

Notes of a White Officer

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CHAPTER ONE

Petersburg – Volunteer Army.

Battery formation (Yalta period, Melitopol period).

Retreat from Melitopol to Akmanai

Akmanai positions

On 31 July 1918 I left Petersburg with the last Ukrainian delegate train. These trains, intended for Ukrainian citizens summoned to Ukraine, also took illegal officers who, like me, tried to leave the rule of the Council of Deputies. Such trains were accompanied by Soviet commissars up to Orsha (passenger) station, on the border with Soviet Russia. The commandant of the train I was traveling on was a former officer of the Life Guards N– Regiment,¹ a wartime appointment, who clearly knew about the illegal passengers on board and promised us a quick and safe crossing of the border.

After 26 hours we arrived in Orsha, where the first thing they told us was that they would first examine the luggage and after that we would be allowed to cross the border. It didn't work out that way. Obviously, the Bolshevik commissars had gotten wind of the fact that many illegals were on the train, and therefore began to drag out our journey onwards. For two days we stood on the siding, surrounded by the Red Army; rumours arose that the entire train would be returned to Moscow for examination of passenger documentation. On the third day, the ticket inspectors showed up, but they never let us out. On the fourth day all the officers on the train conspired to cross the border on foot. We got out slowly from the cars, as best we could, and went to the local representative of Ukraine, from whom we received precise instructions on when to be at the transition point – namely when the commissar was leaving for lunch.

We were greeted warmly by the Germans and taken to the first train leaving for Kiev. From Kiev I moved easily to Kharkov where I lived, officially as a university student, carefully hiding my officer rank, until the Petliura coup. During this time, my brother and I visited Znamenovka, the estate of our aunt, Baroness Frederiks, located in the Bakhmut district of the Ekaterinoslav province. Life there seemed to be the same, but everyone was effectively on the alert, fearing attacks and robberies. Then we met Colonel Perfiliev of the Life Guards Cavalry Regiment in Ekaterinoslav, who promised to let me know when he would go to the Volunteer Army, where we could serve together. Finally, we visited Urezov, where our things were taken from the estate were packed and transported to Kharkov.

When the situation changed in Kharkov, and they began looking for officers – to mobilise or arrest them – when the Germans were leaving Ukraine and the Bolsheviks were expected any day, I decided to leave for the Volunteer Army. A letter was received from Perfiliev, notifying me that he was leaving soon and that a battery was being formed in Yalta. This led us both to leave for Feodosiya where our uncle and grandfather, the Kulomzins, lived. We started from Lozovaya and went via Melitopol, where there were already Volunteer units at that time. At each station the Petliurists checked our documents and examined our belongings.

We stayed in Feodosiya for two weeks and left for Yalta immediately upon receiving news that Colonel Trepov, at that time the commander of the Guards Horse Battery, was summoning me to his service. My brother, was still a whole year off draft age but travelled with me so we could enter service together, which our grandfather and uncle strongly supported. Arriving in Yalta, we found the officers there: Trepov,

¹ The original is obscure in a couple of places.



Lagodovski, Baron Fitingof, Arsenyev, Kosov, Krivoshein and Launits. Aprelev was sent to Novorossiysk for men and uniforms. Perfiliev and Rodzianko went to Odessa for guns.

The battery at that time consisted of 15 horses left by the Germans, 6 lower ranks, 2 machine guns, 4 old German wagons, a mobile kitchen, several rifles and old, torn German uniforms. It was based in Oreanda, in the barracks of the Crimean Cavalry Regiment. Every morning the officers cleaned the horses themselves, and only a week later did another seven lower ranks arrive. None of us had money in Oreanda and we were fed porridge and bread from a cauldron. It was repulsive to go in to Yalta and look at the local restaurants and cafes.

In early January 1919, we were ordered to move to form in the Melitopol area. The “battery” moved thus: in the vanguard in the kitchen, my brother Iliodor, who was admitted to our battery as a volunteer, followed by four harnessed carts, two officers on horseback, all the soldiers and other officers on foot behind, leading three of the worst horses by the bridle, of which one fell on the way. In Sevastopol, Colonel Kotlyarevski was waiting for us, bringing us our guns together with Perfiliev and Rodzianko. On the same day, the battery boarded a train and left. On the same day the battery loaded onto a train and left. It took us seven days to get to Melitopol. It turned out that we had a week to be combat-ready, as Makhno’s bands were becoming more and more bold.

After the Germans left the German colonies formed “*Zelbetschutz*”.² There were 16 companies in total: 8 Mennonites and 8 Lutheran and Catholic. Almost all the companies were commanded by the German non-commissioned officers who had remained in the Ukraine. I must say that they were excellent commanders, who really knew how to lead people. This organisation was subsequently patronised by General Schilling, who sent the Melitopol and Berdyansk Regiments and a small amount of artillery, which included our battery, to help them. Trepov was appointed head of the garrison and commandant of the city of Melitopol. All the armed forces from the Dnepr to Upper Tokmak were commanded at first by General Tillo, but soon after General Schilling replaced him. Perfiliev commanded the armed forces of the Pr-b, Halbstadt³ and Gnoden districts, that is to say the entire German *Zelbetschutz*. Our battery was directly subordinate to him. All Volunteer units within those districts were dependent on the colonists, who provided them with everything necessary for life free of charge.

