in Yamburg, did not manage or were unable

¹¹ Based on the 2nd Division.

¹² About modern Kursk.

¹³ The "Baltic" line ran from Gatchina through Yamburg to Narva. The Myshkino line was a spur.

¹⁴ This cannot be modern Muraveino. The crossing is the one at Porech'e.

to repair the blown-up piles, and when our tanks appeared at the Luga River it was not possible for them to cross to the right bank and move on to Petrograd beside our advancing troops, as the wooden bridge could not bear their weight. It took a long time to fix it, and only some days after taking Yamburg that the tanks were able to cross over the river, after preparing the approaches to a ford to the north of Yamburg.

The day of 10 October should be seen as the first day of the actual offensive, and the results achieved right from the start must be regarded as extraordinary. Having simultaneously broken through the enemy's front in several places, the White Army immediately cut up the 7th Soviet Army into several portions. Lacking any communication between each and in most cases cut off from their higher command and bases, the Red Army units had to abandon any serious resistance and were forced to flee, abandoning their transports, equipment and supplies, to save their lives.

Particularly successful was the defeat of the Red forces on our left flank, along the Yamburg to Gatchina highway. With the help of the sixth column from [Porech'e] to Weimarn and Moloskovitsy and the movement of the fifth column to Volosovo, the entire Red Army right flank was split into small units, that could in no way be used by the Red High Command for any counter-operations, and so lost their fighting ability on the first day of our offensive.

Sketch 2 gives an illustration of the positioning of our columns by 11 October, showing the directions taken by each column separately to achieve the common goal – the defeat of the Reds. In the development of subsequent operations each column acted entirely independently. There was no common front at that time; there was no link between the columns; each commander was guided only by their own initiative, depending on their situation and their position. Only after the capture of Gatchina and Krasnaya Selo did the columns come into close contact with one another and the column leaders once again became subordinate to their superiors.

Before that, because the telegraph and telephone poles had been destroyed by the Reds, and with the speed of their movements, the columns had no communication with the higher headquarters. They could not even report on successes achieved. How significant these successes were is illustrated by the following description of the movements of the columns, operating independently.

Column 5 began its active operations on 9 October. On that day the right flanking regiment of the division, the Talabsk, took the offensive. Under the energetic leadership of their commander, Colonel Permikin, at dawn on 9 October, the *Talabtsi* attacked in the area of Lake Tyagerska and took a number of enemy villages in a decisive strike. On the next day the regiment continued its successful advance, took the town of Khilok, and with the help of the 6th company's commander, Lieutenant Kudin, crossed the River Luga and then fortified the town of Gostyatino on its right bank. On that day, other regiments of the 2nd Division also advanced, with the *Ostrovtsi* fighting their way across the Luga River near Redezha village, and *Semenovtsi* successfully attacking the Reds at the Sabsk crossing. The Horse Jäger Regiment was sent to the gap in the Red front at Sabsk, in accordance with the orders received.

The task of the Horse Jäger Regiment was, first, to quickly reach the railway lines both east of Volosovo station and south of it to the Myshkino branch and blow up the enemy lines in several places. Second, by moving from Sabsk to Volosovo the regiment would break the enemy into smaller units and demoralise them by being in the rear of the Reds' Yamburg group, so the subsequent movement of the 2nd Division to Volosovo could be done without hindrance or delay. Finally, the regiment cut the line for the Reds' right flank, and appearing in their rear and helping the sixth column to advance to Krasnoye Selo.

The regiment brilliantly accomplished the task entrusted to it. Having sent four detachments to blow up the railway lines, at twelve o'clock on 10 October, it crossed the River Luga at Sabsk and moved at a trot towards Volosovo. The enemy, though stunned by the cavalrymen's appearance in their rear, put up resistance, entrenched around every village and trying to detain it. The latter, however, swept away all the enemy's chains which it met, attacking the enemy's positions in several places, and by the evening of the 11th was approaching Volosovo.

The enemy's armoured train *Lenin* was there. Colonel Benkendorf, the regiment's commander, who was not disposed to taking heavy losses, abandoned the thought of taking Volosovo and its train. Holding back, he sent a detachment to blow up the line before the train could react, in order to cut it off from any

possible movement to the east. The detouring unit successfully blew up a viaduct, but the armored train unexpectedly opened heavy machine-gun and artillery fire at those working and their reserve. Under the cover of its fire, it sent a landing crew to repair the railway track. Despite being exposed to the Jägers' fire, the *Lenin's* crew selflessly continued its work, quickly fixed the track with the help of special devices, and escaped to Gatchina from out of the hands of Whites, despite the track being blown up in two places.

Only then did the Jägers manage to consolidate their position in Volosovo. At 02:00 on 12 October the Talabsk Regiment arrived at the station and the cavalry could continue their next task. At a trot the cavalry moved further north to cut off the Narva road – the route taken by the Reds retreating from Yamburg. The position in the village of Klopitsy was attacked and taken on foot, and the regiment then moved quickly on to Novo-Kempolovo. However, here the enemy had managed to concentrate a larger force, with artillery, and two armoured vehicles. To attack Novo-Kempolovo in such conditions was useless and Colonel Benkendorf sent a squadron on a detour, which went Bryzgovo – Gomontovo – Begunitsy – Teshkovo and so to Kempolovo along the road from the west. The enemy retreated, and Jägers left the approaching *Liventsi* to push them on to Kipen', while they themselves hurried north to cut Kopor'e road. There were no Soviet troops in Gostilitsy – they had managed to retreat to Petergof – and Jäger Regiment now went to Dyatlitsy to help the *Liventsi* in their assault on Krasnoye Selo. However, the regiments of the 5th Division had managed to fulfill their tasks independently, and in two columns had occupied Kipen' and Ropsha and on the 16th had occupied Krasnoye Selo by themselves. The Jäger Regiment arrived only on the morning of the 17th.

Following the cavalry on the same path from Sabsk, the column of the 2nd Division was also in a hurry. Without opposition from the enemy, along the route which had already been cleared by the Jägers, and so without any delays, the Talabsk, Semenov, Ostrov and Ural Regiments went one by one. On 12 October the Talabsk Regiment approached Volosovo and defeated, after an assault, the Red troops which were still there. Reaching the Baltic rail line, the whole column abruptly changed its direction and turned eastwards. Having set up a detachment to block anyone coming from Mshinskaya, the commander of the column not knowing it had been captured, the division continued its march towards Gatchina. The Ostrov Regiment followed the country road to the north side of the railway, while the other regiments of the division used the highway to the south of the line.

This White column did not encounter any serious delays on the way: the Reds retreated more than defended, and only one moment was at all risky. It was near Kikerino village, when the entire column headed in the direction of Elizavetino and only one company of the Talabsk Regiment remained in Kikerino. Its scouts unexpectedly found the column of 200-300 men in Lisino, that is, in the rear of our troops. Informing the divisional or regimental commander would lead to a long delay in the assault on Gatchina and thus slow the whole offensive. So the company commander decided to attack the considerable enemy with his own forces. It was planned, then done. The enemy was attacked, beaten and driven away in a panic. The prisoners were taken to Kikerino, where it turns out that they had been a special detachment of selected Communists sent from Gatchina to get into the rear of our troops near Volosovo, and thereby force us to abandon the attack on Gatchina.

After a short battle at Elizavetino, a and dashing action at Shpan'kovo, there was only a skirmish at the famous Gatchina positions and by the evening of 16 October the regiments of the 2nd Division were already close to Gatchina. Not wanting to start a fight at night in the streets of the unfamiliar town, the division commander gave orders to stop for the day. However a reconnaissance party suddenly reported that some troops are moving along the road between Rozhdestveno and Gatchina, and were approaching the town itself. It turned out that the indefatigable General Rodzianko had already managed to reach the Warsaw road with his 3rd Division, at Preobrazhenskaya station, and then marched along it all the way to Gatchina, occupying all the intermediate points and was now preparing to attack Gatchina from the south and south-east.

