

Red Crimea 1919

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Preface

Without going into detail, the phenomenon of the “Red Crimea of 1919” can be summarized in a few lines. At the beginning of April 1919 some Red regiments entered the Crimea through the isthmus, pushing Denikin’s men to the east. At the end of April White units gained a foothold at the base of the Kerch Peninsula. The “Red” authorities were first organised in the form of Revolutionary Committees¹. The Provisional Sovnarkom (Soviet of People’s Commissars) of the Crimea was then formed in early May. Local councils of deputies² were then elected. It was thought that the Crimean Congress of Soviets would take power, but the Congress did not meet in time because in the second half of June, the Whites began active hostilities, and within ten days drove the Red Army and its supporters from the Crimea.

It is unlikely that anyone would find such a simplified story interesting. In addition, the brevity of the phenomenon is disconcerting: only 75 days passed from “came” to “went.” But there were so enough events and paradoxes in that short period, to fill many years in usual times. Speaking of paradoxes, it was precisely these that interested me and motivated me to pursue this subject. For example, I would like to point out that the chairman of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee, the staunch Bolshevik E.R. Bagaturyants (“Laura”) behaved so impeccably during the Red period that she was acquitted by a Denikin military field court! Another paradox: it turns out that most of the Crimean Commissars (all of whom were Bolsheviks) had Mensheviks as their deputies. Newspapers of socialist parties (by that I mean Mensheviks and Left SRs) were published in that period. It is tempting, based on these examples, to present the Crimean SSR of 1919 as a model of a humane solution, a kind of Red regime “with a human face.” We would like to understand the extent of this softness, the preconditions, the reasons and the consequences of this phenomenon.

In order to define the analysed period in its position during the Crimean Civil War, I will enumerate all the periods of that epoch.

November 1917 – April 1918. First Red period, as a consequence of the October Revolution. Main circulation forces: anarchists, followed by the Left Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks. Towards the end of the period was the short-lived Republic of Taurida.

April – November 1918. The Germans occupy the Crimea. S. Sulkevich’s pro-German government, the First Provincial Government.

November 1918 – April 1919. In connection with the end of the First World War, the Germans leave the Crimea. They are replaced by Allied ships in the ports of the Black Sea. The Second Regional Government of South Crimea, militarily supported by the Allied countries and the army of A. Denikin.

April – June 1919. The second Red period, the one we’re interested in.

June 1919 – November 1920. Denikin’s government, then from April 1920 the government of P. Wrangel, are in charge in the Crimea.

November 1920. Wrangel’s supporters leave the Crimea under the onslaught of the Red Army. This is the third coming of Red power.

Closely adjoining the Civil War period is a period of famine in the Crimea (summer 1921–summer 1922).

Regarding the sources of the work, first of all I would like to note that the rich factual material contained in some works of Soviet historians is certainly very valuable and has been used by me. But one cannot completely trust their conclusions and generalisations, for obvious reasons. Incidentally, the very cursory treatment of the period in question in Soviet works has also stimulated my interest in the subject. For foreign (including émigré) historians the subject does not seem to be of interest. Historians of modern Russia are, for some reason, squeamish about the topic. The fact that from 1954 until the spring of 2014 the Crimea was under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian SSR and then the independent Ukraine did not help.

¹ Usually shortened to RevKom.

² Or Soviet of Deputies, SovDep.



There are practically no significant works by contemporary Ukrainian historians on this period. The only exception is the works in Ukrainian by T. B. Bykova, which address the period of the Red Crimea in 1919 without detail. But they reflect only one side of the events – the political.

A few words about the structure of the book. As an experiment, the book is structured in three directions, which the author has called “panoramas.” Such artificial separation certainly has its pros and cons. In defence of my approach, I note that each of the three panoramas is an independent body, formally independent of the other two, which allows the reader interested in the necessary topic to refer only to the relevant panorama, without having to read the entire book. On the other hand, there is inevitably repetition and inconvenience in getting an overview. But it is up to the reader to decide. The three panoramas, enable the reader to find the part of the material he needs, to use it not only for self-education, but also for further research work.

Considering the Crimean history of 1919, the author deliberately does not use the word “Soviet” for either the government or the army, believing that this familiar term does not correspond to the realities of the time. However, the Crimeans did call their army the “Crimean Soviet Army” (I will call it KSA for short).

The author’s task was not to prove how right the White or Red Army were in the struggle for the Crimea, but to detail a tiny slice of Crimean history – the Red Crimea of 1919. I would like to note that I made a conscious effort to give as much information as possible (often excessive), but not to speculate on the situations where no information could be found. Not being a professional historian, I tried to be as restrained as possible in my conclusions and generalizations, leaving most of that work to professionals.

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English Notes

This is a very loose translation of only the first “panorama” of Vladimirski’s book, as my interest is almost exclusively military. The other two thirds of the book is on the politics, economics and social life of the time.

I don’t know Russian, so it should not be relied up other than a very general guide. My intention is only to allow people to find the contents easily so they can check for themselves. I have tried to be most careful around military details, and least worried by errors in “colour”.

I have not kept any of the references from the original, because if you can read and follow them then you can read the original Russian anyway.

I have kept the original footnotes when they are not merely references, but added my own, which are **in Serif font** to distinguish them.



Chapter 1

How the Reds entered the Crimea

With the withdrawal of German and Austrian troops from North Taurida³ in the autumn of 1918, the cities and large railway stations were occupied by Denikin's detachments, and Allied troops landed in the Black Sea ports. Denikin's plan was to make his way south of Ekaterinoslav to join the Allies, who had landed on the Black Sea coast.

Against them in the rural hinterland were numerous insurgent units, which began to fight Denikin's forces using partisan methods. A new impetus to the insurgency was given by the approach of the regular Red Army to the regions of Northern Taurida. On 4 January 1919 the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic issued a resolution on the landing of Allied troops on the Black Sea coast and established the Ukrainian Front. V.A. Antonov-Ovseenko⁴, one of the military leaders of the October 1917 Uprising in Petrograd was appointed commander of the front.

The regular troops of the Ukrainian Front included only 12,000 bayonets and sabres with 20 guns, which was clearly insufficient for active combat operations. The regular army's reserve force was made up of numerous scattered insurgent units, grouped into three main groups at that time under the command of P. Dybenko, N. Grigoriev and N. Makhno. The unification of these three groups into a single military mechanism was taken over by V. Antonov-Ovseenko's comrade-in-arms in the October coup in Petrograd, P. Dybenko, assisted by the young Bolshevik S. I. Petrenko-Petrykovski.

On January 13, a Kharkov Area group was established as part of the Ukrainian Front. Under Order No. 1 for this group, V. H. Aussem was appointed its commander. But Aussem did not lead it for long: Order No. 20 of 22 February indicated that "*due to illness he is relieved of his commission and retired on 11 February.*" A.E. Skachko (until then head of the operational department of the group's headquarters) became temporary, and then permanent, commander of the Kharkov Area group. On 19 February, the Kharkov Group received a clearer structure when A. E. Skachko signed Order No. 7 on the creation of the Zadneprovsk⁵ Ukrainian Soviet Division:

"The troops of the group entrusted to me have been ordered to form a division, so I order that: the units under the command of comrades Dybenko, Makhno and Grigoriev are to form a Rifle Division, which will henceforth be called the Zadneprovsk Krai Soviet Division.

The commander of this division is Comrade Dybenko."

In other words, the core of the Kharkov group was first the Zadneprovsk Division, or rather the 1st Zadneprovsk Division, as it was assumed that other Zadneprovsk divisions would be formed in the group, although this did not happen. Somewhat later, new formations appeared in the Kharkov group: the 2nd Separate Brigade, 3rd Brigade and Crimean Brigade.

The order further stated: "*The **1st Brigade** should be formed from Ataman Grigoriev's detachments, to include the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Zadneprovsk Infantry Rifle Regiments.*" It was not done exactly that way though: the 1st Zadneprovsk regiment was named by N. Grigoriev as the "First Verbluzhsk", the 2nd as the "Second Kherson", and the 3rd as the "Third Taurida." Further, Skachko's order stated: "*The 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th regiments are to be placed into the **2nd Brigade**, which will include the 4th, 5th and 6th*

³ Northern Taurida, or Taurida, is the area directly north of the Crimean peninsula, being the *uzeds* of Berdyansk, Oleshky and Melitopol.

C. Skoryk wrote: "*Taurida was occupied by the Germans and Ekaterinoslav Governorate by the Austrians. The border ran along the Berda river, 18 kilometres from Bryansk. There was a German sentry on duty on one side of the bridge, an Austrian sentry on the other. The Germans did not force anyone to hand over their surplus, as the Bolsheviks did. Instead, they paid money, and the peasants themselves brought in and willingly sold whatever they had for sale. The Austrians, as if on purpose [on leaving] threw away a lot of weapons, which Makhno took advantage of. He armed his gang well and proclaimed Anarchy. The circle of his actions was from Mariupol to the Pologi junction station.*"

⁴ Biographical notes on the main people are in Appendix 1.

⁵ Zadneprovsk is a term for the area "across" the Dnepr. In this case the "Left" or eastern side. It is often translated as "Trans-Dnieper".



Zadneprovsk Infantry Rifle Regiments.” Note that it is this 2nd Brigade that interests us, as the main force that soon after entered the Crimea.

Further:

“The 19th and 20th regiments shall form the 3rd Brigade under the command of Comrade Makhno as the 7th, 8th and 9th Zadneprovsk Infantry Rifle Regiments.

In addition to the above-mentioned units, this division includes the armoured trains No. 8 and “Grozny”, an air detachment, an armoured divizion⁶, artillery of 15 guns, and the 1st Ekaterinoslav Cavalry Division.

I order all this to be done as soon as possible by the aforementioned commanders, and as regards auxiliary units, which at the moment cannot be formed by their own means, to enter into communication with me as soon as possible to submit to the Front Commander and through him to the Narkomvoen⁷ of the Ukraine the appropriate tasks for the military commissariats in creating such units.

*Acting Commander Skachko
Acting Chief of Staff Kartashev”*

By 23 February the HQ of the *Zadneprovtsi* had been fully formed. This can be seen from Skachko’s Order No. 22 of 28 February, which was written in a completely uncharacteristic style for orders – not an order, but a life drawing! It is hard not to recall that A.E. Skachko “in his past life” had been a war correspondent...

“On the 23 February I inspected the headquarters of the Zadneprovsk Division. The HQ had begun to form only a few days before, and the division commander, Comrade Pavel Dybenko, had not yet been given any money for its formation because the group’s field treasury had been moved. In spite of this I found the headquarters to be finally organised. The entire staff had been selected and staff work was well established. In all departments I received exhaustive reports on the situation. At the headquarters perfect order reigns everywhere – impeccable cleanliness and the neat appearance of the people, speaks of the strict orderliness and firm military discipline. Comrade Dybenko has not been given a penny of money and not a single person from the centre was sent to him for help, but he has managed to find useful and competent assistants and in the shortest time managed to organise a staff whose organisation is superior to any of the best organised corps headquarters of the old army. By creating such a headquarters in the conditions in which he finds itself, Comrade Dybenko has brilliantly proved the organisational abilities of the Proletarian Revolution and its activists, who come from the depths of the proletarian masses.

On behalf of the service of the Proletarian Revolution and the Red Army, I declare to Comrade Pavel Dybenko of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division, his Chief of Staff Petrenko and his closest collaborators, my deepest gratitude.

Read this order to all units of the Kharkov group of troops.”

By this time, not only had the headquarters been formed, but the composition of the Zadneprovsk division had also been determined.

But circumstances meant that the Zadneprovsk Division did not fight together. Grigoriev’s 1st brigade broke away from the division and formed the basis of the Odessa Group of forces (commanded by Skachko and then by Khudyakov), i.e. it was assigned to liberate Odessa from the Whites. Makhno’s 3rd Brigade was to defend against Denikin’s advance from the Donbass. A separate task was set for the 2nd Brigade.

In early February, Denikin’s troops sought to break through south of Ekaterinoslav to join the Allied forces. In order to prevent this, the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Antonov-Ovseenko and the commander of the Kharkov Area Skachko instructed the commander of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division, Dybenko, to “keep a

⁶ A divizion should not be confused with a division. It is a unit between company and regiment, so an artillery battalion or cavalry half-regiment.

⁷ Military Committee of People’s Commissars, the body charged with all military affairs.



reliable barrier”, i.e. to close off Denikin’s exit from the Crimea and not allow a breakthrough to Kherson, where part of the Allied landing force was located.