Upon our arrival in Melitopol, we received a lot of volunteers – [university] students, high school students and others, who had fled from the Bolsheviks to the Ukraine. In addition to these, men were sent to us, mobilised by force from the surrounding Russian villages. In all the villages, a small handful of Bolsheviks frightened the rest, who did not dare to voluntarily enlist with us. So these mobilisations often took place with the help of armed force. Beyond all expectations, these men later turned out to be excellent soldiers. We also obtained in a very small number of horses – but only for the guns. Aprelev arrived from Novorossiysk with a small number of old, torn English overcoats around this time. Following this, I was sent by the commander of the guards artillery, General Bezkornilovich, to Sevastopol to receive and send guns and shells to Melitopol,

I had to visit all kinds of institutions with orders and requisition papers. It is difficult to imagine how the number of staff and subordinates could have reached such an ugly number at the time, when every able-bodied man is needed at the front. For example, General Borovski, in charge of all the Crimean troops, had a staff of three thousand men together with his escort. Every piece of paper, once getting to these headquarters, passed through so many hands, and was written in so many journals that we had to wait for weeks. They tried to avoid issuing anything from warehouses, where the required goods were available, while at the front there was a lack of everything. It was a disgusting time – it lasted a month – sitting in

² Self defence units. The “German” colonies were ethnical Germans, but they had been in Russia for generations by this time.

Makhno, whose base was in Gulyai Pole just to the north, singled these colonies out as particular targets of his, as they were prosperous and did not work on the Russian *mir* model of village self-governance, being instead based on private farms and businesses.

³ Galbshtadt in the Russian, modern Molochansk.



Sebastopol in hopeless melancholy. My brother was also there with me, being treated for an abscess on his arm, but he left two weeks before me.

In mid-February 1919, I was summoned by Trepov to Melitopol to replace Krivoshein, who had been his adjutant, but luckily this honour passed me. Soon I was able to leave for Halbstadt, as I was temporarily posted to be with Perfiliev and the logistics unit. The head of the logistics unit was Lekhovich, who had arrived a week earlier from the Caucasus. During my absence, a requisitioning of horses was carried out in the German colonies; in addition, we received a small number of sabres (also from the colonists), so that one platoon of the battery became mounted. I lived as was the way, in the house of one of the richest Halbstadt colonists, Willis, in a separate room with a comfortable bed – everything we needed, from bed linen to food, we received from the owners.

At the end of February, the situation at the front began to deteriorate, Makhno's bands opposing us were reinforced by the arriving Bolsheviks. One fine day Perfiliev sent me with orders to the front. At this time, there heavy fighting. The Bolsheviks were advancing in earnest and the companies of the colonists could not hold them. On returning from the trip I learned that Bolshoy Tokmak, which is six km from Halbstadt, had been occupied by the Bolsheviks. Towards the end of our time there a certain Oberleutnant of the German General Staff, von Honmeyer, appeared before Perfiliev and offered his services. He was received and assisted in the work of the headquarters.

Upon my arrival, I was ordered to collect the wagon train and take it to Melitopol. By the morning of the next day I managed to get under way; the mud was unbearable, the horses walked with difficulty, and the Bolsheviks were approaching Halbstadt. I got out onto the bypass road and took the direction to the German colony of "Orlov". The entire road was clogged with fleeing colonists. Every now and then I was overtaken by foot and mounted military ranks of the colonist *Zelbetschutz*, which clearly indicated that there was a problem at the front. I decided to continue non-stop and walked 60 km in one day. On the way, I was met by my brother Iliodor, sent by the commander to find me, with an order to be in Melitopol by that day at all costs, since all the units were retreating to Melitopol and were unlikely to linger there. My brother found me only with difficulty, because I did not take the direct road.

I entered Melitopol late in the evening; not a single soldier was in the city, only some lowlife individuals robbing shops and houses. It was very unpleasant, especially when I realized that I was responsible for the wagon train. I found Trepov at the station, and with the help of Krivoshein we managed to persuade him to provide wagons for to load all our stuff. By morning everything was ready, and I was on my way to Taman. Shortly before my departure, the battery reached Melitopol, and I learned the following. On the day when I was leaving Halbstadt with the wagon train, the colonists, feeling that they could no longer hold out, decided to surrender. A committee was formed from the colonists themselves, which was to take power into their own hands and arrest Perfiliev. The latter knew nothing about this, since they tried to keep the decision of the committee secret. Leaving his headquarters in the morning, he met von Honmeyer, who was on his way to warn him. Perfiliev did not believe it, but then he saw a group walking down the street with a red flag. He went up to them, took away the flag and tore it up. Then with Lekhovich and his messenger, they mounted and joined the battery. Von Honmeyer disappeared. The battery units retreated along the Alexandrovsk-Melitopol railway alongside the regular volunteer, and almost all the colonist companies scattered. Two of the German non-commissioned officers who commanded them shot themselves (I remember the name of one of them – Sontag).