The 2nd Division immediately rose to arms again, coordinating its actions with General Rodzianko's column, and the White Army entered the town from three sides almost simultaneously. Gatchina fell. The town that the White soldiers could not reach during the May offensive – despite their best efforts – was taken without any difficulty in the autumn.

The regiments of the 2nd Division did not stop at Gatchina, but having thrown out and crushed the Red units and ambushes set up there, immediately advanced further and occupied the Pegelevo – Verevo – Mozino – Romanovka – Shaglino position. There was no contact with the 5th Division, which in the plan of attack should have reached Krasnoye Selo. Not knowing where it was, further advance towards Tsarskoye was delayed.

Column Number Six, the regiments of 5th Division, pushed the enemy from the [Porech'e] crossing on 11 October and marched hard towards the Baltic railroad, aiming to reach the stations at Veimarn and Moloskovitsy. This column met serious resistance at Srednee Selo, but after some hours of fighting the Bolsheviks gave up their resistance even there, and hastily retreated northwards. Some of the 5th Division then quickly moved on Weimarn and Moloskovitsy, almost simultaneously occupying those points. The column in Weimarn then immediately moved northwards through Onstopel', Khotynitsy and Il'eshi, then Gomontovo, to cut the Narva road and get into the rear of the retreating Red Army units from Yamburg. At Gomontovo that column encountered the right-hand units of the 5th Division and joined it in its vigorous attack on Krasnoye Selo. The Horse-Jäger Regiment had already marched ahead of the *Liventsi* and so the demoralised enemy was retreating very quickly.

All the fighting the *Liventsi* faced as they moved eastwards, was of the character of casual encounters with units milling around, out of contact with their higher command and so directionless. Dividing once again into two columns at Vitino, the 5th Division advanced more or less simultaneously towards Ropsha and Kipen', and after a brief assault took them. From there Lieven's men acted more cautiously. Colonel Dydorov, the column commander, did not dare to attack Krasnoye as boldly as he had attacked Ropsha and Kipen' and prepared a plan of action, by which the fortified position at Krasnoye would be taken by bypass movements.

At dawn on 16 October, the Libava Regiment marched from Kaporskoe to Kaukuzi¹⁵, from where it swiftly skirted the Preobrazhensky redoubt, leapt across to the railway line (at Skachki¹⁶) and created a threat to move into Krasnoye from the north. However, the Rizhsk Regiment, without waiting for the results of that detour, attacked frontally in the morning and with their determination forced the Soviet units to abandon the defence of Krasnoye, so important for Petrograd and for the whole operation. At 17:30 the Rizhsk Regiment entered Krasnoye with joyful singing, to the cheers of locals, and were soon joined by the other regiments of their division.

Just as units of the fifth column were not aware of the movements and actions of the Lieven Division, the sixth column was also unaware of the situation to their right. To move further north or east from Krasnaya Selo, without any knowledge of what is going on in Gatchina, was risky. Colonel Dydorov considered it his first duty after the occupation of Krasnoye Selo to establish communication with his neighbours. On the left the *Liventsi* were flanked by the Horse Jäger Regiment, which was engaged in reconnaissance in the Strelna and Petergof areas. To ascertain the situation at Gatchina, Colonel Dydorov put a battalion of the Poltava Regiment on a train captured at Krasnoye and sent it to Gatchina. Near Taytsy station the train came into contact with a reconnaissance party of the Ostrov Regiment. Initially the Whites assumed the train was a Bolshevik one, and there was some apprehension in Gatchina about the situation, but the misapprehension was soon cleared up, and the staffs of both columns got in close communication with each other.

Just as the columns of our left flank advanced so successfully in their intended directions, and in a few days moved from across the Luga River to Krasnoye and Gatchina, our centre and right flank columns were likewise successful in their offensives.

Column number four, which was personally led by General Rodzianko, aide to the Commander-in-Chief, had taken the strategically important village of Krasnye Gory, lying only 10 km from the station of Mshinskaya and 8 km from the village of Preobrazhenskaya¹⁷ by the evening of 10 October. The enemy on our left flank had not been divided into separate groups and still preserved its fighting efficiency, defending very stubbornly. However, General Rodzianko, manoeuvred so as to prevent the enemy from grouping

¹⁵ Now Kuttuzi.

¹⁶ Now on the edge of the town of Krasnoye Selo itself, but the rail station retains the same name.

¹⁷ Now Tolmachëvo

anywhere and skillfully bypassing all their fortified positions approached the Warsaw railroad in the area of the Mshinskaya and Preobrazhenskaya stations with two columns, almost at once, on 13 October. A short, vigorous attack and the communications line from Luga to Gatchina was cut and in both places occupied by White troops.

The Soviets' situation of Luga was now hopeless: the city could not but fall as the advancing 1st Division approached it. Indeed by the evening of the same day (13 October), the Red Army, defending the fortified area of Luga, hastily retreated to the east towards the Vindavskaya – Rybinskaya railway.

The tireless General Rodzianko did not stop at the captured points, but immediately changed the direction of his movement. Having sent a group of troops ahead to take all the railway stations from Mshinskaya towards Petrograd, he moved the entire 3rd Division north towards Gatchina. One by one the stations at Nizovskaya, Divenskii, Kartashevskaya and Suyda all fell, and by the evening of the 16th the 3rd Division was approaching Gatchina from the south, at the same moment as the regiments of General Yaroslavtsev's division approached its suburbs from the west. That evening the regiments entered Gatchina. General Rodzianko handed over the command of the column to the division commander, General Vetrenko, and he himself rushed to the left flank, seeking to connect up with the *Liventsi*. General Vetrenko left the 1st Brigade (Volyn and Temnitsk Regiments) to garrison Gatchina, while the 2nd Brigade took up positions to the east and south-east of Gatchina, where they come into contact with the 2nd Division.

The most stubborn resistance was offered by the Red troops in front of the third column. Here, in the Usadishche¹⁸ – Temnya Vorota area, the Communist shock troops did not retreat under the first onslaught of the regiments of the 1st Division, but defended long and persistently, sustaining bayonet attacks and themselves launching repeated counter-attacks. However, the success of our 3rd Division, which got into the flank and rear of the Red Luga Group at Preobrazhenskaya, forced the Bolsheviks abandon their attempt to defend the approaches to Luga. In the evening of 13 October the St George Regiment, on the heels of the retreating enemy, entered Luga. Other regiments of the same division occupied the villages of Fan-der-Flit¹⁹ and Serebryanka.

On 16 October General Dzerozhinskiy continued to press the enemy and on 16 October he started to break through to the Vindavskaya rail line. After heavy fighting on that day he took Ropti, Shegol' and Kriukovo villages. Every village was a fortress, which were defended by the enemy persistently and bravely. On 19 October it was possible to remove it from Sakhon'e, Bol'shie Ozertsy, Gorodets and Sheremetevskaya villages and only on 21 October did the regiments of the 1st Division finally reach the railway and captured Oredezh and Batetskii stations.

After the Soviet 10th Division was defeated by Prince Dolgorukov's column, including the Independent Brigade, on 9 October, the corps commander ordered the column to return to its initial positions at Strugi Belye. The station was again occupied by the Red Army and the regiments of the 4th Division were forced to retake the area that they had cleared only a week previously. Now, as ordered by the Commander-in-Chief, Prince Dolgorukov declined any operations towards Pskov, and moved from Strugi Belye along the railway to Luga. Having occupied the station of Plyussa and having replaced the guard units of the third column at Serebryanka and Fan-der-Flit, the 4th Division moved to Luga, replaced the regiments of the 1st Division there, and together with them led the operation on Batetskii.