However, Dybenko had another plan in mind: a quick seizure of the Crimea and a drive to Kerch, from where it would be possible to launch an operation against the *Denikintsy* in the North Caucasus. This plan would not have survived any scrutiny, if only because even once broken through to Kerch, the Reds would not have been able to cross the strait between the Crimea and the Caucasus – as the Allied fleet was completely dominant at sea. However, Dybenko managed to interest the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Antonov-Ovseenko, in his plan: *“A fantastic dream – to break through to Kerch, and from there to threaten the rear of the Volunteer Army – fantastic because of the domination of the hostile Allied fleet on the Black Sea, also swept along the commander [Antonov-Ovseenko writing about himself]. Of course, in the emerging situation we would then have to abandon active operations in the Kerch area and transfer two-thirds of P. Dybenko’s forces (up to 10,000 bayonets) to the Taganrog area.”* But in his “Notes...” he shifted the responsibility for entering the Crimea solely to Dybenko: *“We had a decisive preponderance of forces in the Crimean area. But P. Dybenko, not complying with the directive [to keep a reliable barrier], took a decisive offensive to the south.”*

The head of the Kharkov Group, Skachko, also later denied any involvement in this, stating that he had never given orders to Dybenko to enter the Crimea. But on 26 March he had personally given unambiguous instructions to Dybenko *“The main attack is to be on Perekop with the aim of reaching Dzhankoy. Make a reinforced demonstration with the units operating on the Chongar peninsula.”* At the same time Skachko rightly complained in a telegram to Dybenko: *“Please explain how many tasks you have for Comrade Petrenko, as he is division chief of staff, commands the 2nd Brigade, and is also assigned to command the Crimean Brigade”* He also explained on 13 April to the front commander, Antonov-Ovseenko, the reason why the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade had entered the Crimea: *“Dybenko, to the rebuke that he did not follow operational orders and went AWOL deep into the Crimea, replies that he did so out of necessity. For after the capture of Sivash and Perekop there were only 500 to 600 men in the regiments of the 2nd Brigade, and only the sight of the defeated and fleeing enemy enticed the regiments to fight further deep into the Crimea. Had an attempt been made to transfer the units to another sector of the front, the men would have considered it a betrayal and would not have carried out the order”*

Fighting on the outskirts of Melitopol, a strategically important point in the Northern Taurida, lasted a month with varying success. In the first half of March, the units of the 2nd Zadneprovsk Brigade occupied the stations of Prishib and Fedorovka, north of Melitopol, and on 14 March it liberated Melitopol itself. Two days later the Reds advanced another 35 km south of Melitopol to Bolshoi Utlyug station. This prevented attempts by the White forces on the Don from joining the Allied forces in Kherson and the ports of the Taurida.

In the last week of March, troops of the 2nd Brigade approached the fortified positions of the Whites on the Chongar and Perekop Isthmuses.

There were 2,500 *Denikintsy* and 600 Greek soldiers on the Perekop Isthmus. The Melitopol Officer Regiment and other units of the 5th Infantry Division under General Matveev were dug in on the Chongar Isthmus. Allied warships were positioned on the flank in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

The mood of the Denikin defenders is evidenced by the diary of a Volunteer Army private who was in Simferopol at the time:

“11 March. The atmosphere is thickening. Things seem to be extremely bad at the front, and not much better on the home front either. Today our captain has called us all together and announced that the workers in Sevastopol have demanded the removal of the Volunteer Army from the Crimea and the restoration of the Soviets; then the railwaymen flatly refused to carry freight and equipment for the Volunteer Army.

March 12... Today is the second anniversary of Russian Revolution. <...> Was in town. All is quiet. Although you can sense something fateful. Saw two sailors in uniform, but without shoulder-boards, the first harbinger of an impending storm. They are saying that there is a workers’ meeting today at the railway depot, and of course the Bolsheviks will be speaking. I



only wonder how our commanders can look the other way. <...> Melitopol is being evacuated. Trouble indeed. Will it come to that, that our men will not be able to contain the Reds' advance on the Crimea. Why are the Allies asleep ...?"

The chief of staff of the Sevastopol fortress, F. P. Rerber writes practically the same thing: *"While there was hope for success, the Ekaterinodar and Simferopol commanders had a very cold-blooded attitude to our proposals to strengthen and arm the Perekop and Chongar positions with cannons; they laughed at us, rejected our proposals"* It seems that this carelessness at the top level of the Volunteer Army with regard to the defence of the Crimea was due to their confidence in the speedy capture of Moscow. The same view was expressed by D.S. Pasmanik.

* * *

In the Chongar area an important victory was won by Red units on 25 March, when the first line of Denikin's defence at Salkovo Station was taken, with considerable trophies. At the same time Genichesk was also liberated.

The political commissar of the 5th Zadneprovsk Regiment, B. Dashevski, fondly recalled this attack by the Zadneprovsk Division: *"With a brilliant coup they took the Volunteers' fortified point near Prishib station, and swept to Salkovo with an uncontrollable red wave. Singing, for lack of a band, the companies of the 5th [Zadneprovsk] Regiment advanced. The battalion and regimental commanders caused themselves some bad blood, asking that the attack be carried out by bounds and using cover. The Red soldiers replied, 'Our soul boils when we see the cadets up close, we want to get a bayonet into them as soon as possible. And you want us to lie down?' and then advanced without pausing"* On 26 March the command of the Kharkov Group of Forces ordered *"The main attack is to be on Perekop with the aim of reaching Dzhankoy. Make a reinforced demonstration with the units operating on the Chongar peninsula ."*

* * *

On the Chongar line⁸, under the command of the leader of the Crimean Group, S. I. Petrenko (Petrykovsky), all three Zadneprovsk regiments of the 2nd Brigade were fighting. That is the:

- 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment – commander Kvtchenko, commissar Vasilyev, 2,700 men, of whom 2,000 were armed soldiers.
- 5th Zadneprovsk Regiment – commander Lunev, commissar Kahn, 13,400 men, of whom 600 had rifles and 4 machine guns.
- 6th Zadneprovsk Regiment – commander Shishkin, commissar Stupakov, out of 800 men in the regiment 500 had rifles, and 8 machine guns.
- Cavalry *Divizion* – Commander Markozashvili, 560 men, 450 sabres and 450 horses
- Platoon of 122 mm howitzers.

On 28 March these units fought their way up to the Chongar Bridge, and the next day forced a crossing of the Chongar Isthmus. The commander of the 2nd Brigade, Petrenko, reported on the same day from Novoalekseevka:

⁸ The only railway to the Crimea at that time went through the Chongar Peninsula along the route: Salkovo, Dzhimbulak (Novyi Trud), Chongar, Sivash, Taganash (Solo Lake), Mamut, Dzhankoy. On this line there were two railway bridges on concrete embankments up to 8 metres wide and up to 5 kilometres long: the Salkov and Sivash, located near their respective stations.

The highway from the mainland to the Crimea was and still is slightly different: up to the station at Dzhimbulak (Novyi Trud) the route was close to the railway, then it veered left from it. After that it bypasses the village Chongar and the Chongar bridge (i.e. the bridge over the Chongar-Sivash Strait). At that time, the bridge was wooden. Further on it goes through the villages of Tyup-Dzhankoy (Predmostnoye), Medvedevka and Stolbovoye.

The maximum distance from the highway to the railway is about 10 km. Between Mamut station and the modern village of Vetvistoe the highway again approaches the railway and runs alongside it to Dzhankoy.

The old bridge over the Chongar Strait (now concrete, built after the Civil War, but at the time wooden) is still there, and is situated to the right of the modern bridge.



“... The fight went on for four days day and nights, with artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire ... On the fourth day the brigade entrusted to me defeated the enemy <...>. The armoured train “Sokol” and the armoured platform “Muromets” were taken in hand-to-hand fighting <...> We have already installed machine guns on the wooden Chongar Bridge, so the crossing to the Crimea has been opened up.”

In other words, instead of the “reinforced demonstration” requested, Petrenko’s group broke through the Chongar to the Crimea. Dzhankoy was taken by this group on 9 April, after a battle with the Greeks. It was only 160 kms to Simferopol.

In order to delay the further advance of the Red Army along the Arabatskaya Spit⁹, at least for a while, on the night of 1 April the interventionists sent two French destroyers to Genichesk – which began shelling the city and surrounding villages. Crimea was defended at the Chongar isthmus mainly by the 5th Division, under Lieutenant-General N.N. Schilling. The main strength of the Division consisted of the now rather battered Berdyansk and Perekop Infantry Battalions. The division also included the remnants of the Composite Guards and 1st Composite Regiment, as well as three artillery *divisions* and a small number of cavalry.

Under pressure from the three Zadneprovsk regiments, the White group withdrew to Dzhankoy, which it had to leave on 5 April after heavy fighting. Then the White Chongar Group began retreating in the direction of Kerch along the railway to Vladislavovka and then to Ak-Monai. Only one of the Zadneprovsk regiments (the 6th) pursued this group, as the other two regiments (4th and 5th) headed towards Simferopol. Thus the retreat of the White’s Chongar Group from Dzhankoy to Kerch was relatively calm. The engineer units of the group had time to destroy the railway tracks behind them. This group was a week ahead of the group retreating from Perekop to Ak-Monai. This made it possible to prepare defensive positions at Ak-Monai.

After the capture of Dzhankoy by the Red Chongar Group, decisive hostilities unfolded on the Perekop Isthmus.

* * *

On the Perekop Isthmus, reconnaissance gave the following information.

“A narrow strip of land about 12 km wide and approximately the same length, lying between the Sivash¹⁰ and Perekop Bay. The north-eastern coast of the isthmus is indented, with several small peninsulas and a long bay near Pervo-Konstantinovka. The terrain is completely open, flat with no commanding heights except minor hills in the northern and north-eastern part of the isthmus. The roads are good, suitable for the movement of troops of all kinds at any time and converge in a general direction southwards at the town of Perekop – the only large settlement on the isthmus; the main road is from Chaplynsk to Armyansk, passing through Perekop.”

* * *

The tactical advantage of the topography for defence is the small width of the isthmus, enabling fortifications to be concentrated in a small space and a defensive belt to be established in depth, with the flanked covered by bays.¹¹

⁹ The Arabatskaya Spit is a strip of sand about 100 km long that connects the mainland at Genichesk to the Crimea at Kam’yanske (at the time, Ak-Monai). It is less than a kilometre wide in places and has no cover.

¹⁰ The Sivash is an enclosed body of water between the Crimea and the mainland. It is extremely shallow and quite salty due to evaporation. It has been crossed many times by invading armies to out-flank the isthmuses, but is not easy going.

¹¹ The HQ of the Kharkov Group warned of the difficulties of crossing the Turkish Wall: “Two or three km south of Perekop along the Evpatoria road is an ancient fortification: strong ramparts with a ditch up to 3 fathoms deep (5.5 m) and filled with water in spring. This fortification is well camouflaged, keeping the Perekop Isthmus under observation, and blocks the entrance to the Crimea from the north. To avoid an ambush and needless losses one should avoid a frontal attack on Perekop, but try to turn westward towards the gulf of Perekop Gulf 10 km before to



The present-day Perekop Isthmus is quite different from what it was in 1919. Then there was no railway from Simferopol to Kiev (built in the 1930s). There was no North-Crimean Canal, which supplies water to the arid regions of the peninsula (established in 1961-1971). The old town of Perekop no longer exists: its "successor" – Krasnoperekopsk – is 17 km from the former site. The Perekop Isthmus is 30 km long and 7 km wide at its narrowest, up to 9.2 km in the southern part.

Now let us find out the opinion of the defending side's leadership, the Simferopol Officer Regiment, on the fortifications of the Perekop Isthmus. After surveying the terrain, its commanders found out that the existence of the Perekop fortifications, or even several rows of wire fences, were a myth.

"On the left flank near Kordon they found a trench for standing fire with 3 rows of wire and, slightly to the east, another trench had been started. There was nothing else along the line. The regiment's commander immediately reported secretly to the 4th ID staff about the state of the Perekop fortifications. The division's commander, General Korvin-Krukovski, and Chief of Staff, Colonel Dubyago were stunned."

The Perekop offensive was led by Ivan Kotov, a favourite of Dybenko and clearly a controversial figure. Three insurgent regiments, numbering up to 3,000 men, formed mainly from peasants from Ekaterinoslav and Taurida, were operating in this area. After several unsuccessful attempts to storm Perekop, on 3 April a more thoroughly prepared attack was launched. According to Perekop local historian L. P. Kruzhko, the assault began simultaneously along the entire Perekop rampart line with the forces of two regiments. The main attack was from Pervokonstantinovka, a settlement located on the mainland part of the Perekop Peninsula. It was there that the main Red forces were grouped for the capture of the Perekop.

The north-western part of the Perekop rampart (from Perekop Bay to the Dzhankoy-Kakhovka road) was attacked by the 3rd Taurida Regiment under the command of Vsevolod Pavlovski. The inspectors of the Zadneprovsk Division did not think highly of the political level of the fighters of the 3rd Taurida Regiment: *"The regiment has a decidedly partisan character and is sharply opposed to the appointment of commissars. The left-insurgency¹² in the regiment is strong, there are even former Petliurite soldiers."* However, this did not prevent the regiment from carrying out their tasks brilliantly. This regiment found itself in the thick of the events at Perekop due to the fact that initially the staff of the Ukrainian Front had planned to conduct the Crimean operation with the forces of the 1st (Grigoriev) Brigade of the *Zadneprovtsy*. As a left-over from this plan, the Crimean group included the 3rd Taurida Regiment from the 1st Brigade in addition to the 2nd Brigade.

Along the north-eastern part of the Perekop rampart – from the coast of the Sivash up to the Dzhankoy-Kakhovka road – was the 1st Reserve Regiment of the 2nd Zadneprovsk Brigade under the command of I. S. Moiseenko (later called the 1st Special Regiment).