I took a train with my belongings to Taganash;⁴ after two days there we moved to Dzhankoy, but there were no place suitable as a depot there. I had to go back to Taganash, where I learned that the battery was in Novo-Alekseevka. I took a locomotive to get precise instructions from the commander. The battery was commanded by Perfiliev, following Trepov's departure. I was ordered to wait for the battery in Taganash. The property was unloaded into the warehouse by order of Borovski, who did not allow me to take the wagons. I waited for the battery for five days. During that time two more convoys arrived, "formed" during the retreat, with fodder and provisions. One was under the command of Dondiv, the other under Launitz. When our troops reached Salkov, the battery loaded onto the train, which was under Bolshevik artillery

⁴ Now Solone Ozero, on the Chuvash Peninsula to the Crimea.



fire, and went to Taganash, and from there to the farms of Martynov and Balashev, 25 km west of Taganash. It was supposed to guard the fords across the Sivash, together with the then Guards Division,⁵ while the logistics part remained in Taganash.

I was sent to Feodosiya for our wages and to find a room as a depot. Returning to Taganash a week later, I learned that I was assigned to the second platoon of our battery, commanded by Krivoshein. The platoon consisted of two cannons without harnesses, and was awaiting the arrival of the horses we were promised. It was placed with a machine-gun team in the aforementioned farmsteads, while the first platoon left to protect the fords on the Chuvash Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks launched an offensive against Perekop. Our forces there were not numerous. In addition to our units, there were 300 to 400 Greeks – the only time the foreign powers really helped us; they fought well, but as soon as the situation became serious they were immediately taken away. The retreat to Kerch began. Obviously, our platoon and machine-gun crew could not remain in place – an order came for the machine-gun team to immediately join the first platoon, and the second platoon, under the command of Colonel Kotlyarevski was to head to Kerch, trying not to lose contact with the wagon train from Taganash. I was to join the active unit. There was nothing to do but tie the cannons to the wagons and drag them across the whole Crimea.

On the afternoon of 10 March I went out into the steppe to look for my battery. I rode in fear, not knowing where our men or the Bolsheviks were; it was frightening. Finally I identified our unit from its firing and arrived safely at three o'clock in the afternoon. The detachment our battery was in consisted of: the Guards *Division* of Colonel Kovalinski, which consisted of two squadrons; His Majesty's Horse Grenadiers and Ulans, each of about 30 men; our two cannons; and later in Beganka we were joined by the Composite Regiment of the Cuirassier Division of about 150 sabres, commanded by Colonel Danilov – who assumed command of the entire detachment.

The rest of the day we stayed in position, and in the evening we went to spend the night in the village of Kurtichki. At dawn the next day we took up positions in front of this village. The Bolsheviks did not attack us that day; by evening we were ordered to retreat to the Czech colony of Beganka; where we learned that Dzhankoy, 25 km to our rear, was already occupied by the Reds. Before that Aronovski, one of His Majesty's Ulans, was sent to Dzhankoy for reconnaissance; in Dzhankoy town he stumbled across a machine gun 20 paces away, his horse was killed under him, and jumping off he ran on foot the whole 25 km back. He did not find us in the old place, but taking a carriage, joined us in Neumann.

In the evening we set out, walking all night, bypassing Dzhankoy. Having made about 80 km, in the morning we arrived at the German colony of Neumann, 28 km south of Dzhankoy. There we remained calmly all day, and the next morning we went to the colony of Messit, 5 km north of Neumann. After a day and a half the Bolsheviks began to attack. There was a small battle at the Kolay railway station. We departed in the direction of the Meshen colony, spent the night in the Eigenfeld colony (Tatanai). At night, a heavy fog came and the locals, fearing the requisition of their horses, drove their entire herd into the fields. Soon the Bolsheviks launched an attack and were only spotted on the edge of the village. We were all asleep at that time, and we had to hastily dress and fly out of the village under heavy fire. It was not clear to me why the Bolsheviks had not surrounded the village at night. Later, when we reoccupied Tatanai, I was told by the villagers that the Reds' passing column came across the horses in the fog, mistook it for our cavalry and hastily retreated. According to the same locals, about 10,000 Reds were advancing against us that night.

From Tatanai we went to the Tatar village of Kiyarly. A small action. We caught a local by the name of Bedritski, hiding from mobilisation, thought to hang him, but instead whipped him and took him into the battery; later he became a platoon commander, one of the best soldiers and who fought with us up to the end. In the evening we went to the German colony of Lilienfeld – we mobilised several local Germans and replaced the tired horses, but couldn't spend the night in the colony, as too many Bolsheviks were close. We went to the German colony of Temesh, and rested for two days. Again men and horses were mobilised (I remember a couple of wonderful black stallions who drove a machine gun for one and half years, up to

⁵ This was the Composite Guards Infantry Regiment of the Guards Division, part of the 5th Division.



Novorossiysk). Two days later it turned out once more our rear was occupied by the Reds, in the village of Chita 6 km away. We had to withdraw and circle round. We walked all night, I remember some very beautiful places, fording a river in the moonlight. In the morning we came to the Russian village of Koronki, where the locals met our men seeking quarters with shots (I remember a soldier who was Colonel Danilov's hairdresser was killed). We spent the night in Koronki, hanging several people.