The extreme [south] flank column, the Independent Brigade, now remained the only real strength in our entire right wing. Weakened by the loss of the Pechora Regiment, which on the 12 October order of the Commander-in-Chief was loaded at Yamm station for temporary incorporation into the 5th Division, there was no way it could occupy the whole front from Lake Peipus to Luga and Serebryanka. In view of this, the commander of the 2nd Corps, General Arsen'ev, placed a reserve regiment on the right flank of his position, and assigned the brigade as a mobile manoeuvre reserve. The brigade, having no fixed position, was now concentrated for a while at Gvozdianska, then near Blyansk, then near Porozovo, depending on the information given by reconnaissance about the enemy manoeuvres and groupings.

¹⁸ Voloshovskaya Volost'

¹⁹ Possibly now Dzerzhinskogo.

The second period of offensive operations of the North-Western Army was over. In a few days the army had brilliantly executed the plan to split up the Soviet 7th Army, throwing it back along the whole front, and as independent columns getting behind the lines of Krasnoye, Gatchina and Luga, and there forming a new front line.

Sketch 3 gives us a picture on 17 October, when all the columns had come into contact with each other – and if they did not form a solid line, then at any rate were in close communication with each other. Headquarters now concentrated the leadership of the operations into its own hands again and gave the appropriate arrangements. To continue the success, the 5th and 2nd Divisions were to continue towards Petrograd: the former moving towards Strelna and Ligovo, the latter towards Tsarskoye and further on to Pulkovo. The 3rd Division was to advance rapidly eastwards to the station at Vladimirskaya and then head towards Tosno, to cut the line of the Nikolaevskaya²⁰ railway as quickly as possible and prevent fresh Red reserves come from Moscow. The 1st Division and the whole 2nd Corps were to manoeuvre in the Luga and Pskov districts to prevent the enemy from grouping on our right flank and to secure the situation there.

The orders were given. The 5th and 2nd Divisions commenced their operations in the indicated directions, but the 3rd Division commander, for some reason, did not execute his orders and continued to operate independently during this period of the offensive. He sent only one brigade towards Vladimirskaya, and with the other two regiments he headed towards Pavlovsk.

The Reds had managed to bring in quite significant forces from the Karelian and Finnish fronts and gathered up the separate retreating detachments scattered near Petersburg. Now they did not give up not a single inch of the ground, not a single village, without stubborn resistance. Armoured trains and armoured cars, concentrated in large numbers in the sector in front of Petrograd, delayed the advance of our troops with their fire, proving to be a significant asset for the Red Army. Meanwhile our armoured trains and armoured cars, as well as our tanks were still behind the Luga River, due to the lack of a bridge at Yamburg, and their absence significantly hampered our struggle against the Reds.

After capturing Krasnoye Selo our left wing continued to spread to the north and north-east. Having the Horse Jäger Regiment on its left flank, from the morning of the 18th, the Lieven Division continued its offensive operations towards Strelna and Ligovo. Moving along the Krasnoye to Strelna road and another column on the Krasnoye to Ligovo road, the *Liventsi* advanced more slowly than before, but persistently and surely, taking every Red stronghold village by village. On 18 October they took the villages of M. and B. Nikkarovo and Vladimirovka villages on the way to Strelna, and two days later their units had almost reached Strelna and were on the very outskirts of Ligovo. This was the high point of their advance, however, as events on the left flank soon led the whole 6th column to abandon any further action towards Petrograd. On that flank circumstances were not in our favour.

When planning the campaign on Petrograd and assigning each column a direction of attack, our staff did not take into account the combat effectiveness of Krasnaya Gorka. Assuming the armed assistance of the English fleet and the help of the Estonian army, the White General Headquarters believed that the Reds could not open any active operations on the Petergof bridgehead. With the English fleet in front of Kronstadt and with the capitulation of Krasnaya Gorka, the Red Army would not be able to hold on to Petergof and Strelna, with the constant and inevitable threat of being caught in a pocket. But the English fleet did not open the promised fire support in time and the garrison at Krasnaya Gorka did not defect to the White side. On 20 October, the Soviet troops there began to move on our left flank. The Lieven Division were not large enough to be able to maintain a barrier west of the Krasnoye to Strelna road and also succeed in its main attack. The Horse Jäger Regiment remained there, manoeuvring across a broad bridgehead from Krasnoye to Nastolovo, and for some time successfully defeated the enemy's attempts to reach the flank and rear of the 5th Division. But soon had to give up this impossible task: by 19 October units of the Soviet 2nd Reserve Regiment advanced from Pavkulya and Palkolovo towards B. and M. Riumki villages. The Jägers repulsed all the enemy's attacks and on 20 October attacked, clearing the whole region up to Ropsha to Strelna road.

²⁰ This was the easternmost line out of Petrograd, running directly to Moscow.

By that time, however, a bigger column of Reds had moved from Petergof to Gostilitsy, Dyatlitsy and then to Ropsha. From there, Soviet troops continued their march both to the south, to Kipen', and to the east, to Russkaya Kaporskoe and Krasnoye. On 22 and 23 October the Jäger and Pechora Regiments were sent there, and somehow repulsed all the attacks, despite the heavy fire from the battleships *Andrei Pervozvanny* and *Poltava*. During the night of the 23rd Kaporskoe was occupied by the Reds, and now the position of the 5th Division in Krasnoye Selo was threatened. The attacks on Petrograd had to be abandoned. The Libava Regiment, was redirected by the division commander from attacking Strelina to Kaporskoe, and by the evening of the 24th had removed the Bolsheviks from there.

Under the cover of hurricane fire, on the same day, the Reds led a fierce attack on that village. Then over the entire night and day of 25 October, one after another enemy columns assaulted our entrenched forces. Hundreds were killed by the accurate fire of the *Liventsi* chains. However, it was impossible to hold the line for very long, and by the evening of the 25th Kaporskoe was once again captured by the Bolsheviks. That determined the fate of Krasnoye Selo, and the right flank of the *Liventsi* retreated to Kavelakhta.

As was said above, after capturing Gatchina the 2nd Division occupied the line of Pegelevo – Verevo – Mozino – Romanovo. From there, on 18 October, units of the division moved in a broad front towards Tsarskoye Selo. Meanwhile to their east, the regiments of the 3rd Division left Vladimirskaya, and instead of moving towards Tosno began to move towards Pavlovsk, keeping a line with its neighbours on the left. The Talabsk Regiment had thrown the enemy from Novy Bugor²¹ village by the evening of 18th, but its further move to Ontolovo met such a serious resistance that the regiment's commander, Colonel Permikin, refused to advance further frontally and took a detour. A *Talabtsi* battalion bypassed Ontolovo to the east, so as to enter the village from the north.

Just as the battalion reached the highway, Trotski's car left the village along the road – but Trotski could not be captured, and the battalion commander did not allow his men to open fire, so as not to reveal their presence in the rear of Ontolovo's defenders. However, the finest Soviet *kursanty* and Trotski's personal *sotnia* had already seen them, and greeted them with a chant of the *Internationale*. Two successive attacks of the *Talabtsi* were repulsed with heavy losses, and the battalion was forced to retreat and return the way it had come to rejoin its regiment. After that, the Communists, who had encamped in Ontolovo, took the offensive themselves and tried to attack *Talabtsi* and *Semenovtsi*, who were entrenched in the immediate vicinity of the village. Three armoured trains, the *Lenin*, *Trotski* and *Chernomor*, manoeuvred freely along the Warsaw rail line, making manoeuvre very difficult for us, and were of considerable assistance to the Reds.