The third regiment involved in the capture of Perekop was a combined regiment from the 2nd and 3rd Reserve Regiments (commanded by Grigory Chaika; an earlier work by Kruzhko gives it as V.P. Polivanov), which was later called the 1st Shock Regiment¹³. This regiment, together with a reconnaissance unit attached to it (the "Special Purpose Detachment") attacked the Perekop Isthmus from the east, i.e. from the Sivash side. The attack started from Stroganovka, a village located opposite the Chuvash (now Lithuanian) cape of the Perekop Peninsula, from where the distance to the Perekop peninsula across Sivash is least. Soldiers of this regiment crossed the Sivash to the village of Grigorievka by wading, dispatched the

the Perekop fortifications to bypass it [out of reach of enemy artillery]. An advance in the vicinity of Perekop needs thorough mounted and air reconnaissance."

The Turkish Wall is the remains of a substantial Ottoman Turkish rampart and moat, although much degraded at the time.

¹² Presumably this refers to Left-SR views, which were popular in the Ukraine.

¹³ I have translated Ударный as "Shock" in line with how the word is usually translated when used for military formations of the time, such as the Kornilov Regiment. However "Strike" is perhaps a better translation for a Soviet unit.

Soon afterwards (16 April) Skachko reported to Antonov-Ovseenko about this regiment: *"... the Shock Regiment, which had been sent by Dybenko from the Crimea to Volnovakha near Prishib, all went home, despite being one of the best regiments at the front."*



White outpost at Cape Chuvash, and moved quickly to the Armenian Bazar (Armyansk), in the rear of the White defenders. And this despite the fact that wire barriers had been set up and a network of grids with nails had been lowered into the waters of the Sivash. This happened after the successful breakthrough into the Crimea by the Chongar group.

The reserve regiments operating at Perekop were composed almost entirely of Tatars from the province of Taurida. Their level of military training was considerably lower than that of the many *Zadneprovtsy* from Ekaterinoslav and Pologi-Prishib districts fighting. These reserve regiments were only recently formed, untrained, poorly armed and equipped. Their advantage was solely their unprecedented enthusiasm and thirst for victory, which played a major role in their success: *"We did not even lie down at the Perekop, there were no trenches. We went straight ahead. They were firing machine guns, but we couldn't help it. How can they withstand the pressure of troops inspired by revolutionary enthusiasm?"*

In addition, to the west – from the Black Sea – the attack was supported by Porfiry Taran's insurgent detachment from Kherson, which landed three boats on the coast of the Perekop Isthmus from Khorlov. Thus the attack on the Perekop fortifications came from three sides – and this time it was a success.

We should note that there is no consensus as to whose actions proved decisive and led to the victory. According to the recollections of Taran, he considered the role of his landing force to be decisive:

"At night ... I succeeded in stealthily approaching the Crimean shores on the boat 'Pchelka' and landed a landing force of 12 men near Sarabulat, which caused panic and forced the Whites to flee from there.

Having seized a telephone and telegraph station, I began giving orders to non-existent troops in the Crimea 'advancing from Sarabulat to Perekop and Bakal', which caused extreme panic and confusion. Panic was further aroused when the Allied destroyers stationed at Bakal opened hurricane fire with artillery on the Crimea; the rumble of the artillery confirmed and further increased the panic. Hearing such a cannonade the Whites, defending Perekop, abandoned the front and fled in panic into the interior of the Crimea...."

According to the operational summary of the staff of the 2nd Brigade, the main role was played by the landing of the men who crossed the Sivash and were advancing on the *Denikintsy* from the east, i.e. the men of Grigori Chaika's regiment and the Special Purpose Detachment. This combined regiment is referred to in the Divisional Headquarters bulletin as the 38th "Kotov Regiment":

"In the battles on the Perekop Isthmus extraordinary valour was shown by Kotov's regiment. That regiment was given the task of wading across Sivash and getting into the enemy's rear near Armyansk. Despite the disgusting weather, the task was fulfilled. The valiant Red Army men walked 2 km up to their waists in the water full kit, dragging machine guns on their shoulders under fierce fire. Their appearance in the rear caused panic and served as a signal to our enemies to leave Perekop and Armyansk.

And here is what the enemy side says about the events of 4 April: *"At this time, the Reds, having crossed from Strogonovka across the Sivash to the Chuvash Peninsula, overturned the remnants of the Perekop battalion (about 40 people) that were positioned there and threatened Armyansk."* To neutralise this landing it was necessary to use the entire reserve of the 4th Division – the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and two armoured cars. But the landing proved to be a successful diversionary tactic – at two o'clock in the afternoon the Reds took the offensive along the entire front, approaching the Perekop rampart in the area between "Kordon" and the town of Perekop.

The White artillery officer S. N. Shidlovski stated that the Whites simply did not have enough men and artillery to fight off attacks from both the main direction and from the Sivash. According to V. Almendinger, the advantage of the Reds on Perekop was about fivefold. The same author noted "multiplicity" on the defending side: during the battle White units were simultaneously commanded by regimental, brigade and division commanders. All these factors could not but affect the outcome of the battle.

So, at 16 o'clock on 4 April the Perekop fortifications were taken by the Reds. The White Guards hurriedly retreated to the Armenian Bazar¹⁴ leaving the artillery battery located immediately behind the Perekop rampart intact. In the evening of the same day fighting broke out for the Armenian Bazar. Denikin's units on the eastern flank, under the onslaught of soldiers of the 1st Shock Regiment, fled the Armenian Bazar in a panic, leaving machine guns, guns and wounded on the Simferopol road. The Reds found large stores of uniforms, food and arms in the Armenian Bazaar. Having posted guards there, the Red Army spent the night, and on the morning of 5 April the last line of White defence, the Yushun position, was attacked.

From bulletin 42 of 8 April it reads: *"In the Crimea our troops, having occupied the Armenian Bazaar, passed the area of the salt lakes..."* Here it is appropriate to mention D.S. Pasmanik's testimony: *"Trusson promised to assist the Volunteers if they held the second line of defence (near the lakes), but after surrendering this line Trusson refused to support the volunteers any more..."* So from this point on the French leadership left the Volunteers without support. And in accordance with the directive of the French High Command, the *Denikintsy* retreated from Perekop not to Sevastopol, but to the east – in the direction of Kerch, where they entrenched on the Ak-Monai isthmus of the Kerch Peninsula.

The defending White units (mainly Major-General A.V. Korvin-Krukovski's 4th Division) completely abandoned the Perekop Peninsula on 8 April. These units retreated by country roads along the route between Dzhankoy and Simferopol – both of these towns were already under Red control by that time. They stopped for rest and overnight stays in small villages and colonies. On 9 April the Perekop group of Whites met with units retreating from Simferopol along the Feodosiya highway in Karasubazar. On the 14th the group gave battle near the colony of N. Zurichtal (in translation "Zurich valley", now the village of Zolotoe Pole), and on the 17th moved to the area of Petrovka and Tambovka villages. On the 19th an order was received to hastily withdraw to the Vladislavovka to Feodosiya railway line. On the night of 20 April units of this group "went behind the wire" of the Ak-Monai positions. Thus the retreat from Perekop to Ak-Monai took two weeks.

Due to the narrow section of this front at Ak-Monai, British warships could completely cover Denikin's positions with naval artillery fire from the Black and Azov Seas, preventing the Red Army from advancing towards Kerch.

* * *

After crossing the Perekop, all the reserve regiments were immediately dispatched to Makhno by rail via Dzhankoy to Volnovakha. But the soldiers of the 1st Shock Regiment scattered to their homes, and the 3rd Reserve Regiment (KomPolk Kireev) was thoroughly beaten by the Whites on 7 April in fighting near Novonikolaevsk, after which the remnants went to Makhno in Prishib.

The 3rd Taurida Regiment headed to Evpatoria after Perekop, and from there to Simferopol.

The 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment proceeded to Simferopol from Dzhankoy. It is known that on the night of 10/11 April the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment stayed over night in Sarabuza (Gvardeyskoye), where the railway tracks branch off to Evpatoria and Simferopol.

Part of the regiment went to Evpatoria, the rest to Simferopol.

"At 11.30 a.m. today the advance detachment of Soviet troops entered Evpatoria with a delegation from the city. Outside the town on the Perekop highway it was met by delegates from the Revolutionary Committee, French and other consuls, and all the trade unions and left-wing socialist parties with banners and a crowd of thousands of people. The whole people were lined up in two columns, with the delegates of the trade unions and parties in the centre. The Revolutionary Committee, the Party of Communist-Bolsheviks, were the first to greet them. After speeches were delivered by a delegation of the Revolutionary Committee and..." Then the telegram is cut short.

On the same evening a detachment of Crimeans travelled from Evpatoria to Simferopol along the Evpatoria Highway.

¹⁴ as Armyansk was known up to 1921.



"On 11 April at about 5 pm, the first detachment of Soviet troops arrived in Simferopol. From 1 pm delegations of trade unions with red banners began grouping near the district court. Gogolevskaya Street – from the corner of Pushkin Street to the turn to the mosque on Betlingovskaya Street – was densely packed with people: the procession headed for the station, with a musical band at the head and middle. Pavements, windows, tram poles and fences were all strewn with men and women of the town. Near the railway station, on the square adjacent to the Evpatoria Highway, armed detachments had built a float. The right side of Vokzalnaya Street was provided for delegations, which were lined up in pairs; in the centre of the square were placed two cars with representatives of the Military Revolutionary Committee and the political parties. By 5 o'clock mounted Red Army soldiers appeared on the Evpatoria road. A loud "hurra!" drowned out the Internationale. The first hundred Soviet troops, saluting the trade unions and the population, who had enthusiastically greeted them, stopped next to the cars. The arriving troops received greetings and congratulations from the commandant of the city, the Military Revolutionary Committee, the council of trade unions, the amnestied politicians and the Regional Committee of the Communist Party. All greetings were covered with enthusiastic "hurras" and the Internationale. After the greetings, the cars with the delegations drove past the trade unions, followed by wounded Red Army soldiers, a detachment of Soviet troops and, in strict order, a delegation of the trade unions. The procession stretched along Vokzalnaya and Ekaterininskaya Streets. Lunch and lodgings were served to the detachment upon their arrival in the town. Order and organisation were maintained throughout the whole time the Soviet troops were being welcomed. The workers of Simferopol showed how strong their internal cohesion was and how imbued with a desire for order."

So, the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment and the 3rd Taurida Regiment assembled in Simferopol, after which they split up again: one battalion of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment under its commander N. Kvtchenko went to Alushta and Yalta, which were taken without a fight on 13 April; the other two battalions of the regiment and the 3rd Taurida Regiment, commanded by the Chief of Staff of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment, M.A. Petrovski, went to Sebastopol via Bakhchisaray.

It should be noted that the commander of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division, Dybenko, did not personally participate in the Crimea operation; at that time he was coordinating the fighting near Mariupol, which was captured on 2 April. In his report to the Ukrainian Sovnarkom, dated 2 April, he wrote: *"The capture of Mariupol was conducted under my command. The 8th and 9th Regiments [of Makhno's 3rd Brigade] distinguished themselves in the fighting ... Our units are approaching Taganrog."* Dybenko then went to Volnovakha (7 April), after which he went to Ekaterinoslav until 13 April. It is not until 13 or 14 April that he found himself in the Crimea, in Simferopol.

Next we have to consider the military actions and the accompanying events that took place in three directions: to Sevastopol, to Yalta and to Kerch. The events in Sevastopol are so specific that we will have to devote a separate section to them. I note that almost all of the documentary basis for this section is included in the appendix to it.

Events in and around Sevastopol

What was Sevastopol like before the arrival of the Reds in April 1919? *"... The main evil in the city is the terrible unemployment, which for a number of reasons cannot be reduced before the port is opened, the opening of which the shipyard administration delays without any reason. Unemployment pushes workers into crime and into the path of Bolshevism; it turns good workers into ardent Bolsheviks. It is said among the workers that delegates who had been sent to Moscow to the Soviet government for help returned to Sevastopol the other day. The delegates brought the workers 35 million roubles."* According to the minister of the Crimean Regional Government, P. S. Bobrovski, the government had little hope that the Volunteer Army would defend the Crimea itself. According to the government, *"A large number of officers stubbornly refuse to be sent to the front, preferring to hang around the headquarters. At the front, according to our information, there are negligible forces."* And despite the "selfless courage" of the small army, it was slowly but steadily retreating.



Therefore, what hope there was depended on the Allies. For his part, the head of the occupation force, Trusson, told members of the government that *“a considerable French military force would have been in the Crimea long ago if not for the opposition of Denikin.”* Judging from conversations with members of the government, Trusson was hostile to Denikin himself, and ostensibly sympathetic to the army itself. But Trusson’s deeds were markedly at variance with his words. After the Reds had taken the first line of the Sivash fortifications, Minister M. M. Vinaver tried to get Trusson to send French units to the front. In reply, Trusson said that the second line of fortifications had to be defended by the Volunteer Army itself. *“If it did so, he would send French troops to its aid. The Volunteer Army did not defend the second line. The fate of the Crimea was sealed....”*

Red units approached Sevastopol on 15 April. The assault on Sevastopol was carried out by the 3rd Taurida Regiment (3,011 men with 1,750 bayonets) under command of Vs. Pavlovski and part of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment under the command of the regimental chief of staff Petrovski. Unfortunately, we do not know the number of soldiers of the 4th Zadneprovsk regiment involved in the capture of Sevastopol, because part of this regiment – headed by regiment commander N. Kvotchenko – went from Simferopol to Bakhchisaray and Yalta. The total in this regiment was 2,700 men, of which 2,000 were bayonets. But in any case it is clear that on the approach to Sevastopol the number of *Tauridans* was almost twice as much as that of *Zadneprovtsy*.