Colonel Kotlyarevski, who joined us from Kerch then, was sent back to Kerch in the morning to stop the steamers, since no one believed in the possibility of holding out on the Akmanai Isthmus (I remember the bed bugs were terrible that night). In the morning we set out in the direction of the German colony of Neu Zurichtal, and on the way we stopped to dine in a small farm, which the Bolsheviks began to attack. There was a decent combat; here I saw for the first time the remarkable shooting ability of Colonel Lagodovski, who hit a Bolshevik cannon with the second round.

We withdrew that night to a Bulgarian colony, I don't remember the name. It was located almost on the Feodosiya-Simferopol highway itself, along which units of the 4th Division, consisting of about a thousand men, were retreating under the command of Colonel Slashchev. We contacted them, and they were ordered to advance. The next day, at dawn, our detachment launched an attack on the German colony of Konrod. At the same time, parts of the 4th Division (the Simferopol Officer Regiment, the remnants of the Berdyansk and Melitopol Regiments with their artillery and the 2nd Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment) launched an attack on the main forces of the Bolsheviks, located in the villages closest to Konrod. The *Simferopoltsy* and the equestrian *Drozdovtsy* fought especially well; the first consisted almost exclusively of officers who walked with rifles over their shoulders and did not lie down;⁶ they drove the Bolsheviks out of the villages they occupied, but the latter brought in reserves, launched a counterattack, and the *Simferopoltsy* were forced to retreat with heavy losses. At this time we were advancing on Konrod to no avail, since the colony was occupied by a large number of infantry, and we had a small amount of cavalry. Several times our *lava* reached the village, but due to losses we had to retreat.

Here I had an interesting case: the gun I commanded was ordered to move to a new position. Before I had time to dismount, incomprehensively, two shells exploded next to my gun. I couldn't understand it at first. The Bolshevik artillery, which was behind Konrod, could not see me, and moreover it seemed to me that the origin of the shot was more towards our rear. Two more shots followed, killing one horse and injuring two others. Then I just saw it and realised: some Red cannon had come out of nowhere, without any cover, and bumped into us. It fired four shots and ran away, to who knows where. I turned my gun and fired several shots after it.

For the night we retreated to the German colony Kruglik-Sheikhli, where we stayed for two nights; the Bolsheviks did not advance. The day after our arrival, we learned that a Russian village 10 km to the rear was occupied by some bandits. A punitive expedition was sent, in which our platoon took part. We came back late at night.

That night, Bolshevik reconnaissance approached our guards, which were directly in front of the colony. There was a shootout. Our duty officer, not understanding what was happening, rushed into the house where all the officers were sleeping and announced that the Bolsheviks were already in the village and that they were shooting from the neighbouring courtyard. Being sleepy, the shooting really did seem very close. I remember that I had one thing in my thoughts: to have time to put on my trousers so as not to run away in my underwear. The rest of the night was spent in the gun park. In the morning, without pressure from the Bolsheviks, we retreated to Vladislavovka. Along the road we mobilised horses and men who looked suitable age from all the villages. Among the mobilised was a certain Tkachenko, later my messenger, who followed me like a nanny when I was sick with typhus in the Kuban. Those mobilised in this way were generally divided into two categories: those who ran away immediately and those who stayed in the units – the latter later turned out to be excellent soldiers.

⁶ This means, I believe, that they attacked in marching order, without taking cover "by bounds". This was the so-called "psychic attack" that was intended to overawe the enemy. Sometimes, it was just that they didn't have enough ammunition.



We didn't stay in Vladislavovka and went to spend the night in Koyasan, where we celebrated Holy Easter. In the evening of that day, Kotlyarevski returned from Kerch; he had taken the wagon train and the second platoon to Taman, and gathered horses on the way back to us. It was restless in Kerch, where there were battles between the inhabitants of the quarries and the garrison, in which our volunteer Alexander Krivtsun was killed. Kotlyarevski said that there were not steamships in Kerch for if we needed to go. On the same evening, Arsenyev and Rodzianko arrived from Novorossiysk, to where they had transported their families from Yalta. In the morning we went back to Vladislavovka, spent the night, and in the morning went to Koyasan, to the old lodgings.

The next day, we again set out for Vladislavovka, which this time was occupied by the Bolsheviks advancing on Koyasan. We fought all day, covering the infantry, who were retreating to the trenches prepared in advance on the Akmanai isthmus. Here, for the first time, the British fired at the advancing Red lines from their warships. In the evening we retreated behind the wire. At the Akmanai railway station our battery, which was already becoming famous for its daring and its skill in shooting, was met by General Schilling, who thanked us for our exploits. For the night we withdrew with the Cuirassier Regiment to the village of Kiyat,⁷ seven km to the rear of the wire, in the reserve of the division commander. Colonel Kovalinski's division was left in Oguz-Tobe as the immediate reserve.

We remained in Kiyat quietly for about a week and a half. As no-one believed at the time in the possibility of holding on to Akmanai, and since clearly in the event of a retreat to Kerch almost all the horses would have to be left behind, the commander decided everything that could be was to be sent in advance to Taman. This was done. The next day after it was sent, Commander-in-Chief Borovski inspected us (the men marching in formation behind the guns), specially thanked the battery and, it seems, was very surprised by its appearance.