On the morning of the 20th our tanks finally arrived in Gatchina and were hurriedly sent towards Ontolovo. However, the valiant *Talabtsi* vigorously attacked the stubbornly defended village even before they arrived and forced the Reds to retreat. Novo Katlino, Kondakopshino, Kovrovo and Lampulya were taken on the heels of retreating Communists, but at Perelesino and Kanino villages they were delayed again. The Red Army had now managed to bring up a considerable number of fresh and high quality forces, which not only successfully repulsed our attacks, but were also keen to launch counter-offensives. Soviet and Finnish *kursants* were dug in at Perelesino: it was absolutely impossible to make them retreat. The desperate cadets faced with bayonets drawn the tanks – that had by that time come up – and fell in droves against the destructive fire of the steel beasts, but continued to defend their positions steadfastly. However even they could not resist forever, and by the evening of 20 October, the brigade of the 2nd Division took that village and came close to Tsarskoye Selo.

Units of the 3rd division had managed to take Popova and Pyazelevo and found themselves near Pavlovsk, continuing to keep contact with *Talabtsi*. On the morning of 21 October, the Red Army advanced in the area between Tsarskoye and Krasnoye Selo. After some efforts, they succeeded in making such considerable progress in that direction, such that there was a danger of breaking through our front and encircling the Ostrov and Semenov Regiments. However, the 2nd Battalion of the Talabsk Regiment, which had been sent at dawn to Alexandrovka, bypassing Tsarskoye Selo, managed to fulfil its encircling mission and with a surprise attack took Tsarskoye Selo railway station.

²¹ Bugry

A few minutes after *Talabtsi's* occupation of Tsarskoye Selo station, units of Volyn Regiment reached it from the east, having broken through Red front between Pavlovsk and Tsarskoye, then bypassing Tsarskoye Park to the east. There was no way for the Reds to hold Tsarskoye Selo. They were forced to retreat to the north-west, to N. Kuzmino, to which area the Reds had to recall all their troops, compressing the front of our 2nd Division. With the fall of Tsarskoye, the 3rd Division extended their success by capturing Pavlovsk, after which our forces fortified the north side of the newly occupied towns.

Further advance to the north was significantly hampered by more stubborn resistance from the Reds, who had now gained numerical superiority. The Soviet High Command had managed to bring huge reserves from the Finnish, Karelian and Arkhangel fronts, and had mobilised their *kursants* and internal security from Moscow and Tver²², along with huge amounts of artillery and armoured trains. Because of the lack of English fleet, it could open fire from the 12 inch guns of its own fleet. The Red Army began to take the initiative in its own hands.

The unexpectedness of our advance had caused confusion in upper Red Army staffs, and therefore the first days of the offensive were met with almost no counter manoeuvres or attacks. But on 16 October the Red Commander-in-Chief, Trotski, arrived to the Petrograd front. The confusion gave way to feverish energy in the Red Headquarters. A few hours before the fall of Gatchina, he was still trying to halt White's advance – but seeing that it was impossible, he left that town to organize the defense of Tsarskoye Selo. The large reserves had not yet arrived, but he quickly gathered all the Petrograd *kursants*, called up sailors from Kronstadt and mobilised all the male population of Petrograd. He used bayonets and machine guns to push the conscript units back to their positions. With these vigorous measures he brought the approaches to Petrograd into a defensive state. To oppose the advancing Whites more successfully, he sought to gain the initiative as soon as possible, and on 20 October he ordered a general attack by the Red Army.

Sailors, *kursants* and some Communist units of the “deepening revolution” faithfully executed the orders of their commander-in-chief and attacked our regiments in many areas. But panic had not yet subsided in the conscript Red units, where confusion still reigned, and as a result the White cause was able to eliminate all the Reds' attempts to sustain a counter-offensive. However, with each passing day our own advance was getting slower and slower. Every hour brought trains with fresh units from Moscow and Vologda, which were almost immediately introduced into battle. The Reds took into account the weakness of our flanks, understanding that it was where we were most vulnerable, and were eager to take advantage of their superiority in numbers.

To that end they concentrated two columns in the area of Petergof and Strelna which, relying on Krasnaya Gorka for support, on 20 and 21 October commenced an interesting operation on our left flank. One Red column attacked units of our left flank at Raikuzi, Ropsha and Russkaya Kaporskoe attempting to disrupt the Lieven Division so as to force it to retreat towards Gatchina, while at the same time keeping the Strelna – Kipen' – Gatchina road in its own hands, that is not letting the White Army fall back to the west. At the same time another column left Petergof for a deep bypass via Gostilitsy, Dyatlitsy and Gubanitsy. From there the Red Army was trying to cut the Baltic rail line near Volosovo, and so surround the White Army – which had become over-extended – from the north-west and west. Other movements by Red groups from Tosno and Luga would have been sealed off the Gatchina sector to the south and southeast. If things went well for the Reds, the North-Western Army would be trapped a cauldron, from which there would be no escape.

That was Trotski's plan. However the Bolshevik commander-in-chief did not take account of the Estonians, and thus was unable to carry it out. At the start of our offensive the Estonians were very passive, and did not even pursue Red troops retreating on our left flank. The Estonians only joined the march to Petrograd after some wavering, temporarily subordinating their Baltic Regiment to the White Russian army (which in fairness was considered to be the best regiment in their army). The main Estonian forces were therefore in a wait-and-see position. But when the Bolsheviks began to advance from Petergof, the previously passive Estonian 1st Division standing west of Gostilitsy attacked the Reds in their flank. As a result, the Bolshevik

²² Presumably a reference to the Cheka and railway guard units which arrived from those cities.

bypass column had to abandon their move towards Volosovo, fight the Estonians and then, thoroughly battered, return to its starting position at Petergof.

While this operation was being planned and executed on our left flank, the centre of our front continued its operations in the Tsarskoye Selo sector. All of 22 and 23 October there were stubborn battles around Pulkovo, fought with varying success: the vigorous attacks of *Ostrovtsi* and *Talabtsi* were met with the no less furious counterattacks of Red *kursants*; soldiers were killed by the lead rain in their hundreds, the ground was shaken by incessant roar of artillery and the approaches to Pulkovo, Redk Kuzmino and Verkhi Kuzmino and Kokkolevo changed hands. The artillery of Bolshevik fleet, which had opened fire at White's positions with variable success, soon had to stop as the Reds were taking more losses from the bombardment than our 2nd Division was. By the evening of the 23rd, success was definitely beginning to tilt in our favour. The Reds had begun to show signs of fatigue, their manoeuvres had lost their intensity – it was clear that they were exhausted.

Then fate decided to play a cruel joke on the Whites, who already had their triumph. At the time when the units of the 2nd Division were preparing for the last decisive attack against Pulkovo, almost at the moment when Trotski had decided to give up defending it and order a general retreat (according to the testimony from prisoners, that order had in fact already been given), a small group of Bolsheviks attacked the Whites at the junction of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions. The Vyatka Regiment – one of the weakest regiments of the North-Western Army – was in position there, on the edge of Pavlovsk Park. That regiment could not withstand the unexpected blow, but broke in a panic and turned to flight, heading directly to Tsarskoye Selo. Units routing to their rear could not but affect their neighbours: the regiments of the 2nd Division became flustered and nervous at the rumours of a breakthrough of the White Front and, instead of moving forward, moved south from Tsarskoye. As a result of the flight of the Vyatka Regiment, the Reds were able to take Pavlovsk without a fight. Retreating from Tsarskoye, the 2nd Division took positions near Perelesino and Kanino, but on the next day moved further south.

On 25 October the 2nd and 3rd Division again tried to take Tsarskoye and Pavlovsk. After several attacks they occupied the villages of Pikko, Kiskisary, Popovo and Katlino, but the White army could no longer advance, or even hold their positions. Persistent attacks from larger enemy forces, obtaining reinforcements with every hour, forced our units first to move to a line at Ontolovo, and then closer to Gatchina at a line of Pegelevo – Verevo – N. Bugor – Vyarlya – Vladimirskaya station. By this time an enemy attack from the Tosno area was also planned. Three fresh regiments had been unloaded there and the Bolsheviks directed them to bypass Gatchina to the south-east. However, a timely counter-operation from the 3rd Division removed that danger in time, and the White Army took the village of Lisino to secure its positions near Gatchina.