On the evening of that day, members of the Regional Government left Sevastopol on the steamer “Nadezhda.” On the same day the Sevastopol MRC’s¹⁵ *Izvestiya* published their Declaration with four ultimatums to the French command: 1) stop removal of valuables, food and arms by the Volunteer Army; 2) transfer of authority temporarily to MRC; 3) take all measures to promptly occupy Sevastopol with the Red Army; 4) summon an immediate meeting of the Sevastopol Soviet of Workers’ Deputies “to whom MRC will transfer all authority and report on its actions.”

Shortly before, on 10 April, there had been a panicked evacuation of Sevastopol by the propertied classes and those who feared retribution from the Bolshevik authorities – judicial officials, police officers, prison guards, etc.: *“There was something indescribable going on at Graftskaya Wharf throughout yesterday [10 April]. Carts and wagons with belongings were coming there from all over the city, and carriages and household junk and solid yellow leather suitcases were being driven there. All this was piled up, transferred to the boats, and so to the military transports. Panic was more evident here than anywhere else. A pure animal fear gripped everyone who was leaving, as if they could not believe they were safe yet, that in another hour they would say goodbye to their homeland. <...> Only by three o’clock ... did panic somewhat abate, and everyone who had the good fortune to leave, was in position already...”* - wrote the Sevastopol *Crimean Herald* on 11 April (29 March). F.P. Rerberg estimated the number of refugees arriving in Sevastopol from Simferopol at two thousand. And there was a characteristic scene of receiving passes for the steamboats: *“In front of the building where the so-called Base Navale (naval base) was located, thousands of Russian people stood from morning to evening, waiting for their turn to receive their steamship passes. There were French sailors at the door, who treated us with disgust.”* The author himself (D.S. Pasmanik) had been trying to get a pass for four days.

What is the reason for such a panicky attitude towards the approaching Red troops? The answer is unequivocal: exactly one year had passed since the massacre, under the unambiguous slogan “Death to the bourgeoisie.” It was therefore natural that panic amongst certain sections of the population was incredibly strong.

What can we say about the fears of the ‘real bourgeoisie’ when even the quite apolitical writer S. N. Sergeyev-Tsenski, who was living in Alushta at the time, feared for his life. He wrote to the editor of a Crimean newspaper A. B. Dermanu on 11 (24) March: *“I was already in a bind, whether not to write “Sevastopol Stories.” I have to think about leaving the Crimea. The previous members or the SovDep will appear again, and even if one of them appears, it is all the same: I was at the top of the “danger” list of our old Sovdep.”*

¹⁵ Military Revolutionary Committee, VRK in the Russian.



On 16 April, the day after the Red Army approached Sevastopol, negotiations took place between Trusson and the Sevastopol city delegation. The delegation consisted of Ya. Gorodetski from the Revolutionary Committee, the mayor V. A. Mogilevski and the trade union representative, the Menshevik P. Shevchenko. At these negotiations Trusson told the delegation that the French contingent would defend Sevastopol until the French High Command ordered an evacuation. He also reported the withdrawal of Volunteer units from the city, of which the Red command knew of. According to Rerberg, the French were in a dilemma: on the one hand, they were afraid that their alliance with the Volunteers would compromise them in the eyes of the French public, and on the other hand they had obligations to the other Allied countries.

The Sevastopol city administration tried to free itself of the Volunteers, in view of their behaviour during their last days in Sevastopol and especially their wanton shootings. Mogilevski tried to convince the French that with the departure of the Volunteers the civil war would end and there would then be no need for the French to continue occupying Sevastopol. According to Rerberg, *“But not being a bloodthirsty man, Mogilevski decided to let the Bolsheviks in no sooner than the last Volunteer was out. It was this plan for the rescue of Sevastopol – both from Volunteers and from the Allies – that Mogilevski carried out, and which was met with the approval of Colonel Trusson. In front of the politicians of the world it was necessary to play up the defence of Crimea from the Bolsheviks to the last extremity, including the use of naval artillery to support the land armies. When we were still in Sevastopol, we were told that between cannonades Mogilevski would get into a car and boldly drive to Simferopol to negotiate with the Bolsheviks; from there he would return and go directly to the naval barracks to Trusson, and to the Admiral Amet, from which he drove again to Simferopol.”* During negotiations between the French and the Sevastopol city delegation, it emerged that Trusson was wary of two things: submarines based in Sevastopol which could act against the Allied ships, and the possibility of Red troops attacking the rear of the evacuating French. In the subsequent negotiations with the military, the French command put forward conditions preventing the execution of these threats.

On the 17th, negotiations began between the French and a military delegation consisting of Vizermann, a political worker, Astakhov, the editor of the front newspaper *Fighter for Communism*, Dmitrov, a political officer of the cavalry regiment, and Markozashvili, a cavalry regiment commander. But the negotiations were immediately disrupted that same day *“by units of the 3rd Taurida Regiment, which attacked – after which the enemy opened heavy fire at our position, but did not cause us much damage. At 10 o’clock in the morning our aerial reconnaissance ascertained that the enemy fleet had gone from Sevastopol bay out to sea and in an hour opened fire on our troops. The fire continued until 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Our units occupy the positions: the 3rd [Taurida] Regiment with their right flank at Inkerman and their left flank on the Malakhov kurgan. The 4th [Zadneprovsk] Regiment is on a line 50 fathoms from the city...”*¹⁶

Negotiations continued in the evening of the same day and an armistice was concluded the next morning. Petrenko reported this to his military superiors and to Rakovski in Kiev on 18 April.

The testimony of Zinaida Richer-Durova, a correspondent of the Moscow *Izvestia*, written hot on the footsteps of the events, is interesting.

“...They say that when General Trusson was told that the Bolsheviks were approaching Sevastopol, he did not believe it: there are too few of them here, they would not dare!

However, the Bolsheviks dared and began advancing from the side of Belsk, Laboratory Gully and Streletska Bay. The entire working-class population welcomed the Soviet troops with joy and gave them all possible assistance.

The English and French vessels opened fire, but the shells fell behind the city and disturbed the dead more the alive (by ploughing up the cemetery) – there were almost no killed, few were wounded.

All night there was a gunfight between the Greeks, the French and the rebels, who reached almost as far as the railway station. The rebels were reluctant to leave the town, having been ordered to retreat. Peace negotiations began....”

¹⁶ 50 fathoms is just over 100 metres. This seems too close.



Here is her sketch of the days of the armistice:

"The insurgents, having taken Perekop and Sivash and reluctantly obeying orders to leave Sevastopol, which they had entered by battle, are fed up with the prolonged inactivity, sitting on the bare stones under the besieged city. Tired, powdered with Crimean healing dust, the Red Army men (rebels), one by one and in groups, walk along the Balaklava highway in the direction of the city.

Behind them is the picturesque Baydar valley, around – naked stony steppe, and only on the horizon the narrow strip of sea (Sevastopol Bay), deeply sunken into the low yellow coast.

The military commissar with whom I go to Sevastopol, every time he reaches such a group, he orders the driver to slow down: "Stop! Where are you going?" "Back into town... To mend my boots." "Who did you leave at the front? The Greeks and the French haven't left the city yet. They'll get you, then help me out! You'll fight the blacks! You'll make trouble for the Taraba... Get back! No talking!"

On 19 April S. I. Petrenko himself went to Sevastopol to negotiate with the French. He was introduced to the French military as "an emissary from General Kotov" and was received by Vice-Admiral Amet. In the course of the conversation, Amet outlined the main requirements of the Allied command for the withdrawal of their troops from Sevastopol:

"By 30 April the Allied infantry units will be evacuated from the city. All submarines that are in port will be sunk in deep water. All [Russian] destroyers and cruisers will be rendered combat unready and some of them will have the engines blown up and parts removed.

The Allies insist that neither in Odessa nor in Nikolaev shall the ships that remain there be used against them."

That day Petrenko returned to Dzhankoy from Sevastopol and reported the results of his conversations with the Admiral to KomandArm Skachko, who in turn reported the results to Antonov-Ovseenko at the Ukrainian Front's headquarters.

Here is Petrenko's telegram dated 19 April, intended for the press:

"After three days of negotiations with the Allied Command, the delegation reached an agreement and concluded an armistice for eight days until 25 April. Power in Sevastopol is transferred to the Revolutionary Committee, which takes over all affairs, and a Council is to be elected on 19 April. The removal of property from the city by the French is forbidden. After eight days, if the decision of the Allied governments on the fate of Sevastopol is not clarified, the truce period can be extended; Red militia is introduced in the city. Commander of the Red Crimean Group Petrenko."

The course of the negotiations and the conditions of the French command are described in more detail in the telegram by Skachko.

Parallel to the negotiations in Sevastopol, correspondence between the French Command and the Commissar of Ukraine, Rakovski, was taking place. The first letter, dated 21 April, was addressed by Rakovski to 'the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces'. The text of the letter is not known. In a reply letter dated 24 April, the French Rear Admiral Kobe demanded security guarantees for ships of the Allied fleet. In response, Rakovski gave appropriate guarantees on behalf of the Ukrainian SSR, noting that "it only remains by mutual agreement to establish practical norms and work out the conditions."

Rakovski's position can be seen from his secretary Mirra's message to the Chief of Operations of the 2nd Ukrainian Army, Chernigovsky-Sokol, in Ekaterinoslav: .

"..In Rakovski's opinion, the Allies want to buy time for a better evacuation by negotiating. Therefore you must think of only the military interests. Comrade Rakovski wants to know whether an armistice is militarily indispensable. If the Allies destroy the fleet, protest in advance and point out that all the losses caused by them must be compensated. Send a telegram to Sevastopol immediately. Keep us informed of all negotiations.



Secretary of the President of the Sovnarkom Mirra.”

On 26 April KomandArm Skachko forwarded both letters to the commander of the 2nd Brigade of the Zadneprovsk Division, Petrenko “for information and guidance in negotiations with the French command.” However, this correspondence was late, as the Allies and the Reds had reached an agreement on the withdrawal of the ships and coastal guns on 23 April. The agreement was signed by M.A. Petrovski and B. Astakhov. It remains unclear why the known text of the treaty is dated 20 and not 23 of April. It is possible that it was prepared by the French on the 20th and signed only on the 23rd. It is most likely that Petrenko did not attend the negotiations on 23 April out of caution, but delegated the signing to Petrovski and Astakhov.

* * *

Comparing the two documents - Skachko’s report to the headquarters of the Ukrainian Front and the letter from French Rear Admiral Kobe to Rakovski – one can see the change in the position of the French military leadership towards the Rakovski government after the famous events of 20 April (the mutiny of French sailors and their shooting¹⁷). If at first the French military leadership declared that it would not conduct any negotiations with representatives of the Soviet government, because the Soviet government was not recognized by the Allies. Then the French agreed to withdraw from Sevastopol on the condition that the government of the Soviet Ukraine guaranteed the safety of navigation of Allied ships in the Black Sea. Rakovski gave such guarantees in his reply letter, saying that “*it only remains by mutual agreement to establish practical norms and work out the terms.*” But this letter from Rakovski was too late – the military representatives, having no authority to do so, had already signed the treaty with the French.

In this way, Trusson beat both the mediator – the city delegation – and his opponent – the military delegation. Trusson didn’t need any consultation with the leadership. He planned (see conversation with Vlasov on 12 April) to delay negotiations with the mediator – the city delegation – in order to have time to remove the most valuable goods. In his own words Trusson said, there is “a colossal stock of 5 billion francs in the port.” Once much of the expensive equipment had been shipped to Constantinople (it took 31 ships to do this), and some of it had been given to the Volunteers and taken away by them (on another 35 ships and 9 boats), there was no longer any need to defend the city. Trusson told the city delegation that the Volunteers had left the city and he was ready to negotiate with the enemy, i.e. the Red military, rather than with the mediator, the citizens’ delegation. There was no need to drag out the negotiations at that point. In addition, after the mutiny of 20 April, Trusson realised that he had to leave before the morale of the French sailors completely disintegrated.

There was another reason for the French delay in Sevastopol – the forced repair of the battleship *Mirabeau*, which had run aground on underwater rocks during a storm in Sevastopol Bay on 20 February. At first the repairs were carried out on the ship itself, and on 6 April the *Mirabeau* was put into the emergency (northern) dock of the Ship Repair Yard. Eventually workers removed the armour from this ship at the Sevastopol Sea Plant dock, enabling her to be towed to Constantinople on the eve of the general evacuation of the French fleet. Based on a note in the Kiev *Izvestiya*, the *Mirabeau* was taken from the dock on 5 May.

The negotiations unfolded as follows: the day after Petrenko’s talks with Amet, i.e. 20 April, the French prepared their version of the treaty, which was based on the principles laid down by Amet in his conversation with Petrenko. And the treaty was very disadvantageous for the Reds. On 23 April extended negotiations took place between the French and Russian military, during which the French version of the contract was signed by representatives of the Red command, Petrovski and Astakhov.