On the same day it became known to us that a cavalry raid was planned on Vladislavovka; the commander had decided to return the horses and men taken. Around 20 April 1919 (I don't remember the exact date), our troops attacked Vladislavovka. Unfortunately, I personally did not participate, since I was left at the wagon train in Kiyat as the result of severe stomach upset. The night before the cavalry units, with our battery, set out. By the morning they crossed the wire near the Black Sea, and without combat occupied the village of Kamyski. Then after some fighting on the outskirts of Feodosiya, they took the rail line to Vladislavovka, which they reached but did not occupy, and then returned by evening across the wire. The infantry at the same time left their trenches and reached Koyasan. This battle was interesting because in a small area there operating: cavalry, infantry, both horse and foot artillery, armoured vehicles, armoured trains, airplanes and Russian and English naval artillery. The British fired at Vladislavovka with volleys from the *Emperor of India* dreadnought with 16 inch guns; the impression was terrible, with shells lifting whole corners of cottages into the air, shattering all the windows.

This raid must have made a depressing impression on the Reds, who had been thinking our mood was sinking and we would be utterly demoralised, but for us it was a boost. General Schilling was wounded during the day, and was replaced by the (promoted) General Slashchev. It was also interesting how the English sailors went ashore after the battle in front of the wire and looked with curiosity at the Bolshevik rear: they sought to see something extraordinary, maybe people of a different colour than in Europe. Then, with childish joy, they pounced on a herd of sheep, loaded them on their shoulders and carried them away in their boats to the dreadnought.

Our battery did well and bravely, and earned thanks in the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Crimean Army. After that the Cuirassier Regiment and I were taken to the German colony of Kenzger, where we were positioned for two days. On the third day we were summoned to the front by an alarm, as the Bolsheviks on our right flank had launched an offensive and occupied the trenches. But when we arrived, the situation had been restored by Kovalinski's division, with the help of British artillery from the Sea of Azov. We were left in the immediate rear in the village of Oguz-Tobe; the entire battery occupied two houses – the village was terribly overcrowded. It stayed quiet for about a week, but the Bolsheviks

⁷ Modern Uvarovo



launched another attack and again occupied the trenches. Our position was restored with large losses for them.

We stayed in Oguz-Tobe until 5 June, the day of our general offensive. A few days after the Bolsheviks' second attack a second platoon from the Kuban joined us. At the same time, Colonel Kotlyarevski arrived from Novorossiysk with English uniforms. At the same time, all the units received reinforcements from the Kuban. The mood improved significantly, and if not for the disturbing rumours about Kerch, where the uprising in the quarries was growing, it would have been very good.

They began to remove units from the front one by one and send them to Kerch to pacify the rebels. At the very end of April or at the beginning of May, I don't remember, the battery was ordered to allocate a platoon to be sent to Kerch. The commander appointed the second platoon to go, since it had not yet fought at all and it needed the practice. As I was officially a junior officer with the that platoon, I joined it and went with it to Kerch.

The previous Bolshevik offence from Melitopol through to Akmanai did not have the character of a premeditated plan – it developed by chance. They took the Perekop and passed through the fords to the Chuvash Peninsula at the same time, advancing head on. We didn't have enough men or artillery to prevent with them in both places: there were several fords, and the entire artillery for the army was four or five batteries. The Bolsheviks bypassed us each time, their advancing chains stretched across the horizon, and there were always several chains, one after another. For all that, during all that time, there was not a single battle in which they defeated us. When we resisted and attacked, we met almost no resistance. The Reds were completely unable to deal with cavalry attacks and never stood for them. Neither their riflemen nor artillery were able to shoot well, and we suffered minimal losses relative to the number of cartridges and shells which they expended – but they suffered much more from our fire. They went for quantity over quality. They were bandits rather than troops.

The Akmanai position, although there were both wire and trenches, did not represent anything very serious. The trenches were not deep, there were neither dug-outs nor bunkers; the wire was in one row, and such that (I saw it myself) when you pushed one of the stakes with your foot, the whole row collapsed. This was an "imaginary line", not a position. When we occupied the Akmanai Isthmus, there was a change of mood both in us and in them, but I still do not understand why.

The Bolsheviks did not immediately launch an offensive, instead giving us time to gather our strength, but after the rest we had more self-confidence. Maybe the Reds rushed to plunder Simferopol, Sevastopol, Yalta and Feodosia – thinking us defeated. But I cannot assure you of this, only one thing can be said with certainty – with every day that passed their spirits dropped, while ours rose.

CHAPTER TWO

Kerch uprising and its suppression

Offensive of 5 June 1919 Cleansing of the Crimea

Kakhovka

The city of Kerch is located, as you know, between two small hills. Since the time of Byzantium building materials have been cut out of the limestone layers on these hills. Caves and underground passages were formed, which over time became bigger and bigger. By our time, they have reached considerable size: the passages were up to 12 km in length, there are more than 300 known exits. In addition, there were rumours that there were corridors that had direct access to the city and to the nearest villages. The caves were so wide that a lorry could easily enter them, and there were also underground halls.

