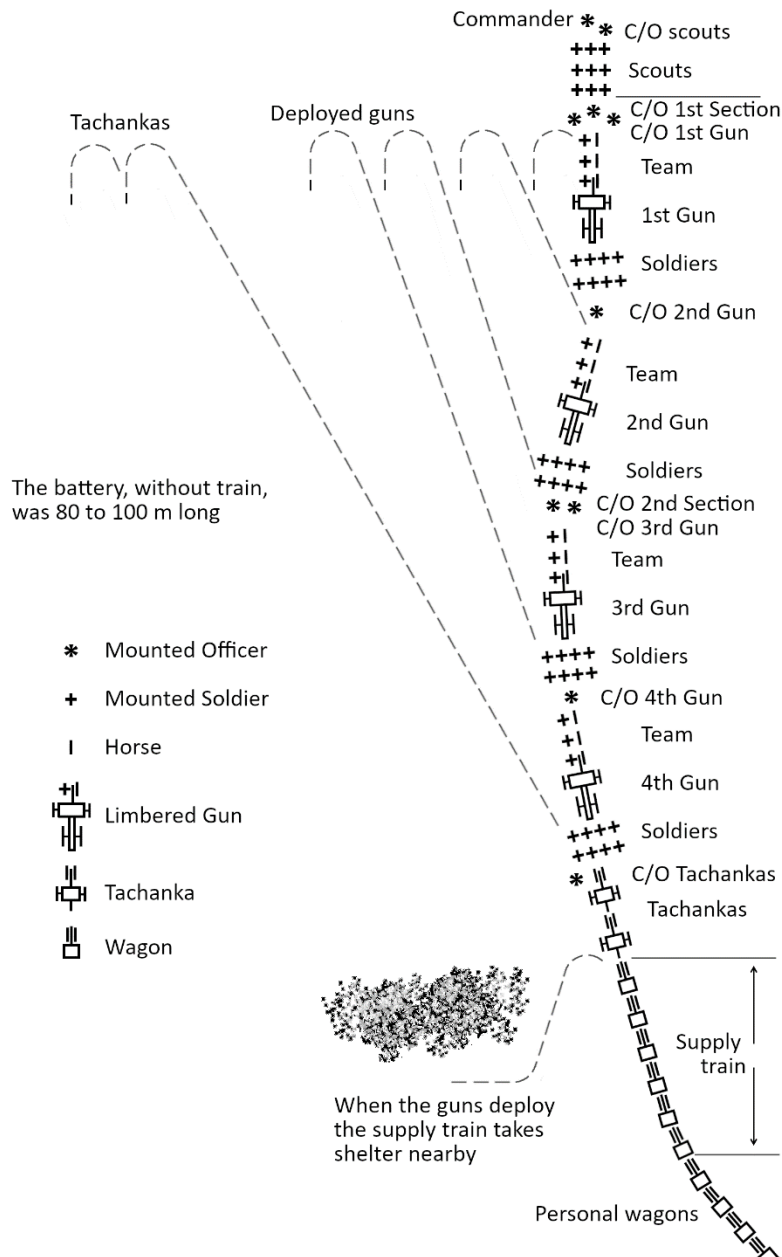


Sergei Mamontov

Campaigns and Horses

This is an excerpt where he specifically discusses tactics and deployments. The book contains a lot more details, but they are scattered about.

The Battery while Moving



Here the battery is shown at the effective maximum. It has 10 officers, 48 soldiers, 9 scouts, 75 horses plus the wagon drivers.

The minimum strength was 3 officers, 20 soldiers, 12 wagon drivers, 1 tachanka, two large wagons and four small ones.