Unfortunately the lack of reserves began to take its toll. During our initial advance, in those moments when our staff was able to choose which particular direction or sector to attack, our small forces were enough. But once the initiative passed into the hands of the enemy, and it could hit us in the most vulnerable places, with our command having no means to cover all the holes that were appearing, disaster was inevitable. The Reds were pressing on us in multiple directions: to repel their attacks and eliminate their success in any one place the White headquarters was forced to expose the front in another place, where the Reds would then in turn start active operations.

In such circumstances it was impossible to stick to the original plan. Our staff summoned the 1st Division from near Luga. It was hurriedly sent to the fighting east of Gatchina, where the Reds were still continuing their all-out operation, threatening to encircle our Gatchina group. With General Dzerzhinskiy's Division strengthening the position of the Gatchina front from the east, there was no longer any threat to us from that direction, and the staff decided to take more energetic measures to liquidate the enemy's success on our left flank. Here the Bolsheviks, after their first unsuccessful attempt to reach Volosovo, were again trying to bypass our position to reach our rear. Declining to go through Gostilitsy, due to the remaining threat of attack by the Estonians, on 26 October the Bolsheviks began a bypass move from Kipen' to Kas'kovo. By that time our left flank, the Lieven Division, was positioned on the left bank of the Pudost'

River²³, and at Staro Skvoritsy was bent back to Tuskolova, and further towards Kezelevo. The Reds moved to Kas'kovo without any trouble from the Whites. To restore the position of the left flank, and to prevent the Bolsheviks' plan from being executed there, the NWA command decided to move to active operations on Kipen'. For that purpose a strike group was formed, which on 27 October moved from near Gatchina to the area of Staro Skvoritsy. The group consisted of the Talabsk, Semenov, Horse Jäger and Bulak-Bulakhovich's Horse Regiments, under the command of Colonel Permikin. He asked for two tanks to ensure the success of the action. He received them in the form of two French tanks, the so-called *bébés*, brought from Finland a few days before.

By the evening of 27 October, Colonel Permikin had concentrated his group on the left flank of the Lieven's sector. On the morning of the 28th, the *Talabtsi* and Bulak-Bulakhovich's Horse Regiment took M. and B. Pervolevo²⁴. In the evening of the same day Permikin seized Kipen' with an enveloping movement. From there he sent the Horse Jäger Regiment to Vitino, that is, along the route of the Bolshevik bypass column. It attacked Vitino, knocking out the garrison and thus forcing the Bolsheviks to abandon their advance towards Kas'kovo. As retiring to Kipen' was no longer possible, the Red column went back to Ropsha through Sokuli. On the 29th, superior Bolshevik forces forced the cavalry to leave Vitino and return to Colonel Permikin, who deployed them in the area of Volkovitsy – Kelozi to support his wing. The Bulak-Balakhovich Horse Regiment, the Semenov Regiment and two battalions of the Talabsk Regiment, together with the tanks, took up positions around Kipen', which was attacked from three sides on the 29th by strong Red units, in the form of a reserve regiment. The next day Permikin received help from General Rodzianko, bringing from the south a tank battalion, a landing company and General Rodzianko's personal *sotnia*. With these forces, Permikin began to manoeuvre on 31 October. He sent a Talabsk battalion and part of the Horse Regiment through a gap in the forest from the Krasnoye Selo highway to the rear of the Bolsheviks advancing on Kipen'. When the Reds began to retire as a result of that, Permikin went on to the attack with his main forces. Chasing the enemy he broke into Ropsha, where he took a truck with a gun and a large number of prisoners.

On the same day, the Bolsheviks launched a vigorous attack on the Lievens' position near Malkina. The Poltava regiment stationed there met the avalanche of Soviet troops with terrifying fire, but the Bashkir battalions and Finnish *kursants*, despite huge losses, forced it to retreat behind the Pudost' river. Once again, the Kipen' to Gatchina road risked being cut, and Colonel Permikin decided to launch a new counter-operation. For that purpose, he chose Vysotskoe, which, if threatened, would force the Reds to withdraw from the line between Mutakyulya and Malkina, opening the way for the Whites to reach Krasnoye Selo.

On the morning of 1 November Permikin advanced with tanks towards Vysotskoe from Kaynalazi, and when all the attention of the Bolsheviks was drawn to that direction, he suddenly threw the Horse and Talabsk Regiments from the Ropsha area at the town. With a vigorous attack those regiments occupied Vysotskoe and forced the Bolsheviks to hastily retreat all the way west of Krasnoye Selo. The Lievens went onto the offensive, with the Horse Jäger Regiment already reconnoitering Krasnoye and Colonel Permikin hoping to take it by morning – as the enemy's bypass column had been completely dispersed – but suddenly, due to the events on our right flank, HQ gave Permikin orders to halt all attacks against Krasnoye Selo.

There had been a lull on our right flank as our 1st Corps units advanced. The 4th Division and Independent Brigade not only brilliantly executed their task of diverting the attention of the Reds from the main axis, but also battered the enemy's Pskov group during the period from 28 September to 12 October. During that time they captured six guns, more than 3,000 prisoners, 100 machine guns and huge quantity of the military booty. Because of this defeat, the Soviet troops could not undertake any counteroffensive operations in Pskov region, even though our right flank was completely exposed. On the vast stretch from Lake Peipus across to the Luga district, there remained only the Reserve Regiment of the 2nd Corps and the Independent Brigade. The 1st and the 4th Divisions were still concentrated in the Luga area, which also allowed them to manoeuvre towards Strugi Belye. But the superior Red forces in the area of our central strike – the sector of Tsarskoye Selo and Gatchina – forced the White Army command to take the 1st

²³ There is no Pudost' River that I can find. The river that flows through the town of that name, and on to Skvoritsy is the Izhora.

²⁴ I cannot find these villages. I suspect it may be modern Tervolovo.

Division from Luga on 20 October and send it to the Gatchina area. Because of the complete lack of reserves a brigade from the 4th division was also sent there on 30 October.

By that time the Bolsheviks had had time to recover. By a roundabout route through Tosno and Novgorod, Trotski had managed to establish communication with Pskov from Petrograd, and gave the order for a general attack. The Bolsheviks attempted to attack our positions on the Zhelcha River on 24 October but were beaten back by the manoeuvring of the Independent Brigade. Over the next few days the enemy regrouped, and on 30 October they started simultaneous attack along the whole length of the Warsaw railway from Luga to Lake Peipus. On the flanks our units successfully repelled the offensive, but in the centre, between Strugi Belye and Plyussa Stations, the Red Army met no resistance due to the lack of White units. The Soviet 11th Division is able to cross the rail line without hindrance and, heading north, got into the rear of our Luga group. This broke the connection between Luga and Gdov and cut off the line of retreat for the 4th Division brigade from Luga to the west, its starting position. Throughout the day of 1 November the Reds attacked Luga furiously from the east and south-east. When they resumed their attacks on the next day, Colonel Grigoriev, head of the Luga garrison, decided to abandon Luga and retreat towards Gatchina.

On the 2nd, Red troops entered Luga and immediately began to widen the success they had achieved by moving north. Grigoriev retreated along the Mshinskaya line to Volosovo. On the morning of the 3rd Soviet troops occupied Preobrazhenskaya and Mshinskaya. The situation at Gatchina had become threatening, due to a possible encirclement from the south-west, and the White command decide to start a retreat, surrendering Gatchina without a fight and to send in the reserves gained as a result of reducing their front to their right flank, where the situation remained precarious.