Although Petrenko negotiated with Admiral Amet personally, and was undoubtedly directly involved in concluding the agreement with the French, he prudently did not put his signature on it – the document was signed by Petrovski. Why? Was he wary of signing such an unfavourable document for the Reds – or did he simply assign the signing to Petrovski, as he had not been able to get to Sevastopol from Dzhankoy to sign the document himself? Perhaps Petrovski could sign on behalf of Petrenko if the latter was absent and he

¹⁷ The Red flag was raised on battleships in Sevastopol harbour. There was no fighting and no-one was shot, by either party. However it was clear to the French that they could not rely on their mutinous crews to fight the Soviets.



was given the appropriate authority. In addition, Petrenko might not have gone because he had previously acted as “emissary “ for Kotov rather than as the Chief of the 2nd Brigade of the Zadneprovsk Division.

It should be noted that on the eve of signing the agreement Petrenko, allegedly on behalf of Rakovski, invited the 2nd Army commander Skachko to take part in the negotiations, but KomFront Antonov-Ovseenko forbade Skachko to go to Sevastopol for negotiations, considering them “a thing of secondary importance.”

The original agreement in Russian is not available to us: the only known text of the agreement is the French text attached to Rakovski’s letter to Chicherin regarding Petrovski’s inappropriate signing of the treaty with the French and a summary of the treaty in a newspaper article.

The final fragment of this text reads as follows:

Ecrit a la main.
Le representant des Troupes des Soviets Ukrainiens.
le Chef d’Etat Major de la Premiers Division*. Signe Petrowski
le Commissaire Politique. Signe Astakoff — guillemets.
N 878. Rakowsky

Translation from the French:
Handwritten:
Representative of the Soviet Ukrainian forces,
Chief of Staff of the First Division. Signed: Petrovski
Political Commissar. Signed: Astakhov. Quote marks closed.
№ 878. Rakovski

Note that French translates both дивизия (division) and дивизион (battalion) as “la division.”

Regarding the signing of the agreement with the French command, Dybenko, in a letter to Rakovski, of 6 May, stressed that the French command “*was told that it was signed only by a representative of a military unit and could not be binding on the government.*” Explaining the reasons for signing the agreement, Dybenko added: “*It was signed in connection with the circumstances that applied at that moment at the front – it was necessary to win the moment, to get rid of their forces and save all the military property that could still be saved, which was achieved.*”

The agreement was immediately taken advantage of by the British fleet – a systematic removal from service of all Russian ships remaining in Sevastopol began. First of all, ten submarines were towed to deep water and sunk. Then it was the turn of the surface fleet and, at the end, of the aircraft. Another, no less nefarious task was carried out by the French military. Even before the agreement was concluded they started destroying the fortifications and armament of Sevastopol fortress. In particular, they placed charges in the muzzles of the guns and blew them up. At the same time – under the guise of destroying the fortress – there was an outright looting of warehouses. However, as Soviet experts later testified, the damage to the fortress was not too great, and its combat condition could be restored fairly quickly.

The conclusion of the struggle for Sevastopol was indicated in the telegram of the Chief of Staff of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment Petrovski to the headquarters of the 2nd Ukrainian Army: “*On 29 April at 4 o’clock in the afternoon the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment entered Sevastopol, enthusiastically greeted by thousands of the proletarian masses. <...> Red banners hover over Sevastopol and at sea. Petrovski.*” Characteristically, this telegram did not mention the 3rd Taurida Regiment at all, although it has also entered Sevastopol. Apparently, the relationship between Petrovski and the commander of the 3rd Taurida Vs. Pavlovski was utterly spoiled by the antics of the *Tauridans*. But the commander of the Crimean group, Petrenko, saw fit to praise the 3rd Taurida Regiment, despite the fact that it had disrupted the start of negotiations by its unauthorized attack. Petrenko made no mention of the regiment’s antics in his order. It appears that after its attack, while under fire from the French fleet, the regiment did obey orders and ceased firing. Astakhov’s emotional appeal to the departing Allied military contingent is also of interest.

Events in Yalta

The April events in Yalta are remembered mainly for the panicked evacuation. It is thought that about 20,000 people left the city. But let us start a little further back.

The winter of 1918-1919 was quite calm for well-to-do inhabitants of the Southern coast of Crimea. The horrors of the previous winter with its "Bartholomew" nights¹⁸ which had been organised by the Reds under the very simple slogan "Death to bourgeoisie" gradually began to recede. They were ashamed to accept protection from their recent enemies – the Germans – but no one else could intercede for the Crimean "bourgeoisie." But when at the end of 1918 the Germans left the Crimea (there was a revolution at home, the war was over) they were replaced by Denikin's army, which was also some kind of protection. But the main hope was placed in the Allies. Their ships came to Sevastopol in December – the French, and then the English and the Greeks. The latter to protect their countrymen, who had settled in the Crimea from time immemorial. So it was possible to be calm.

Indeed, until March there seemed to be no trouble ahead, although there were vague rumours that the Reds were coming, they said, from the North, almost from Moscow and Petrograd.

The first warning signs were, as might be expected, received by the higher "bourgeoisie" – members of the Tsar's family and entourage. From the recollections of Countess Catherine Petrovna Kleinmichel, maid of honour to the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna:

"One day at the beginning of March I arrived at Kharaks¹⁹ at the hour appointed by Her Majesty and I saw a very dusty car standing in front of the Palace. A Cossack told me that a naval officer had arrived from Sevastopol to see the Empress, and therefore I must wait for him to leave in order to see Her Majesty. Prince Dolgoruki passed and seemed very worried. When I entered the Empress's room I found her very anxious, and she told me with indignation that an English officer had come from the Admiral [Calthorpe] to warn Her Majesty that the nearest front the Bolsheviks was advancing this way, and that there was no hope the isthmus could be defended, and therefore it is essential for the Empress to leave. The Admiral would send a ship or come himself to take Her Majesty away."

Further events developed rapidly: on the morning of 7 April (Annunciation Day) Admiral Calthorpe, commander of the British naval forces in Sevastopol, went to see Empress Maria Feodorovna. He reported that King George V had placed the battleship *Marlborough* at the Empress's disposal and insisted on setting sail that same evening. At first the Empress resolutely refused. With difficulty she was persuaded that departure was necessary, to take advantage of the calm seas in order to embark. In the event of wind, this would have been very difficult to do, as the battleship was standing in an open anchorage.

From F. Yusupov's memoirs of the events of those days:

"That morning we all gathered at Kharaks to celebrate the birthday of the Grand Duchess Xenia. The Empress instructed me to take a letter to the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich informing him that she was leaving and inviting him and his family to go with her. The news of the Empress and Grand Duke Nikolai's impending departure spread with the speed of light and caused an enormous panic. People were begging to leave too. But one warship could not accommodate the thousands and thousands of citizens fleeing the Bolshevik bullets. Irina and I boarded the Marlborough, which the Empress had already boarded with the Grand Duchess Xenia and my brothers-in-law. When Irina told her grandmother that nothing had been done or was being done to evacuate the people, Her Majesty announced to the Sevastopol Allied Command that she would not go anywhere as long as even one person, of all those whose lives were in danger, remained in the Crimea. They relented, and a large number of Allied ships arrived in Yalta to evacuate the refugees."

¹⁸ A reference to the 1572 massacres of St Bartholomew's Day, when Protestants were murdered across France by their Catholic opponents.

¹⁹ Their villa near Yalta.



Typical evidence of the tense atmosphere in Yalta on the eve of the White evacuation is a telegram, which somehow survived in the archives of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee of the Crimean State Archive:

"9 April. Military. From Yalta to Ekaterinodar. Kuban meeting. To General Grishin-Almazov. Received the telegram yesterday. Stop. Proceeded to execute your order at once. Stop. Political situation has changed drastically, I was forced to withdraw my whole detachment from the Crimea to save my life. Stop. The British have taken over the evacuation in Yalta. Stop. I was the last to leave with the detachment as a combat unit. Stop. If it's possible, I beg you to wait. Rotmistr Maslovski."

Zinaida Vladimirovna Richter-Durova, a correspondent for Moscow *Izvestia*, rather playfully describes the details of the evacuation:

"The port is buzzing with activity: Italian, Greek, French and English dreadnoughts and Russian steamers with English and French flags are arriving. The boats are relentlessly carrying passengers from the breakwater to the steamers."

Things were actually happening in a rather sad manner:

"...British passenger and military ships and destroyers were sent from Sevastopol and the next day everyone gathered at the breakwater in Yalta. It was a sad picture, all those refugees, most of them sick and old and all grief-stricken to leave their homeland, sitting on sacks and blankets (no chests were allowed) waiting for a set of steamers. We were first taken to Sevastopol, saying that there we would be given the option of whether to go to the Caucasus or abroad.

The Empress kept her promise to the end and only agreed to the departure when the last steamer with the refugees was loaded. Instead of the squadron escorting the ship with the Empress on board, it was she, as Mother, who covered the departure of her children.

At Sevastopol we were told that we could not go to the Caucasus and, having loaded us onto other vessels, we were taken to Constantinople and the Prince's Islands for three days and again to Constantinople, where we had the joy of seeing the Marlborough in the distance and of knowing that our dear Queen was with us!"

Naturally a large proportion of those who left were families of volunteers, but there were also many other fugitives – people who fled absurdly and gratuitously, who succumbed to the unprecedented panic that gripped Yalta. *"Many other Yalta residents, compelled to stay by their health or their financial situation looked with envy on those mad refugees trembling on the decks of a muddy transport! How anxiously they awaited the arrival of the Red Army."*

There is little reliable information about the details of the Reds' arrival in Yalta. Even before the Volunteers left Yalta, a Revolutionary Committee and a city self-defence unit had formed. On Sunday 13 April the Volunteer Army left Yalta. And on the same day, "at the beginning of the fifth hour", the first cavalry detachment of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment, under KomPolk N. Kvtchenko, entered. At a rally held on the occasion, the commander said in particular, addressing the locals: *"You must not indulge in feelings of revenge... There is no need for blood. You must show the power of the proletariat in its organised, systematic, building and organisational work..."* A proclamation allegedly signed by the chief of the Perekop group of troops, I. Kotov, urged people not to believe counter-revolutionary rumours. The population was guaranteed "complete freedom, peace and order."

From a note by another witness to the events:

"And so, the first units entered Passion Square... And the city was at once calm, there was not even the usual looting of the White Guards' possessions. And then other troops arrived, commissariats were formed, and the transition of power was completed with astonishing speed, life was back on track"

These words are too benign to be trusted wholeheartedly. Let us therefore await further developments.



The Rise of the Eastern Front. The formation of the Ak-Monai Front

As already noted, the Zadneprovsk regiments, which had entered Crimea from the Chongar Isthmus, occupied Dzhankoy on 9 April after a battle with the Volunteers and Greek troops. In addition to the abovementioned 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment, the 6th Zadneprovsk Regiment reached Simferopol, and from there headed east along the Simferopol-Karasubazar-Stary Crimea-Feodosiya highway. Following the retreating White units from Simferopol to the east of the Crimean Peninsula from Dzhankoy, the 5th Zadneprovsk Regiment also headed east. But its route lay along the Dzhankoy, Vladislavovka to Feodosiya railway, which had been destroyed for 60 km by a White demolition team.

The 5th and 6th regiments moved eastward slowly, as the Whites were stubbornly resisting, meanwhile preparing a defensive line on the Ak-Monai Isthmus. Lieutenant General Borovski, commander of the Crimean-Azov Army, noted that the retreat from the Perekop-Sivash front to the Ak-Monai positions took place within two weeks, from 8 to 21 April (26 March to 8 April).

The sequence of the Red Army's advance to the east was as follows. Up to 8 April there was fighting near Dzhankoy, including a night battle near the village of Kokhchegoz. Further (on 11 April) the Whites halted the advance of the 5th Zadneprovsk, having occupied the intermediate line of defence in the colony of Eigenfeld, 10 km from Seytler (modern Nizhnegorsk station, located two stops from Dzhankoy towards Kerch). Then on the 14th the Reds, in the course of hard fighting, took Grammatikovo (Sovetskiy) and Karasubazar (Belogorsk). On 15 April the Whites abandoned the colonies of Men-Germen and Nei-Zurichthal. On the 19th Stary Krym and on the morning of the 22nd Feodosiya were taken.

The Reds tried to take Feodosiya more than once:

"When the Soviet troops approached the city, an English superdreadnought, several English and Greek destroyers and a monitor were in the anchorage. These vessels opened fire on the Bolsheviks, causing them great losses. The English and Greek consuls and workers' representatives arrived on the battleship with a request to stop the shelling, as otherwise the Bolsheviks would harass the foreigners. The squadron commander rejected the request, stating that he was taking on board all foreigners wishing to leave Feodosiya. The advance of the Bolsheviks towards the city was stopped."

On the day of the final capture of Feodosiya by the Reds the English fleet also acted:

"... Two destroyers under the English flag bombed Sarygol for half an hour, setting fire to the station, from where they transferred fire to the location of our trenches, but have not brought much harm ..."