The Battery in Combat

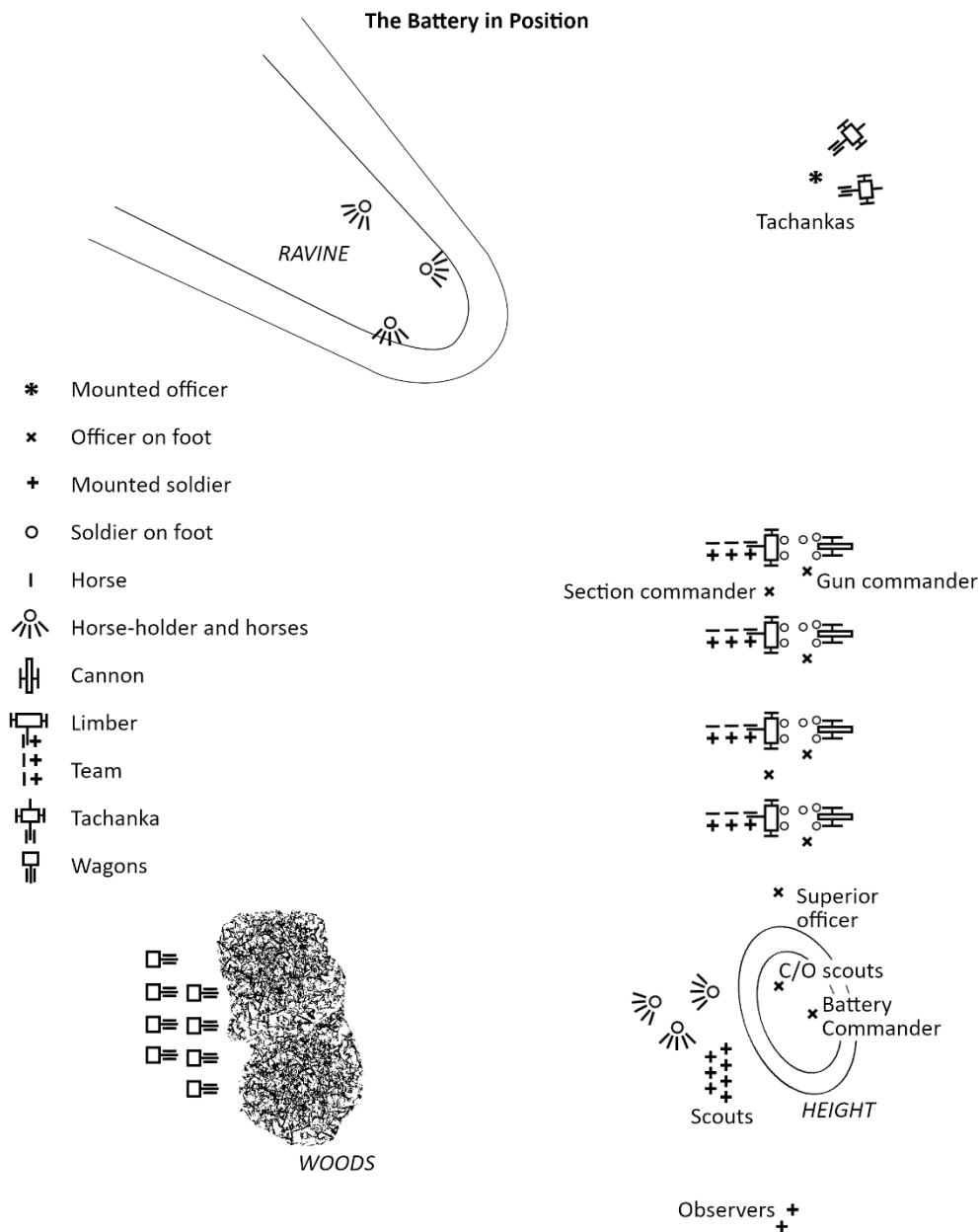
Through practice and experience the batteries – the horse-mounted and ours – developed some methods which were contrary to the regulations of the previous war. The first change was the lack of caissons. Initially, thanks to the shortage of shells, we could carry them all with the limbered gun. Then we noticed that without caissons, the battery became more mobile, its was half as long on the march and losses were



reduced, especially in horses. The reserve of shells began to be transported on normal carts we had requisitioned, in a "combat train", a little behind the battery. We fired shells carried by the limber. When it was calm for a moment, a cart would come up to the battery and replenished the supply.

A battery was four guns, not six. Previously the smallest unit was a platoon, that is, two guns. We had each gun commanded by an officer and often operated independently. The gun also arranged its own supply.

The battery almost always fired from an open position. Initially it was difficult to find a hidden position on the flat Kuban steppes, and afterwards because you need to act quickly in a war of movement. There was no time to search for good positions. Finally, we found that fire at close range was more effective, both in terms of causing losses and the psychological effect. It was necessary to deploy faster than the enemy's battery. In the beginning, the Reds had batteries without officers and fired poorly, which allowed us to take risks. If a battery came under fire, it was often rescued by another battery, which silenced the enemy, or it abandoned the position, often moving in a dispersed formation to reduce losses.



The battery had a *tachanka*, sometimes two, for cover. When the battery deployed, the head of the machine-gun team chose a place on one of the flanks.

The combat train consisted of an ambulance wagon and the carts for personal belongings, one per gun. These were the carriages that belonged to the battery. In addition, there were a certain number of requisitioned carts, in which we carried shells, barley, flour, salt etc. We only had a mobile kitchen rarely, there was no time to cook because of the repeated movement. The combat train followed directly behind the battery, so as to not get lost. During a battle, it went to a hidden spot nearby. If there were a lot of carts, an officer was appointed to command them.

A train with the tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths etc was about a hundred kilometres to the rear. Officers and soldiers went there for treatment and rest.

The effectives of the battery varied a lot. There were always more people when on the offensive than when we retreated. More in summer, less in winter. It was roughly between fifty and eighty men.

At night, the guns were placed in a 'park', on a square or in a street. A guard wasn't always posted. Each man took his horses to the stable attached to the house he was staying at. We didn't like hitching posts and rarely used them.

We didn't take any roll calls, make reports, or have any paperwork. Doubtless the rolls of effectives were with train in the rear, and incorrect.

We fired shells taken from the limber. They were placed three paces from the guns. Taking the limbers away any distance was unthinkable in a war of movement. In the event of an attack, we would never have had time to limber up.

While General Nevadovski, formerly of the 64th Brigade, was the inspector of horse artillery, everything went well. But after his death, General Prince Avalov, an actual horse artilleryman, became the inspector of horse artillery. And then trouble began. This was facilitated by two circumstances. Firstly, there were few true horse artillerymen among the officers of our batteries. There were light gunners like me and even infantry officers like my brother. The inspectorate couldn't stomach this. In the past, the horse artillery had been like a caste, which Avalov had belonged to. Secondly, all that I mention above wasn't consistent with regulations.

Avalov rarely visited the front lines and couldn't understand that our innovations were more practical. He was convinced it was negligence, and insisted on the exact application of regulations, not wanting to admit that they were outdated, that different rules are needed in a mobile war than in a positional one.