Initially, in the Zhelcha River valley, our forces repelled all the attempts of the enemy to cross the river, and General Arsen'ev even decided to make a small diversion in order to lighten the situation of our centre. On 3 November the regiments of the Independent Brigade crossed the Zhelcha, but did not spread any further south. But it could not save the situation: the enemy had enough time to bring up its reserves and was beginning to pressure our small units everywhere. The Soviet 11th Division, moving north from the Warsaw railway, without any impediments, headed west from Lakes Syabero and Samro towards Narva. At the same time, an enemy cavalry regiment also moved without any hindrance from Strugi Belye and suddenly appeared near Cherneve, in the immediate vicinity of Gdov. The only Whites in Cherneve was a small unit stationed there to guard an ammunition depot. They lost a skirmish with the enemy, who managed to blow up the whole depot. Having dispersed the unit, the cavalry continued its march towards Gdov. Second Corps HQ was there, but no troops or reserves. General Arsen'ev gathered the commandant's command, attaching a sapper company, and with those forces set out to repulse the enemy. However the latter, having spent the night only four kilometres from Gdov, for some reason did not continue its raid into the town, but turned south and, having broken through the fluid line of *Denikintsi*, joined its main forces.

The Soviet 11th Division continued its march towards Narva. The White 1st Division was sent to meet it, which it did close to Gostitsy station, and so prevented the Soviet division from reaching its intended destination. However, being in the immediate vicinity of Yamburg, in the deep rear of the Gatchina position, it kept the North-Western Army's main forces in danger of being hit in the rear. This forced the White command to hasten a general retreat.

Counter-offensives were out of the question and all efforts were directed to preventing the enemy's southern forces from raiding into our rear. Thus, while taking rearguard actions, which were required to allow the retirement to be conducted in measured stages, the White Army scurried from Gatchina to a line at Kikerino, then Volosovo, until it reached its old July positions near Yamburg on 7 November. On 8 November, under the pressure of superior enemy forces, the 2nd Corps had to withdraw from near Gdov. On the 11th it was forced to give up Gostitsy. At dawn on the 14th the Bolsheviks took Yamburg with a deep turning movement.

Not a single town was left at White's disposal. The White units found themselves pinned down on the Estonian border, and the days of the North-Western Army were numbered.

3.

The North-Western Army was not alone in its struggle against the Bolsheviks. From its very creation the Northern Corps was closely connected with the Republic of Estonia and its fledgling army. In most cases the units that went on to form the NWA received their baptism of fire while defending Estonia from the Bolshevik invasion: all the actions of the Northern Corps were inside the territory of the Estonian state until May 1919. This could not but mean that both the Estonian and White Russian armies were allied to one another, and both had the same goal – to successfully fight the Bolsheviks. During the life of the Northern Corps, this alliance was formalised by a treaty. However, when the Russian Corps turned into an army, the situation of both sides had drastically changed: all of Estonia was liberated from the Bolsheviks, and the Russian army was fighting on Russian territory.

This meant that the Russian army was no longer under the control of the Estonian high command, and in General Yudenich it had its own leader, appointed by the supreme ruler of Russia and recognised by all the former allies of the Russian state. However, without a port of its own and limited by the size of its territory, North-Western White Russia continued to rely on Tallinn and Estonia, just as the Northern Corps had had to do. Estonia, though, having been freed from the Bolsheviks, already had its own 80,000-man army and did not need any substantial support from the White Russian army. This violated the essence of the treaty made by the Corps, and to maintain the friendship between the White Russians and free Estonia, required the formalisation of their relations with a new treaty. The basis for that was grounded on the issue of the recognition of independent Estonia, which was of concern to both sides, as well as in Estonia's military support in the battle for Petrograd. The government of North-Western Russia, formed in August, hastened to acknowledge Estonia's full and eternal independence and asked that this be granted by all the Great Powers, Russia's supreme ruler, and all Russian provincial governments. In return, Estonia agreed to assist White Russia in their fight against the Bolsheviks, and promised to help General Yudenich in his campaign on Petrograd.

However, when the attack on Petrograd began, for whatever reason, the Estonian army did not take part. After losing Yamburg, the right flank of the Red Army was forced to hastily retreat to Krasnaya Gorka and Petergof, but although the units of the Estonian 1st Division crossed the line of the old positions and advanced eastwards, they were far from thinking of pursuing the retreating Bolsheviks. The same passive stance was maintained at the section near Pskov, where the slightest pressure on the Velikaya River would have been certainly been successful for the Estonians and result in the fall of Red Pskov. The position of the Estonian 1st Division was especially odd with regards to Krasnaya Gorka. The garrison of the latter had long been unreliable, from the Bolsheviks' point of view, and showed a strong tendency to go over to the White side. The White command knew that, and when the attack started a special unit was sent to Krasnaya Gorka, to have talks with the garrison. However, delegates from the fort went out before it arrived and were forced to enter into negotiations for a surrender with the units of the Estonian 1st Division. As one of their first demands, the delegates did not want Estonian units to enter the fort – only White Russian ones – as the Russian garrison only wanted to side with other Russians. The Estonians were unhappy with that demand, and having refused any further negotiations, they simply shot the entire delegation. The garrison, understandably, gave up any idea of surrendering and – backed by the sailor units sent by the Soviets – actively participated in the defense of Petrograd.

Under pressure from the White Russian Command and the White Russian government, the policy of the Estonian government was moved somewhat, and during one of the Reds' strategic maneuvers the Estonian 1st Division shifted from passive to active, thus significantly easing the position of the left flank of the North-Western Army at the end of October.

Up to the beginning of the retreat, Estonia, as represented by its high command and government, continued to be friendly to its allied army and allied White government. Only when the outcome of the Petrograd campaign was finally determined, and victory at the front obviously went in favour of the Bolsheviks, did Estonia change its attitude and do whatever it could to contribute to the further defeat of the Whites. Pressed against the Estonian border in the middle of November, the North-Western Army needed the help of its former ally more than ever, but instead of sympathy and help was met only with unfriendliness and hostility.

Only history will tell the true tragic story of the North-Western Army after it crossed the Narva River under the pressure of the superior Bolshevik forces, and will give an impartial account of Estonia's position at that time. That time is not yet, but it can only be said that Estonia played a primary role in the forced demobilisation of the North-Western Army and in the impossibility of using it to continue to fight the Bolsheviks.

Our former allies, the British, also took a strange position during the offensive against Petrograd. With the appointment of General Yudenich as commander-in-chief, the Allied governments had openly taken the side of the White Army in the North-West and made a number of promises to wholeheartedly support it. An endless number of foreign missions, commissions and sub-commissions appeared in the area of the struggle against the Bolsheviks and visited the front with the Russian generals. When inspecting the regiments they were horrified at the sight of the ragged and unclothed soldiers and loudly repeated that they would not leave their former allies in that state and would help them in their further struggle against the Bolsheviks. Week after week passed, but the promised material support did not come. The daily reminders of our commanders-in-chief were met with a reassuring reply from the foreign representatives that everything would be sent in time. The Bolsheviks kept attacking, three-quarters of the White soldiers were without boots, the White artillery was unable to fire due to lack of shells and there were not enough rifles, even for combat units – but this “promptness” did not appear.

The Lieven Division arrived, perfectly supplied by the Germans. Confidence in the Allies was noticeably shaken, and voices began to be raised openly about the need to change orientation. At the request of the army commanders, the High Command summoned a meeting of all the foreign representatives to be held at the end of July. For such a meeting, according to established custom, two guards of honour were posted: one was from the Lieven Division, the other from the Yamburg *Druzhina* (later disbanded). The first guard, dressed in new German uniforms, armed with German rifles in fine boots and immaculate clothing, presented such a stark contrast to the barefooted, nearly naked, unequipped guard of the *druzhina*, that it could not but cause bewilderment. One of the English representatives could not but express his surprise and asked the Russian officer who accompanied him, the explanation of such a sharp difference in the two lines of the same army. “That is because,” answered the Russian officer, “the guard of the Lieven Division is equipped by our enemies, the Germans, and the other by our friends, the Allies.”