The Whites retreated to Vladislavovka, which was taken by the Reds the next day, after which, as operational bulletin 106 of 24 April said, *"the enemy retreated to Ak-Monai station, where their positions were heavily fortified, with trenches dug from the Azov to the Black Sea and two rows of wire entanglements ..."*

During the retreat of the Whites to the Ak-Monai positions, the British fired on the advancing chains of the Reds from their warships. *"The British fired volleys from the 16 inch guns of the dreadnought Emperor of India, making a terrifying impression: the projectiles lifted up whole corners of houses into the air, shattering windows."*

In his memoirs, the White artilleryman S. N. Shidlovsky wonders why the Reds stopped their offensive when they reached the Ak-Monai Isthmus. In our opinion, the reason is that the three Zadneprovsk regiments were moving eastwards with different speeds, and the first regiment that came to this line (most likely it was the regiment moving along the Dzhankoy-Feodosiya railway, so in our opinion the 6th Regiment) waited for the others who were still heading eastwards from Simferopol to catch up. This gave the Whites the opportunity to finish organising their defences and prevent a breakthrough.

Nevertheless, the Whites who had withdrawn to the Ak-Monai trenches did not, for the most part, believe it was possible to hold out there. Dragoon officer A.A. Stolypin wrote in his diary on 20 (7) April: *"Kerch is being evacuated just in case. You can hear the guns being taken away from the fortress. Steamships with cargoes of mines, shells, bombs and mortars are scooting between the Taman and the fortress, and still*



they cannot take out huge stocks <...> Every day artillery fire is heard from Ak-Manai²⁰. It is the Reds trying to take our double trench row."

On 24 (11) April General Borovski signed order No. 16 at the station Sem Kolodezey (Lenino) for a radical reorganization of his army "*because of the great many gaps in units.*" Many units were combined and only two divisions (4th and 5th) remained in the army. By the same order the Simferopol Officer Regiment was temporarily reorganised into the Independent Simferopol Officer Battalion, of four companies

So the Ak-Monai front was formed, where battles and skirmishes of varying intensity took place for almost two months. (See chapter 2 for details of this confrontation.) The Reds took up positions on the high ground near the villages of Tulumchak and Karpech. The left flank of the Reds was adjacent to the village of Koy Asan and the right to the village of Dalni Kamyshi. The headquarters of the Reds Ak-Monai Group was in Islam-Terek.

²⁰ The name of the town and resulting line written in different ways: Ak-Monai, Akmonai, Ak-Manai and Akmanai etc. As a rule, White memoirs have Ak-Manai and Soviet ones have Ak-Monai. As this book is from the Soviet side I shall use their form, except as here when quoting White sources.



Chapter 2

The Red Military in Red Crimea

The KSA : the “Crimean Soviet Army”

The official birthday of the army, which was always somewhat unusual, was when it was named the “Crimean Soviet Army” (KSA) on 5 May, with its commander P. Dybenko issuing an order No. 1 for the KSA troops. However, the actual formation of the KSA began as early as mid-April. Thus we see the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Antonov-Ovseenko, who arrived in the Crimea on 26 April, state that the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division was to become the 1st Crimean Division. Uncharacteristically for that time it had the epithet “Soviet”, received because it was officially created “according to the Resolution of the Provisional Government of Workers and Peasants of Crimea” on the same day as the formation of the Crimean SSR. In the same first order of the KSA, S. I. Petrenko was appointed its Chief of Staff – and also Deputy People’s Commissar for Military and Maritime Affairs of the Crimea.

However, in Moscow at a meeting of the RCP(b) Central Committee Bureau regarding the Crimean Army the following decision was taken: *“The Crimean Army is part of the Red Army of the RSFSR, forming part of the Southern Front as a division. Independent actions and formations on the Crimean Peninsula are not permitted. The fleet and ports are under the control of the All-Russian Naval Staff.”*

At first the KSA consisted of one division – the 1st Crimean Division. This division had three brigades: the Shock, Special and Zadneprovsk. Each brigade had three infantry regiments, supplemented by several auxiliary formations.

The Shock Brigade comprised:

1st Shock Regiment (formerly 1st Reserve), 800 bayonets, stationed at Pologi Station.

2nd Shock Regiment (formerly 2nd Reserve), 600 bayonets, initially based in the village of Tambovka, with the HQ in Grammatikovo, and later sent to the Ak-Monai Front (officially called the Kerch Front).

3rd Shock Regiment (formerly 3rd Taurida Regiment), 550 bayonets, Sevastopol.

The Special Brigade comprised:

1st Special Regiment, 700 bayonets, Karasan.

2nd Special Regiment, 550 bayonets, Seit-Asany

3rd Special Regiment, 475 bayonets, Seit-Dali

The headquarters of those regiments were also located there.

A battalion of the 3rd Special Regiment was located in Genichesk, numbering 600 bayonets. It was part of the Crimean coast guard system. A June summary of the Crimean Regional Party Committee wrote about this battalion: *“The garrison is anti-Semitic. Rallies are seldom held. The political committee of the garrison openly speaks out against Soviet power.”*

The Zadneprovsk Brigade included the infantry regiments of the former 2nd Brigade of the Zadneprovsk Division. As Antonov-Ovseenko wrote, this was the backbone of the entire division. The numbering of the regiments was retained from the time of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division:

4th Zadneprovsk Regiment, 800 bayonets, Dzhankoy. At first this regiment was involved in fighting on the Ak-Monai front, and then it was part of the suppression of the Grigoriev mutiny.

5th Zadneprovsk, 500 bayonets, village of Klets - Ak-Monai Front.

6th Zadneprovsk – 718 bayonets, Novoprokrovka - Ak-Monai Front. (However the artillery of this regiment was deployed in Genichesk)

Antonov-Ovseenko gives data on the military strength of the 1st Crimean Division as of 26 April: 13,000 bayonets, 30 machine guns, three batteries (a battery of four 77 mm guns, another of four guns and one of two howitzers), two armoured vehicles (one with a gun).



It was envisaged that another division would later emerge from new units. Some units were created in Crimea, such as the 1st International Soviet Regiment stationed in Evpatoria (commanded by Silka), the 1st Sevastopol Regiment (actually a battalion of 284 men), the 1st Dzhankoy Soviet Regiment and others. But the command did not have time to deploy them into another division. In May, the military commissariat began implementing a series of mobilisation measures. The registration of people liable for military service began on 10 May, and the registration of doctors began on 18 May. At the same time, the following categories of citizens who were not subject to mobilisation to the army were enlisted in the rear militia:

- People who exploit other people's labour, who live on unearned income (that is, interest on capital), the owners of industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises, members of boards and management boards of joint-stock companies, owners of companies of all kinds or partnerships, directors, managers, trustees of such companies.
- former sworn attorneys and their assistants, employees of the bourgeois press.
- monks and ministers of churches and religious cults (of all denominations).
- pupils of cadet schools and cadet corps
- people without a specific occupation.

A vital issue for the army was that of supplies. Here is what Ulyanov and staff officials of the KSA wrote on 25 May in a letter to Chairman Lenin of the Sovnarkom, Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council, Sklyanski, and Head of Supply of the Red Army, Sud'in.

"... We need immediately: at least three thousand Russian three-line rifles²¹, thirty Maxim machine guns, eight forty-eight line howitzers or forty-two line²² guns and twelve light three-inch guns²³ with the corresponding amount of ammunition, one million three-line cartridges. As regards the cartridges, the situation is desperate - we are finishing off the last of them, which was communicated to you by telegram No 951 of 24 May.

In general it should be said that we have not received anything from the UkrFront. Soldiers are barefoot, naked and there is a considerable unrest among the men. We are forced to confiscate trousers from the population for the Army, but this does not help much – ten thousand sets of uniforms are needed. We kindly ask you to send all the aforementioned articles to Simferopol however you can, or we will send our own collectors. We expect an immediate answer.

President of the Crimean Sovnarkom Ulyanov, Deputy Commandant Petrovski, member of the Revolutionary Council Tolmachev."

B. N. Muravin, a commissioner of the Red Army's Central Supply Department, confirming the needs of the KSA, added for himself:

"For my part I testify to the full necessity and validity of the requirements. Up to now the Crimean group of troops has made do solely with supplies seized in the occupied areas, receiving nothing from the UkrFront. I request three thousand rifles from the Moscow artillery depot's "special reserve", one million cartridges and machine guns from the Tula artillery depot, and uniforms from Moscow. Please telegraph the answer to me."

Considering the military theme, of course we cannot fail to mention the actions of the Crimean partisans based in the quarries of the Kerch Peninsula, who provided considerable assistance to the Crimean Soviet Army. This topic has been developed in great detail by Soviet historians. We will also refer to a source from the opposite camp. The guerrillas did indeed draw off considerable forces of the Denikin forces. This is evidenced, in particular, by the memoirs of Arkady Stolypin, who took part in the struggle against these partisans (he called them "brigands") in three areas of their concentration (Adzhimushkay, Bagerovo and Stary Karantin). *"Adzhimushkay is more serious than Bagerov and Stary Karantin. In Bagerovo there are*

²¹ That is, the standard Russian Moisin-Nagant 7.62 mm rifle of WWI.

²² 122mm or 110 mm (a "line" is 0.1 inch)

²³ This was the standard 76mm gun of the civil war, most made by Putilov.



about 60 brigands and we have two squadrons; in the [Old] Quarry there are about 150 brigands and we have our regiment and guardsmen. Here the enemy had 600-800 men, while we, apart from our Guard Cavalry Regiment and the Guards, have only the 2nd General Drozdovski Officer Cavalry Regiment, the Crimean Cavalry Regiment and the Taman Cossack and Slashev Escort sotnias; plus there is the so-called Kerch Company.” He also described the inhumanly brutal torture and torture of the “brigands” captured by the *Denikintsy*.

The Army and the People, the Army and Civil Power

The aspirations of the civilian population at the stage of the Red Army’s arrival in the Crimea are quite reasonably set out by Kharkov’s *Izvestiya* in an editorial entitled “Liberation of the Crimea” on 13 April. The article explains that the occupation of the Crimea by the Red Army was due not only to the refusal of the Allies to actively help the “dark aims” of the Volunteers, not only to the valour of the Red Army regiments, but mainly to the sympathy of the majority of the local population to Soviet power and to the Red Army. Therefore, among the tasks of the “long-awaited liberators” the first priority is to “*be able to use this sympathy; it is necessary to support this fire of faith and hope in the Soviet power with a caring hand.*” This means that not a single mistake of the previous Red period can be repeated. A more tolerant attitude towards the middle classes is necessary. The national question in an area with a predominantly Tatar population must be resolved “*skilfully and at once.*”

The provisions of this article were also outlined in the Crimean party newspaper *Taurida Communist*. But the newspapers’ wishes remained mainly on paper. The attitude of the population to the army rapidly deteriorated. From the very first days, all sorts of contradictions between the army leadership and the civil authority arose. Therefore the task of the civil authority was simple – to protect the population from the arbitrariness of the military as much as possible. And the citizens had to be protected from the arbitrariness of both Red commanders and ordinary soldiers.

The army leadership believed that the civilian authorities and the population should do everything to meet the daily needs of the army: they should feed it, clothe it, treat it, supply money, dig trenches, etc. Even in the local press there was wording to this effect: “*Only once the needs of the Red Army are met will the Sovnarkhoz start supplying tobacco products to the population as well.*” The tasks of the higher military authorities are only concerned with armament and command. And the army was supposed to fight solely in the name of the World Revolution, first against the bourgeoisie of their own country, and then to do the same on a global scale.

The population did not get any kid gloves. “*Troops took bread, sugar and petrol, often destined for the city, right from its arrival at the railway station*”, reported A. Gallop at a meeting of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee.

The rigidity of the position of the military authorities is shown once more by a couple of quotations from speeches at the military congress in Dzhankoy: “*All Red Army men are outraged by the philistine indecision to expropriate the property of the bourgeoisie, leading to the poor outfitting of the Red Army.*” And another, “*In order to establish the firm power of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the conquered and captured areas, our power should be composed exclusively of the old workers of the Communist Party, with the representatives of the army in the central Crimean authorities. <...> Representatives of classes other than the proletariat and the poorest peasantry must never be admitted to these authorities.*”

For its part, the local Bolshevik press could only suggest that the population should be patient: “*We are going through a serious period of our revolution. We have no time to think about peace-building, no opportunity to engage in the settlement of industry, the supply of the home front with enough basic necessities. All forces are superhumanly strained for war, but not at all because we want it...*”

The day-to-day difficulties of the population were not the concern of the military authorities, they simply did not notice them. Therefore, very soon after the arrival of the *Zadniprovtsy*, the euphoria of the first days of liberation from the *Denikintsy* (which was certainly present everywhere in the Crimea!) was replaced by disappointment and mutual alienation of the army and the civilian population.



In the euphoria of the early days, the assistance to the army was generally voluntary. This assistance had to be organised by the Revolutionary Committees, the only authorities in power at the time. The request for assistance of the “main” Revolutionary Committee, the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee, came from the very top of the army command. Thus, in a note to “Comrade Chairman of the Crimean Regional Revolutionary Committee” Laura (E. R. Bagaturyants) the KomFront of the Ukrainian Front Antonov-Ovseenko wrote on 17 April, *“I regret that I did not see you. The general situation requires the creation of the Crimean authorities, **firmly united with the military**. The Red Army needs decisive help, we must strain all our efforts. In the meantime, the army is undressed and naked. I appeal to you, as a representative of the communist forces of Crimea, to help us, help form new units, provide uniforms....”* Laura’s resolution did not reflect any emotion on this matter, she simply wrote: “Noted”, but it is clear that the Revolutionary Committee had to work in this direction.