Local Bolsheviks settled in these quarries, and plenty of looted rifles, machine guns, hand grenades and cartridges were taken there, along with a large amount of food. When our offensive from Perekop was launched, the men in the quarries became active – preventing as much as they could any passage of goods



or people to the Kuban, plundering the surrounding villages and making the approaches to Kerch very dangerous. Anyone captured by them was certain to not get out alive. They were difficult to fight, since it was necessary to systematically drive them into the quarries and then blow up the exits, which required a fair amount of troops and a large amount of explosives, which were difficult to get.

Our platoon arrived in Kerch late in the evening and we unloaded from the rail cars on the same day. As you know, the station was located three km from the city. The men in the quarries had occupied the station three times prior to our arrival, so remaining outside the station for the rest of the night was a concern and security had to be posted. The next morning, linking up with parts of the garrison, we went across to the Bryansk plant, to guard the city from the Adzhimushkai quarries (north side), while the rest of the garrison, namely the Composite Regiment of the Caucasian Division with a demolition team, eliminated the quarries near the fortress (south side). On the same day we were sent to Eni-Kale to carry out some searches and arrests. By evening we came back, immediately dismounted and went into the town, as the men in the quarries had begun to cut off the Bryansk plant from the town. We camped out on Prison Street. In this way we spent about a week on watch duty, guarding the town from the north side.

The fortress quarries were almost liquidated. On the last night, the Bolsheviks in them left and joined the ones in Adzhimushkai, unexpectedly attacking the units sleeping peacefully in the city, taking prisoners on the way. Then the district authorities decided to act: the city was placed under martial law – it was forbidden to go out after 9 o'clock. The guardhouse was moved forward to the tower of the railway station from the Bryansk plant. Both of our guns were manned day and night.

At this time I was sent to Taman for a wagon train and horses, with four soldiers including my brother. I finally got my belongings after two months. My brother was sick with a fever while on the Taman. A week later I returned with the wagon train to Kerch. During my departure, some changes had taken place: the fortress quarry had been cleared. The Bolsheviks, sensing the end was near grew bolder and made a sortie from the Adzhimushkai quarries, almost getting into the city. Their entry into the city itself was expected at any time.

The night after my arrival back, I was ordered to drive the enemy back into their holes and then blow up the exits. They fought desperately and we suffered heavy losses. The battery fired at a sight mark of less than 10 (about 400 metres), so that fragments of our shells flew back to us. Captain Strelev was wounded. I must say that at this time we all became embittered – it became known for certain that all the bosses in the quarries were Jews and that there was even a special Jewish company. All the men from the quarries we got hold of were hanged. So, step by step, we took one hole after another. At night we went to the town and stationed ourselves in a small courtyard surrounded by a high stone wall; there was always a machine gun at the gate, and sentries with rifles were always skirmishing.

An interesting incident happened here. I was on duty and while near the location of the battery, I suddenly heard two shots. I rushed to the yard and asked what was the matter. They pointed me towards a man calmly walking down the street with something in his hands, who would not stop despite repeated calls to do so. I called out to him again, threatening that I would shoot, but he paid not the slightest attention and continued walking. Sentries in neighbouring units began to fire at him, but he kept walking quietly on. Then I took three soldiers and followed him. It turned out that he was a blind-deaf-mute, carrying home some kind of food, and naturally was immediately released.

Before dawn we drove to the quarries and stood there all day. (At this time, Kotlyarevski received leave and was replaced by Lagodovski.) Then the 2nd Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment arrived in Kerch from the front – just in time, since almost all the exits from the quarries had already been blown up and the desperate Bolsheviks had decided to leave and break through the line, attack the city and occupy it, counting on the support of the local rabble.

It happened on the night of 20 May: we were awakened by heavy gunfire in the city, which was approaching us. Immediately realising what was the matter, we were on the move, the machine gun was taken out, and barricades were built in the streets. We were expecting the arrival of the men from the quarries, since we were positioned next to a prison in containing a lot of Bolsheviks. Without waiting for their arrival, we killed all the political prisoners.



About an hour later, we and the rest of the units gathered near the garrison headquarters, which was located almost in the centre of the city, in order to operate from there against the enemy who had broken into the city. There I learned the following: the men from the quarries had arrived at night via some completely unknown exits, almost in the city itself, not far from the station. They occupied the station and then advanced to the Mesaksudi factory in the port itself, slaughtering all the officers and soldiers who did not have time to escape from them along the way. But they stumbled unprepared into the 2nd Drozdovski Cavalry Regiment near the Mesaksudi factory, were driven back by them and forced back to Mount Mitridat and to the cemetery, where they settled in. We had to prise them out step by step, incurring considerable losses. They positioned themselves in houses and behind various cover, shooting well, and if they caught an individual did not spare them. All of them were an earthy yellow colour, because they had been underground for a long time without light. That skin tone made it possible to recognise the enemy.

By evening, the city was liberated and all the surviving men from the quarries fled, hiding around the city. Searches, arrests and executions began, taking anyone suspicious, adhering to the rule: it is better to destroy ten innocent people than to release one guilty person. At the same time, the publisher of the Menshevik newspaper *Volna*, which had been writing consistently in opposition to the Volunteers, was drowned.