At that meeting, the military leaders spoke openly about the impending disaster, argued the impossibility of continuing to fight the Bolsheviks under the existing conditions of material support and urgently demanded real help from the foreign representatives. Once again, the Allies solemnly promised to hand over the material to the White Army, which allegedly was on its way, in the next few days. At the end of the meeting, the Army proposed that if the promised aid did not arrive within ten days, the White Army should give up Yamburg, make it clear that the Allies were powerless to help the White Army and they felt not only entitled but obliged to change political direction.

On 31 July the first transport arrived in Tallinn, but on 5 August Yamburg was surrendered, and White Army withdrew behind the Luga River. Further retirements stopped, as two more transports arrived in the following days, one after the other, carrying boots, uniforms, tanks and weapons. The Allies had kept their promise and from then on, they became even more involved in the White movement. The Assistant Chief of Mission, the British General March, in a categorical and unacceptable manner, formed a provincial North-Western Government for the Whites. General March justified his demand that the government be formed quickly by claiming the need to establish an authoritative Russian power, with which both the Allied countries, Estonia and other new nations would be able to enter into treaty relations. The government was formed and headed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, S. G. Lienozov, and started to organise the rear. General March and the head of the British political mission, Colonel Gordon, inundated the government and General Yudenich, who was Minister of War, with promises of financial, material and political aid. The Whites believed in the sincerity of their former allies and were feverishly preparing for an assault on Petrograd. The British had been particularly insistent on this offensive since August, promising not only material and moral support, but also the military assistance of their navy for this purpose. Preliminary military meetings were attended by the British, and a plan for a march on Petrograd was drawn up together with them. The British fleet, at the same time as the White forces were moving towards Gatchina, were to appear at the straits of Krasnaya Gorka and Kronstadt and, with its fire, force the Red

garrisons of the fortresses to abandon their resistance and hasten their transition to the White side. The North-Western Army opened its offensive, the White regiments reached Gatchina, Krasnoye and Tsarskoye, but the British fleet did not appear. The bolder Bolsheviks open fire from their dreadnoughts and battleships, landing parties of sailors were sent from Kronstadt, one after another to the southern shore of the bay – and the English fleet was still not seen. At last, the Bolsheviks took the offensive themselves, squeezing our units at Tsarskoye and Krasnoye, and we were getting preparing for the retreat – and only then an English monitor appeared in front of Krasnaya Gorka and fired several shells from its 15-inch guns at maximum range.

With the active fighting with the enemy coming to an end; the battered North-Western Army found shelter in Estonian territory, at the price of its humiliation. Russian Headquarters and Russian political circles were facing a total defeat – they were aware of the impossibility of fighting the Bolsheviks on the old Petrograd front, as Estonia was willing to make peace with Soviet Russia. But the fight against the bandits needed to move elsewhere, the Allies could not abandon tens of thousands of fighters for a righteous, common cause. So thought the Russian people, and they knocked at every closed door to save the dying army. But Lloyd George decided to make peace with the Soviets, refused all aid and the White army was left to itself, to disappear into the abyss of the turbulent sea.

The reasons for the expected help not appearing from the Estonians and the British during the operation against Petrograd are unknown. The reasons, political and psychological, are multiple, but one of the most important is the actions of Bermond. At the very moment when the North-Western Army, in the name of saving the Motherland, was commencing its decisive offensive against Petrograd, a strange story was unexpectedly playing out on the shores of the Gulf of Riga. There a Russian-German corps had been formed by the Russian Count Keller and the German Count von der Goltz, and was concentrating near Liepaja. It was under the overall command of the Russian Colonel Bermond-Avalov, and for some reason it opened active operations against the troops of the newly formed Latvian state. Only in the future will it be possible to establish the actual reasons for Bermond's actions and, perhaps, to determine the exact reason for helping Soviet Russia by weakening the rear of the North-Western Army. For the time being, one can only speculate in that respect and draw possible evidence from the facts which directly emerged from the Bermond venture.

The chauvinist circles in Latvia and Estonia were alarmed at the first shots fired on the coast of Riga. "The connection between Yudenich and Bermond is undeniable," argued the politicians of those countries: "Yudenich simultaneously wants to crush both Soviet Russia and its estranged states and Bermond is carrying out his directives."

It was very difficult for General Yudenich to convince Latvia and Estonia that he was not in league with Bermond, and that he deeply disapproved of his actions. The Commander-in-Chief was not trusted, his declaration of Bermond as a traitor was seen as mere hypocrisy, and General Yudenich's relations with the Estonian government begin to deteriorate.

Just as the White forces needed more supplies and ammunition for a successful advance, they also needed bread and flour for the starving people in Gatchina and Luga, but all of that was located in Tallinn, and required Estonian trains and the Estonian railways to transfer the required quantities to the Russian territory. But the Estonian government was transferring its forces from Narva to Riga, to fight jointly with Latvians against the Germans and Bermond, and as a result was refusing to deliver ammunition and flour from Tallinn in time.

The plan to defeat Krasnaya Gorka required a strong Estonian barrier is to move along the coast of the Gulf of Finland simultaneously with our advance towards Gatchina, but its forces were needed to protect against the encroachment of Bermond, and the Estonian government refused to take aggressive actions against Krasnaya Gorka. The English Naval Squadron had to support the Latvians in their fight against the Russo-German units and could not appear at the required time in the waters of the Gulf of Finland.

The North West Army artillery had a lot of old Russian guns, not supplied by the English, and the Estonians also had a lot of them. Before Bermond's assault, the custom was that the Russian and Estonian armies would help each other out in the theatre of war, by temporarily supplying each other with ammunition, even food. Now, the situation had changed, and Estonians refused the requests from the Whites to

temporarily lend some ammunition. Finally, the Latvians had to withdraw almost all their forces from the Bolshevik front, thus emptying their sector in Latgalia, which made it possible for Bolsheviks to use the men facing the Latvians there as reserves to strengthen the front against Yudenich.

These are the facts, drawn from the actions of Bermond-Avalov. History will truthfully assess them and determine their importance during the struggle of White Russia against the Reds.

4.

These three factors – Bermond's actions, the lack of the English fleet at the right moment and the passive position of the Estonians – should be considered the cornerstones of the failure of the campaign on Petrograd. Already disorganised, our rear was further weakened by the consequences of Bermond's intervention, which impeded the successful communication between the White home front and the Estonian authorities. All the requests of the White Russian government institutions for aid in one way or another, as it strained its forces to fight the Bolsheviks, were met with refusals from the Estonians, who were motivated their reluctance to help White Russia only by the fact that they had to save the forces of their small country for the struggle that lay ahead with Bermond's army. As a result, shells and ammunition were not delivered to the front on time, food supplies for the people and the army were delayed, and there were many logistical problems.

Because the promised British fleet did not appear in front of the forts of Kronstadt and Krasnaya Gorka, the whole plan of the campaign to Petrograd was significantly altered. If the Allied squadron had appeared in the Gulf of Finland simultaneously with the advance of our 1st Corps units, then Krasnaya Gorka would have capitulated without any doubt. In that case, the Bolsheviks would have not been able to hold and manoeuvre in the Petergof bridgehead, and so not be able to counteract our advance towards Strelna and Ligovo. The consequence of that would have been that our left flank would have reached the Pulkovo positions of the Reds. None of this happened due to the absence of the British. Krasnaya Gorka remained a Soviet stronghold, on which the Bolsheviks could base their manoeuvres on our left flank and use their numerical superiority to create a serious threat to bypass our entire position there.

The uncertain position of Estonians put both of our flanks at risk. By not taking any steps against Pskov and refusing to negotiate about surrendering the garrison of Krasnaya Gorka, the Estonians allowed the Bolsheviks to keep two forts almost in the rear of our forces, giving them the opportunity to manoeuvre on our flanks. This was the sole reason why Petergof did not fall on the shore of the Gulf of Finland, and why the Reds were able to launch such a decisive attack on our right flank and finally bring the Soviet 11th Division deep into the rear of our position.