Moreover, the initiative of Antonov-Ovseenko was picked up by the local military leadership and as early as 5 May the supply department of the military commissariat gave more specific instructions to the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee: *“In view of the lack of basic necessities to supply the army units, please order the urgent collection of voluntary donations from individuals of clothing and supplies for the Red Army soldiers, such as: boots, underwear, belts, blouses, shirts, socks, scarves, towels, sheets, etc”* After the local Soviets of Deputies were elected, they too had to deal with the problems of the army. For example, the executive committee of the Karasubazar Soviet Deputies adopted the following decision: *‘Having heard the report of representatives from the front about the extreme need of the Red Army soldiers for shoes, the executive committee has decided: “To propose that the Military Commissar immediately proceed to requisition the necessary amount of footwear and leather from local trade establishments and enterprises.”’*

Even earlier, during the fighting for the Crimea, the army had asked for medical assistance. Here the Revolutionary Committee’s response was swift and effective. As early as 16 April the Revolutionary Committee sent doctors, nurses and paramedics to the head of the Sanitary Department of the Perekop Group. At the same time the Revolutionary Committee helped the army with medicines and bandages.

Yet the scale of voluntary assistance from the population of the army did not satisfy the military’s appetite. *“Put an end to this outrage,”* Rakovski wrote to Dybenko, referring to the shameless requisitions by the military authorities. The military in Yalta were especially active in this regard: commandant Levin, appointed by the chief political committee of the KSA, ordered the military to arrest ships carrying Turkish silk and wine and to seize wagons from peasants who brought food to the cities. Naturally, this merely aroused the hostility of the population against the army and discredited the new power. As a curiosity, it should be noted that J. Gorodetski, who mentioned this, believed that *“this phenomenon was characteristic of Crimea as a result of its distance from the centre.”*

* * *

Dybenko’s soldiers were, for the most part, recent peasants from Taurida and Kherson, who had volunteered to join partisan units to fight first against the Germans and Austrians and then the Volunteers. Unexpectedly for them, Dybenko united these insurgent partisan detachments into an almost regular army – the Zadneprovsk Division, which was formally part of the Red Army.

However, during the months they spent in the partisan units, the former guerrillas developed their own ideas about the norms of military life: the election of commanders, a lack of discipline, an unpunished “self-sufficiency” (i.e. taking from the population what they wanted), anti-Semitism at the household level, a patriarchal attitude towards women, etc. Despite the official line of internationalism, it was not only anti-Semitism, but also ill feeling towards Tatars, Greeks, Germans and other smaller groups of the Crimean population flourished.

Considerations of their effect on the nation did not exist for the military at all: *“The military authorities do not take into account the local peoples,”* was the wording used by K.E. Voroshilov in his report from the Crimea on 6 May to his superiors in Kiev. The insurgents did not trust their commissars and did not approve of the tribunals and emergency powers. The Communists were generally disrespected. It was enough to say you were a Communist to be told: *“Go back to Moscow with your Communism.”*



“There is no discipline and comradely treatment of the people among Dybenko’s army; anti-Semitism is terribly strong; female workers are looked upon as freaks...” inspector V. Goryunov reported to the Central Committee of the RCP(b). Of course, we have to consider the level of literacy and conscience of the soldiers.

The main party functionary and Moscow’s protégé in the Crimea, Y. P. Gaven, was quite frank about the mood of the military. In his letter of 27 May we read among other things, *“...The general political situation in the Crimea is uncertain. The influence of Grigoriev and the Makhnovshchina on Dybenko’s army is strong. We do our best to halt the tendency towards pogroms, which unfortunately is supported by the [ex]partisan commanders (or rather bandits) and some HQ staff. Still, we hope in the near future to turn Dybenko’s insurgent army into a regular army.”*

The frankness of this letter (which is invaluable to us) is explained by the fact that it was intended only for members of the Central Committee of the RCP(b). When publishing the Central Committee correspondence in Soviet times, it was often necessary to cut out the strongest expressions. Thus the phrase “or rather bandits” is absent from the publication of this letter. In the publication of another report of the Crimean Obkom for Moscow (dated 3 June and signed by Gaven and Shulman), such lines are missing as, *“... Genicheski: The garrison is pogromous <...> the garrison political worker openly speaks out against the Soviet authorities.”*

An even more depressing picture of the army’s actions is painted by M.D. Shuster, a member of the Crimean regional committee, in a summary for the CP(b)U²⁴ of 19 May. We note that the party workers’ briefs for Kiev are much more frank than those for Moscow. Thus, we quote:

“The situation in the army is unenviable. The regiments are mostly made up of detachments of Petliura and Makhno; they are largely peasants from the richest regions of the Ukraine – Melitopol and Berdyansk. No political work is conducted in the army. There are small Communist cells in the regiments (but not in all), which are powerless to do anything. The army’s Political Department consists of only one or two Communists, and is ostensibly non-partisan. Political committees are not allowed to do any work. It is not uncommon for them to be shot. <...> A number of other phenomena are known, such as this: when in Simferopol a Red Army detachment surrounded one of the poor districts of the city (mostly Jewish) and took everything they liked.<...> This is the situation in the Crimea on 19 May.

We should add that Dybenko, who had arrived from Moscow, told the Supreme Military Inspectorate that *‘it can get lost. It has no control, as he is a Narkomvoen²⁵.’*

Another party worker, Kovalchuk-Chernousov, reported in a bulletin for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U dated 1 June that two Communist organisations were active in Simferopol. One of them, the Bakhchielsk organization (named after the village of Bakhchi-Eli, which is now within the city limits), was allegedly *“dominated by elements of a criminal nature and former leftist Social Revolutionaries.”* Characteristically, this clearly more radical group of Simferopol Bolsheviks collaborated with, and largely indulged, the army of Dybenko.

Not surprisingly, the main Moscow protégé, Y. P. Gaven, had difficulty getting along with the KSA commanders, about whom he spoke so unflatteringly. Therefore L. B. Kamenev²⁶ had to reconcile Dybenko with Gaven *“by creating a kind of triumvirate headed by D.I. Ulyanov”²⁷*. There is mention of this in Kamenev’s letter of 8-10 May. Ulyanov turned out to be an appropriate choice, balancing the mutual recriminations of the military and civil authorities.

And Dybenko’s ambitions may well have extended to wanting to lead the Crimean government as well. This is possible because as early as 17 April Antonov-Ovseenko was aware of the plans for a Crimean Red government. On that day he informed KomandArm-2 Skachko: *“There is going to be a government of its own in the Crimea.”* Here it is most likely that the first to take the initiative was not Moscow’s protégé

²⁴ Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine.

²⁵ A member of the ruling political body – he was effectively Minister for the Navy.

²⁶ Lev Kamenev was commander of all Red forces.

²⁷ Lenin’s younger brother.



Gaven but Dybenko, who actually tried to create a government “for himself”, as historian V. A. Savchenko pointed out. As it turned out, Dybenko failed to become head of the government – Moscow was categorically against it – but he did get the post of Naval Commissar (not without the assistance of the same Antonov-Ovseenko).

The supportive and friendly attitude towards Dybenko of Antonov-Ovseenko, commander of the Ukrainian Front, probably originated from the time they worked together in Petrograd in the early days of October. But for the staff officers of the Ukrainian front, and especially the Chief of Staff V. P. Glagolev (military specialist, colonel in the Tsarist army) just mentioning names of Dybenko and his rear workers aroused straight out hatred. We can refer to the following document:

“19 April, No. 0968. Train No. 702, to KomandFront Antonov.

“Dybenko officially reports that when the commissar and treasurer of the Zadneprovsk Division turned up at the front headquarters to receive money, the front’s chief of supply, Pallinger, told them: ‘Your division and all its command staff, led by Dybenko, are bandits, and we give nothing to bandits. The Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Front, Glagolev, said to the same: ‘No one has allowed you to organise a bandit division.’ Dybenko asks that Glagolev and Pelinger²⁸ be brought to justice for the insults inflicted on the division. Otherwise he asks for his dismissal. I request an investigation of the case and satisfaction of Dybenko’s claim. KomandArm Skachko.”

Note that Glagolev did not appear as Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Front by accident, he must have been a confidant of Lenin. “You can appoint anyone you like as commander ... with the indispensable condition that Glagolev be the actual commander-in-chief”, Lenin wrote to the Ukrainian leadership.

There is another interesting aspect – how was P. Dybenko’s army perceived by ordinary people?

“There was a furry-woolly thing heading this way. It was rumbling, glittering, rattling. Two horses side by side. The cavalymen looked unusually wild. They had all manner of hats – fur ones, German ones, crushed officer ones, fox hats – some with tails. Careless young faces, from clean-cut and hairless to stubbled, convict-like. They were all warm, but most wore fur coats, some pulled back; one wore a general’s tunic. Bright belts and badges, crossed machine-gun bandoliers, sabres, water bottles, rifles, daggers, revolvers, red ribbons in bows, ponytails on the saddles, sheepskins. Others had mutton attached to their saddles ... a horde, that’s all. One of them had a lance.

At the front rode a prominent man in a white fur hat with a red top, all resplendent. His chest was crossed by a gleaming Caucasian belt, which I saw later. There was a sabre on his back, a pair of Nagant pistols in his scarlet silk belt, a rifle behind his back, and a red cloth star on his hat. The lad was recklessly handsome, fair-haired and black-browed, with a sly look.”

It would seem that the writer I. S. Shmelev, who wrote this story 35 years later in exile, was struck with a repulsive impression upon meeting a *Zadneprovtsy* detachment in Alushta. The writer, after all, had his own personal grievances with the Soviet authorities. And yet, through the disgust and hatred of the *Zadniprovtysy*, an involuntary admiration for these fighters emerges.

“Acts of mass terror were not observed ...”

This is how the situation with the shootings is formulated in the Zarubin brothers’ book “Without Winners: From the History of the Civil War in the Crimea.” Of course, the sporadic massacres of the second arrival of Red power in the Crimea pale in comparison with the first appearance of the Reds in the Crimea, when the mass slaughter of “non-proletarian” elements took place under the unambiguous slogan “Death to the bourgeoisie!” No less mass repression took place during the third arrival of the Reds in the Crimea after the defeat of Wrangel. Just the slogan was different. The slogan then was Trotsky’s directive “I will not come to the Crimea as long as at even one counter-revolutionary remains on the peninsula.”

²⁸ different spellings in the original.

Carrying on with the theme of the shootings of the second Red Crimea is the following note in the Sevastopol *Crimean Herald* of 21 July (3 August) 1919:

“In the papers left behind by the Simferopol Emergency Committee a list was found of the people who were to be shot by the famous Khrapov detachment. The list is made up of all the former members of the Crimean regional government, from the Minister to Social Democrat. S. Bobrovsky, and including the Chairman of the Provincial Zemstvo Board V. A. Obolensky, the editor of the Tauridan Voice, V. S. Nalbandov and others.”

It is unclear whether this memo corresponded to reality or not, but we can say with certainty that any executions were carried out by military and not civilian punitive bodies. The note mentions “Comrade Dybenko’s Special Unit” under the command of Khrapov, created under the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Crimean Army, which left many sad memories among Crimean inhabitants. According to extant documents, Khrapov’s detachment operated not only in Simferopol, but also in other cities; in particular, it travelled to Yalta in mid-May. It appears that Khrapov’s detachment was not alone. For example, the orders of the Army Headquarters mention a “Comrade Kotov” punitive detachment of 80 men.

V. Obolensky has noted the struggle between the military and civilian authorities about summary executions: *“Dybenko’s staff, who fought with the more humane Revkom, continued it on to the Sovnarkom, headed by Lenin’s brother and led by a group of Mensheviks. In the end Dybenko was allowed to organise his military Cheka, but it did not have time to unfold its bloody activities.”*

And Dybenko’s intentions of this kind can be seen from the order which appeared at the beginning of June. Order No. 32 of 5 June:

“Recently anti-Soviet pogrom agitation has been carried out by priests, White Guard scoundrels, in connection with which demonstrations with crowds of people are taking place in the cities, stirred up by the Black Hundreds²⁹ provocateurs.

*I order all military institutions under my command and those in positions of responsibility to take the strongest measures against the Black Hundreds agitation. <...> People actively opposing Soviet power and leading agitation are to be **shot on the spot.**”*

What frightened the fearless military commissar of the Crimea? It turns out that this time it was a women’s demonstration in Sevastopol that alarmed Dybenko. We read about it in a note in Moscow’s “Izvestiya VTSIK” of 4 June:

“... With children in front, the demonstration marched through the city to the Revolutionary Committee. A red banner with the inscription “Give us bread!” flew above the crowd. An impromptu rally was held in front of the Revolutionary Committee. They demanded a pound ration for everyone and permission to sell bread freely. Representatives of the Revolutionary Committee pointed out the impossibility of fulfilling the demand due to the extremely difficult situation of the food business. The demonstrators asked for permission to make [their own] purchases in the Melitopol district. As a result, the rally elected ten delegates who were given the right to take part in the bread procurement. The manifestation dispersed with cheers and thanks to the Soviet authorities. The delegates had already left in a special train with the food workers for Melitopol.”