This lasted for three days and at the same time the last exits of the Adzhimushkai quarry were blown up. Up to 3,000 people were killed in Kerch during this time, most of them Jews. The British who were in Kerch spent all day with terribly contented faces, taking photographs of those who were hanged and executed around the city. It is safe to say that almost none of those who had been in the quarries escaped. They were very creative in ways of hiding themselves; for example, they found two under the floor in a room occupied by the commander of the 2nd Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment. One was in our park in the bushes, right by the cannon, with a rifle, reading a newspaper. Another climbed into the house of the prison guard, threatening him with a grenade, but the guard grabbed his revolver from under a pillow and hit the impudent man in the forehead with the first shot. It was remarkable how well-informed they were, knowing the exact location of all units; including our battery, for which they already had men and drivers ready in case it was captured. Their enterprise was mainly prevented, as mentioned above, by the 2nd Cavalry Regiment that had arrived the day before.

At the very end of May, when all the quarries were empty, we joined our first platoon in Oguz-Tobe. During the absence of the second platoon, a training squad had been formed in Oguz-Tobe and there were intensive classes. The battery became unrecognisable as men were pulled out and trained. Even a *concours hippique*⁸ was arranged, in which all the soldiers participated. At this time, all the guards artillery, from which we were taken to form a separate Guards Horse Battery, were transferred to the Kuban. We had to take over the positions of the Life Guards Rifle Battery stationed in the village of Akmonai, on the shores of the Sea of Azov. This village had been almost completely destroyed by shells, with not a single house without a hole. We engaged in the exchange of food with the British, delivering them chickens, geese, ducks and sheep and receiving from them chocolate, coffee, canned foods and sugar.

About two weeks before, information began to reach us that the main forces of the Volunteer Army on the Manych and in the Donetsk coal basin had gone over to the offensive and were successfully advancing northwards. From day to day we expected an order about our own offensive. Finally, the long-awaited day came on 5 June 1919. All the cavalry was consolidated into an independent brigade under the command of Colonel Miklashevski. It consisted of the 2nd Drozdovski Cavalry Regiment under the command of Colonel Barbovich, the Composite Regiment of the Cuirassier Division under the command of Colonel Danilov, the 2nd Composite Guards Regiment⁹ under the command of Colonel Kovalinski, and our battery – for a total of about 1,000 sabres with four guns. The entire brigade was concentrated on the extreme right flank right on the Sea of Azov. It was supposed to advance to the right of the railroad and in the evening reach the line of the Dzhankey to Vladislavovka railroad.

⁸ That is the term used today for show jumping.

⁹ This unit was actually formed slightly later, at least officially.



At dawn we set out – a charge took the first line of Bolshevik trenches. The prisoners and machine guns, after eliminating the Jews, were sent to the rear, spread across units. We moved on but got too carried away and jumped too far ahead of our infantry's advance. We became caught between forces on two sides, plus the enemy had Red cadets¹⁰ – we had to retreat and align ourselves with the infantry. Never before had I been under such fire as on that day, even breathing seemed difficult on account of all the bullets. The battery was always level with the *lava*.¹¹ At about 12 o'clock we had fired our entire stock of shells and went to the rear to replenish, but an hour later we were already back in action.

Our dismounted units were unable to drive the Bolsheviks out of the village of Kiyat¹² at this time, regardless of how they tried. The battery came up turned, deployed about a kilometre from the village, clear of our front units – the Bolsheviks could not stand our fire and fled. The various squadrons began to advance, and the battery at a gallop overtook the chains of infantry, riding far ahead of our lines to see the Reds off with more fire. I will never forget that moment. The Bolsheviks were driven back to the village of Seytler,¹³ but we did not seek to occupy it, spending the night in the village of Kiyat, waiting for the infantry, which occupied Feodosiya and Vladislavovka.

Captain Krivoshein was wounded that day. I also remember another episode of that time: they were leading a captured Red Army soldier, wounded in the head with a sabre blow, face covered in blood, past a squadron of His Majesty's Cuirassiers and suddenly I saw a soldier jump off his horse, run up to the prisoner, hug and kiss him. It turned out that they were brothers.

The next day the offensive continued. The Bolsheviks no longer offered much resistance, withdrawing along the railroad. The last major clash with them in the Crimea took place near Gramatikovo station, they were put to flight by cavalry charge, which got into their rear. It happened in the following way: on 8 June all the cavalry was grouped in the German colony of Konrod, on which we had attacked unsuccessfully two months ago; at dawn the brigade moved forward, covering the right flank of the Bolsheviks, in front was the 2nd Guards Regiment with the second platoon of our battery. We passed through the village of Koronki and reached the Bulgarian colony of Chita on the same day. On the way, we caught five Reds on their way to the Gramatikovo station. One of them, a Communist, as it turned out from his papers, was shot on the spot ("wrecked", in the expression of the time), and the other four were taken with them. They stood in Chita for two hours, waiting for the main forces.

The following incident happened to me here. I was lying in a garden under a bush, falling asleep, and suddenly I heard a loud noise and shots not far from me; bullets whistled right over my head. I grabbed my revolver, from which I was never parted, jumped up – and almost collided face to face with one of the recently captured Red Army men. He was running away at full speed, and the other three were running away to my right. I knocked him down, the soldiers who approached him took him away and then shot him. The others were killed in the pursuit.