However, in determining the reasons for this uncertain position of the Estonians, we encounter mistakes made by the main White leaders. Their political positions were far from being up to the mark and did not meet the demands of the time. The indisputable fact of the temporary separation of its former provinces from Russia and their insistent desire to permanently distance themselves from Russia had not met with sympathy from those in charge of the White movement. The generals, who acted as diplomats and politicians, assumed an authoritative tone when negotiating with the governments of the Allied and neutral states; they treated the former territories as vassal states on behalf of the future Russia. Many of the senior leaders went even further and consistently stressed that they viewed the independence of the new states only as forced and temporary, and that with the fall of Bolshevism in Russia, the latter would begin to reassemble its remnant parts. With such an attitude, one could hardly expect full sympathy from those, who White Russia needed to help them. The Estonian High Command, well aware of the danger to world culture posed by Bolshevism in Russia, willingly agreed to support the idea of active aid to the North-Western Army, but the government of the Republic of Estonia, aggrieved by its treatment in the upper circles in White Russia, refused to back any military action.

The Finnish government also refused to help General Yudenich in his actions against Petrograd. In public both governments motivated their refusals due to their own weakness and other reasons, but there is no doubt that with less arrogance and more pliability, the upper levels of the White Russian governments would have found common ground with the governments of the smaller states and General Yudenich could have long ago created the necessary united front.

The political mistakes of the high command of the North-Western Army led to a military one. Without the help of the Estonians, the Russian army began their attack leaving both of their flanks unprotected. While moving eastwards, the White Army could not halt the operations of the Red Army in the Pskov bridgehead, nor prevent sailors from making landing operations in the vicinity of Petrograd. Trotski and his generals hastened to take advantage of this to deliver a deadly blow to their advancing enemy. Concentrating large forces to the north-west of Krasnaya Selo and to the south-west of Luga, the Red command began to bypass both wings of our position almost simultaneously. On the left flank the corresponding regrouping of the White Command managed to not just eliminate any danger, but also to completely recover the position that was lost with the fall of Kipen' and Ropsha. But that could only be achieved by concentrating nearly all the forces of the North-Western Army near Gatchina, and these forces left not enough to successfully operate near Luga. There was a lack of reserves, and military science says it is impossible to fight a manoeuvring enemy without reserves. Day by day the enemy got deeper and deeper into our rear, putting our Gatchina group of forces in a more and more difficult position. In the end we had to rush a general retreat in order to save our forces from being surrounded, without thinking about any counter-operations.

The enemy's forces were only slightly greater than those of the North-Western Army at the start of the offensive. The Bolsheviks did not have large reserves to Petrograd, being up on the Finnish border – they had them concentrated near Moscow. As soon as there was a serious threat to Petrograd military trains rushed there one by one from the centre. To prevent that, we needed to cut the Nikolayevskaya rail line. The High Command was perfectly aware of that and, once Gatchina was occupied, had ordered the 3rd Division to immediately advance to Tosno and fortify there. For unknown reasons, however, General Vetrenko did not execute this order and for some reason just east of Gatchina, at Vladimirskaya station, he turned north towards Pavlovsk. The lack of proper resistance during this period of the advance had created among the White forces a confidence that there would be no resistance at all. General Vetrenko yielding slightly to that general mood, did carry out the orders received and decided to rush to Petrograd, where he wanted to be the first to arrive.

In this case General Vetrenko's initiative was in direct violation of the orders of the Commander-in-Chief. The explanations given by General Vetrenko's staff – claiming the autumn rains had spoiled the routes to Tosno and that circumstances demanded an immediate attack on Pavlovsk – were absolutely inexcusable. The Commander-in-Chief, as well as the staff of the 1st Corps, when they ordered the 3rd Division to move to Tosno, took into account the general plan of the offensive and to implement that required the execution of their categorical order. It was not done, and looking back at it, the lack of the responsibility of the officials can be seen to be one of the prime factors for the failure of the whole campaign. The majority of the North-Western Army – corrupted by the Revolution, which had completely perverted the notion of military discipline – had not learned by the time of the offensive to serve not out of fear but out of conscience.

During the civil war the commanders became accustomed to partisan actions, and had learned to be guided entirely by their personal judgement of the situation. When those partisan detachments became part of an organised army, their commanders did not totally discard their experience of independent, partisan methods. Instead they continued to use them, forgetting that the tasks they were assigned were not independent manoeuvres, but only a link in a coordinated plan. The senior commanders did not show sufficient insistence in demanding full obedience, and as a result discipline in the North-Western Army did not meet the most modest requirements.

This was not so in the Red Army. Being aware of the anti-Bolshevik mood of the bulk of the Soviet troops, Trotski used a variety of coercive measures as its commander, introducing such a firm discipline in the Red Army at the time of its creation that it soon grew into bloody terror. To protect against possible uprisings, Trotski went on to form special punitive units, and surrounded himself with hired Chinese, Magyar and Bashkir battalions. Relying on those praetorian bayonets he alone ruled his army of two million, forcing all of his generals, officers and commissars to obey his – Trotski's – will, without question, through fear of execution and revenge.

Trotski's boiling energy was to play a major part in the defence of Red Petrograd. At the height of our offensive, he arrived in the city and took into his own hands all the threads of the defense of the capital. Through strict measures he forced literally everyone to work till exhaustion. He made sure that panic and

confusion in the Red Army, not only subsided, but were replaced by enthusiasm and impetus. It must be said, however, that the morale in some troops of the Red Army were extremely high even before that. Some units, made up of Communists or sailors, when surrounded by White regiments at the very beginning of our advance, with no hope of rescue, did not surrender but went on to die a heroic death. Extreme self-sacrifice was also shown by the Soviet *kursants* and armoured train crews, the *Lenin's* crew being the most loyal to Soviet power.

The reasons for the failure of the campaign include the lack of necessary assistance from the Allies. While the help of the English Navy – whether due to Bermond's intervention, or for other reasons – did not arrive in the Gulf of Finland in time, only starting to fire on 27 October, indicates the lack of military support, there is also evidence of the fact that the Allies did not give sufficient material help. The uniforms sent (not for free, of course, but with our money) were definitely decent and satisfactory, but unfortunately the same could not be said about the tanks and guns. The tanks were old junk, which required repairs after every two or three kilometres. Moreover the tank crews were not suited to the situation, preferring a carefree life in Narva to self-sacrifice and heroism in battle. As for the guns sent to Narva, the majority of them were without locks, which had been "forgotten" when loading.

Finally, the blown up bridge across the Luga near Yamburg also played a major role in the sad outcome of the offensive. The tanks were directed there and our armoured trains and armoured cars were concentrated there. They could not cross the Luga River, however, and we had to conduct the first attacks on the Reds without any technical support. The tanks could be crossed over the river via a ford within a few days, but the trains and armored vehicles remained on the left bank of the river Luga until the bridge was repaired on 5 November. By this time our retreat was at full swing, and only trains we captured during the operation were allowed to pass. On 14 November the bridge was blown up for a second time.

The Campaign on Petrograd ended in failure. For the reasons listed about, the White Army failed to reach the Northern Palmyra, and did not bring the hoped for deliverance to the population of the unhappy capital. But the self-sacrifice of the Russian soldiers, shown in the exploits performed by them during the offensive, showed the world once more that the Russian hero-soldier will face any obstacle – he is ready for any heroic, fearless action in order to save his native land. The avalanche of refugees that accompanied the retreat of our army, the enthusiasm of the population that greeted the entry of White troops into this or that place, let them show how deluded the politicians are when they say that the Communist system is a paradise for the Russian peasant and worker.