That day our entire brigade moved on to the German colony of Lilienfeld, where we arrived in the evening. We thought about resting there, but immediately upon our arrival, two squadrons from the 2nd Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment, with two of our guns, were allocated to sneak up to the railway near the Kolai station at night and blow up the tracks. The idea was to delay the Reds' armoured train, which was near Gramatikovo station. One gun of the first platoon and my gun of the second platoon went.

We set out when it was completely dark, with all sorts of precautions, since there were Bolsheviks around us in all the villages. Smoking and talking loudly were forbidden. At about two o'clock in the morning we approached the railway near the village of Karomin, on the way taking a whole headquarters of a Red regiment, with commissars, officials and papers. The line was blown up in five places. Then we broke into the village of Karomin, where the Bolsheviks were sleeping peacefully, and took a lot of carts. Now a train began to approach from the direction of Feodosiya; we waited with tension for it to derail. A terrible

¹⁰ He uses the term "*yunker*", which is a Tsarist term for military cadet.

¹¹ The *lava* was traditionally a Cossack cavalry formation, but by this stage adopted by all cavalry, which was an advance as a loose wave, generally with the ends extended forward looking for a flank to attack.

¹² Kiyat (modern Uvarovo) was behind White lines at the time. Perhaps he has the name wrong.

¹³ Now Nizhnegorsk.



commotion arose, which we further intensified with the shots from our guns. It turned out to be a train of Red cadets, who, realising what was going on, drew themselves into a chain and began to attack us.

Dawn broke and the armoured train "Red Falcon" approached, laying a heavy fire on us. Having rejoined the brigade, we began to retreat towards the infantry line, which in its turn, launched an attack. The cadets followed us for ten km. Any Jews, commissars or communists taken prisoner that night were hanged, and the rest were brutally whipped. After two days of continuous marching we were taken to a camp for the night, I don't remember the name. In all the villages we occupied the inhabitants greeted us with joy, bringing out bread, butter, milk; in some of the colonies most affected by the Bolsheviks, many even cried.

A day later, we set out again, spending the night in a village near the German colony of Lilienfeld, and in the morning the whole brigade went to Dzhankoy. Two squadrons of the Cuirassier Regiment with one gun, namely mine, under Colonel Kosikovski were allocated the task of going to Sarobuz station and blowing up the line, in case the Bolsheviks had not yet finally evacuated from Simferopol and Sevastopol, and then joining the brigade in Yutun. But the Bolsheviks were gone, all we knew was that they were still occupying trenches on the Perekop peninsula. At this time, Melitopol was occupied from the direction of Berdyansk and Mariupol, and Volunteer units were approaching Kharkov, so those Red units still in the Crimea had two exits: across the bridge over the Dnepr at Nikopol and the other at Kakhovka. The tanks received from the British, operating in the Kharkov region, successfully contributed to our offensive.

At this time, Captain Rzhnevski, who had fought in the Kuban since 1917, took over command of the second platoon. On the right flank the 2nd Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment was advanced, with two of our guns. Two squadrons in *lava*, rode into the trenches, but the Bolsheviks could not stand it, they barely shot and our losses were one wounded man. After the charge they took up positions and broke into Armyansk. Meanwhile, in the trenches between the other lakes, the Reds were still in place, and the 2nd Guards and Cuirassiers Regiments drove them directly into our arms, along with the Bolshevik artillery.

On that day it was mostly the Jewish Communist regiment facing us, and it goes without saying that no prisoners were taken. About ten days after that, I drove through the place, and it was difficult to breathe because of the cadaverous smell. In Armyansk the supply trains were taken and immediately there was a large pogrom against the Jews: neither the officers nor the soldiers could tolerate that many Jews, who were effectively bourgeois, had decided to toe the communist line. Added to this is the fact that everywhere in all the villages of Crimea we heard a lot of complaints about the Jewish communists.

That day we learned about the occupations of Kharkov and Tsaritsyn. The mood was good. The Bolsheviks fled everywhere. The next day, the brigade moved to Chaplynka and, after spending the night, went on to Kakhovka through the village of Chornaya Damina, where they found a depot of cartridges and shells abandoned by the Bolsheviks, because the local peasants had not allowed them to be taken away.

The Bolsheviks were no longer in Kakhovka, but on the other side of the Dnepr in Bereslavl, from where their artillery fired at Kakhovka. The residents greeted us with flowers and ringing bells. The officers of our battery settled down with a wealthy merchant who fed and watered us gloriously. Invitations poured in from all sides to drink tea and dine. There was also a wine warehouse in Kakhovka, so after fifteen days of hiking and fighting, we had a great rest.

At this time, talk began about the formation of our second battery. Here my brother and I got some leave and left for Kharkov. Having reached the Taganash station by carriage, we boarded the train and arrived safely.

Two days after our departure, the infantry replaced the brigade in Kakhovka, and was transported by rail to Lyubotin, near Kharkov. At the same time, the infantry in Aleshki crossed the Dnepr and occupied Nikolaev and then Odessa. The Dnieper was also forced and crossed at Ekaterinoslav.