It is clear that the skilfully crafted, but implausible ending of the article was only needed to get it published in a Soviet newspaper. But the essence of the event was captured...

In general, throughout the period there was a constant struggle between the extremely hard line of the military and the softer line of the Revolutionary Committee and the Crimean Soviet government. Here is a sample of the order of the military authorities, for Yalta, 28 May:

²⁹ The “Black Hundreds” had been a far right-wing grouping prior to the Great War, notoriously nationalistic and anti-Semitic. By this time it was mainly used as a general slur against any opponent of Soviet power to the right.

*"To the counter-intelligence officer of the 1st Watch Battalion, Kotelvets. Copy: To Commandant Novikov and Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee. **I want to inform you that no one has given you the right to whip and shoot anyone.** I am ordering you to hand over those who have been arrested to the Special Branch. I categorically declare, that if similar cases happen again, you will be brought before the military revolutionary court. 28 May 1919, No. 982. KomandArm Petrovski."*

It seems from this extremely polite order that all the rights to punish or pardon belonged exclusively to Special Department of the Army. However, Commissar of Internal Affairs for the Crimea Gaven, ordered differently, *"The right to execute for any, even grave, crimes belongs exclusively to the judicial authority, but in no case to the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Army."*

At least one case of a group execution was leaked to the local press:

"Report of the Extraordinary Commission³⁰. At a meeting of the Sevastopol Revolutionary Committee B. Zanko reported that nine people had been shot without trial by the Red Army and four by the Extraordinary Commission (two of them as bandits and two as counter-revolutionaries). Communists: we must bring the culprits to justice and not carry out any further shootings without the sanction of the Revolutionary Committee.

E. P. Dukhanina (Social Democrat): 11 men shot, 9 corpses found. The Revolutionary Committee has no right to sanction shootings, as it took part neither in the investigation nor in the trial. A Revolutionary Tribunal must be established.

Alexakis (chairman of the Revolutionary Committee) - it is necessary for the Revolutionary Committee to approve every verdict.

The Left S.-R. Semenov agreed with him on behalf of his party."

Another case of shootings is known from a summary compiled for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U as of 19 May by a member of the Crimean Regional Committee, M. D. Shuster. He reported the execution by the KSA Shock Brigade's head, Kotov, of the brigade's political commander. Further Shuster writes, *"Kotov, at the congress of political workers in Dzhankoy, when asked about the reasons for his actions with a comrade, threatened to shoot everyone asking about it ..."*

I believe there were other cases of such intra-army squabbles in the KSA.

The Fighting on the Ak-Monai Front

The leadership of the Crimean Soviet Army stated its operational objectives in a letter to Moscow as follows: *"To occupy Kerch using all possible means, and thereby secure Crimea and provide strong support to the Southern and Caucasus Fronts."* Nevertheless, the KSA did not achieve this task.

The main reason for the military failure lay in the fact that considerable Red Crimean forces were been deployed to suppress the Grigoriev rebellion (see the separate chapter for details). Only at the very beginning of the confrontation at Ak-Monai was the advantage on the side of the Reds, but at that time they failed to make use of it. Very soon after the balance of forces changed. In particular, Markozashvili's cavalry regiment (800 sabres) was an especially big loss for the front. That left only a cavalry squadron of 200 sabres. The failures of the Reds could not but affect a gradual change in the morale of the belligerents: for the Reds it fell, and for the Whites it rose.

As of 7 May the following KSA regiments were engaged on the Ak-Monai front:

- 2nd Shock Regiment from the Shock Brigade. 900 men . This is the former 2nd Reserve Regiment of the Perekop operation.
- 5th Zadneprovsk Regiment from the Zadneprovsk Brigade. 350 men. Commander Lunev.

³⁰ That is, the Cheka.



- 6th Zadneprovsk Regiment from the Zadneprovsk Brigade. 600 men.
- Combined Special Regiment made up of the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the Special Brigade. 1,200 men. Commander I.S. Moiseenko, Commissar S.Y. Baisha.

Thus the regiments of all three KSA brigades were represented on the Ak-Monai front. The total bayonets: 900 + 950 + 1200 = around 3,000. Markazashvili's cavalry regiment operated there with 800 sabres, but as noted above, it departed soon after to suppress the Grigoriev mutiny. Of the cavalry, only a cavalry *division* of 200 sabres remained, with a base in Feodosiya.

The seemingly exhaustive data on the Denikin forces on the Ak-Monai front at the time of its formation is given by the KSA intelligence report for 27 April:

"...The enemy is fortified near Ak-Monai station and has two rows of trenches and two rows of barbed wire fences. The enemy forces consist of one division: of the Melitopol Regiment, 450 men, Feodosiya Regiment, 250 men, Kerch-Enikali Regiment, 300 men, Pavlovski Guards Regiment, 400 men, and an officer cavalry regiment, 200 men. All regiments were formed in Dzhankoy and have six heavy guns and about 20 smaller guns of various calibres. Enemy air reconnaissance consists of five apparatus. 27 April 1919 No. 01058. P.P. Head of Operations Chernigovski."

So, initially the Zadneprovsk army supposedly was confronted by only 1,400 bayonets and 200 sabres with considerable artillery support. These figures differ greatly from the data of V. Kravchenko, who claimed that already by 27 April the White forces could field 1,500 sabres for a raid. Apparently, the Red reconnaissance unit had underestimated the number of White troops, particularly it seems the cavalry (both Kravchenko and Shidlovski mention 1,000 sabres). This can be explained by the fact that the cavalry were stationed deep to the rear of the Kerch Peninsula.

But the main advantage of the Whites was the constant support of Allied ship artillery from the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. With this in mind, the Red Command tried to negotiate with the Allied Command in some way over these bombardments. From Message 50 of 23 April:

"In the Kerch area our units have to advance under heavy artillery fire from French, English and Greek vessels, despite the fact that the Allied Command occupying Feodosiya stated that there would be no shelling. After asking the Italian and Swiss Consuls and a member of the Feodosiya Revolutionary Committee what the violation of this treaty meant, they were told that this was being done by order of the High Command and when asked if they were at war with us, they replied that it went without saying. The Italian and Swiss consuls refused, in protest, to defend the interests of the Allied subjects. In Feodosiya, by the way, the Allied Command said: if the attack on Kerch stops, so does the shelling of our units; but our advance on Kerch, despite the shelling, continues..."

The situation on the 'White' side of the front can be found in the detailed notes of Staff Captain V. Almendinger of the Simferopol Officers Regiment:

"On the morning of 8 April 1919 the regiment occupied the middle, most important, sector of the Ak-Manai position. ... At the time the regiment occupied the site, the trenches were only an outline and the wire was arranged in two stakes (at the height of "Kosh-Oba" there were two strips of two stakes each). On the very first day, the trenches were brought up to scratch and we began to improve the barbed wire. Building material was provided and the companies worked happily to improve the position: those trenches which had had shelling were brought forward; the wire was increased to three stakes and in more important places to four stakes; in some places two fortified lines were built. Everyone worked during the day and then served at night. ... The Reds took up a position at Koi-Asan outside our artillery fire."

Up to that time the *Denikintsy* defending forces were not optimistic. I quote a fragment from the report of the Head of the Sea Defence of the Azov coast, Captain Dmitriev, dated 23 (10) April to the Naval Directorate of the AFSR, "Despite the powerful naval artillery from the sea, the mood of the army (if we can call 1500-2000 men that), stretched over 22 km of line, is extremely depressed and everyone, apparently,



thinks only of evacuation to the Taman coast – that is judging by how often I was asked questions on shore from officials, of all ranks, about the readiness for this evacuation in Kerch.” Artillery officer S. N. Shidlovski mentioned the same, reporting that *“no one believed in the possibility of holding on to the Ak-Manai Isthmus.”* And such mood was not only at the moment of the retreat to Ak-Monai, but also on the eve of the first attack of the Whites on 27 (14) April.

We should add that the *Denikintsy* forces of the Ak-Monai front were rapidly increasing during May. So as early as 4 June the Simferopol Officer Battalion was again transformed into a regiment – it had by that time six companies and teams, with a total strength of 575 men.

Summaries of the Operational Department of the KSA Headquarters (Head of Department Ostroukhov) for the first half of May show the development of the situation on the Ak-Monai front. In particular, the bulletin of 28 April reported rather sparingly that on 27 April *“the enemy launched an attack on our trenches, but was repulsed with heavy losses and retreated to its previous positions.”* More details about the objectives and course of this attack can be found in the memoirs of the White side:

“...On 27 (14) April a cavalry raid was made on Vladislavovka to ascertain the enemy’s forces. The raid involved cavalry (1,500 sabres) from four regiments as well as two companies of the Simferopol Officer Regiment. The raid moved along the Black Sea coast to the rear of the Reds, occupied the village of Dal’niye Kamyshe and reached the outskirts of Feodosiya, allegedly causing panic among the Reds in the city. The infantry in the course of the raid took Koy-Asan, and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, in pursuit of the Reds, broke into Vladislavovka. By the evening, the White units, under the order “to retreat behind the wire”, returned to their previous positions, “having discovered the large Red forces, concentrated near Vladislavovka.”

Lieutenant-General Schilling, the commander of the 5th Division, was wounded in this battle. The brigade commander of the division, Colonel Slashchev, took temporary command of the 5th Division.

As a result of the White raid on the village of Dal’nye Kamyshe, 45 men were killed and about 100 wounded. The “White” memoirists do not mention an important detail – the shelling from British ships. There is no doubt that the Whites would not have been able to hold their positions on Ak-Monai without the support of the Allied naval fleet. The correspondence concerning the raid on 27 April in particular bears witness to this.

The commander of the Crimean-Azov Army on the same day telegraphed to the commander-in-chief of the Allied squadron: *“I and the troops entrusted to me convey our heartfelt thanks to the Allied fleet by way of its chief officer for the fire support, which had a decisive influence on the success of today’s action of 27 April.”*

And here is the reply of the 58th British Admiral: *“On behalf of the Allied Squadron I thank you warmly for your kind telegram and congratulate you and your troops on the success they have achieved in the last attack. I am convinced that our future work hand in hand will be an even greater success.”*

The firing of shipboard artillery into Feodosiya did cause panic in the city, and the local Revolutionary Committee had to reassure the “comrades and citizens” (this was the characteristic manner of address at the time).

Appeal
Comrades and citizens

Anglo-French gunfire has caused panic in the city.

The Military Revolutionary Committee of Feodosiya once again categorically declares to the population that no danger threatens the city.

The rear is well secured against counter-revolutionary Kadet³¹ gangs.
Comrades to work. Calm and order.

³¹ “Kadet” was a reference to the Constitutional Democrats, a party supported overwhelmingly by Whites. It was reinforced by the fact that a lot of the White forces were officer cadets.



We'll continue our work in peace.
Military Revolutionary Committee

A few days later the Reds attempted a counter-attack. At dawn on 30 April, under cover of heavy fog, a raid of 20 horsemen advanced from the village of Arabat, pushed the infantry out of their trenches and occupied the villages of Ak-Monai and Oguz-Tobe in the rear of the Whites. The White cavalry and infantry in carts, supported by shipboard artillery, eliminated the sortie and the position of the front was restored.

According to Lednev – commander of an Inkerman detachment (about 60 men) of the 1st Sevastopol Regiment – his detachment was sent to Kerch front “to relieve tired units of the first trench positions near Vladislavovka station, but then received an order to move to Grishino station (in the Donbass) tasked with delaying the attack of General Shkuro..” Thus the 1st Sevastopol Regiment left the Crimea before the general retreat of the Reds.

The last major attack by the Reds occurred on 2 May in the area near the railway line to Kerch. The attack was repulsed mainly by cavalry. A counterattack by the *Denikintsy* was launched on 5 May on the Black Sea flank when, supported by Allied naval artillery, they were again able to temporarily occupy the village of Dal’niye Kamyshi. A counterattack by the Reds drove the *Denikintsy* out of it and they retreated. On the same day French ships shelled Vladislavovka station from the Black Sea. A bulletin of KSA reported that, “in the village, which was re-occupied by us, up to 30 women were executed, some of them killed by the White Guards.”

At Ak-Monai station the enemy blew up a water tank and other railway installations. Intelligence established that the enemy had taken everything possible out of Ak-Monai. Thus Denikin’s men were preparing to retreat to previously prepared positions behind the station. Judging by the summary, these demonstration manoeuvres of the *Denikintsy* were mistaken by the Red Command as preparations for a retreat.

Later in May neither the Reds nor the Whites made any serious attacks. Only the scouts on both sides interrupted the relatively peaceful face-off from time to time. The everyday situation at the front during this period is to some extent illustrated by the extracts from the operative reports of the headquarters of the 1st Division of the KSA from Islam-Terek. However, we are aware that not all reports are entirely plausible.

7 May, at 8 p.m. *The French vessels shelled Vladislavovka station from the Black Sea. The shelling lasted about an hour and did not cause much damage. Rifle and machine-gun fire was heard in the rear of the enemy. Heavy noise and explosions were heard all night long from Ak-Monai station. Railway track at Ak-Monai station was blown up in several places. The enemy has not shown active actions lately.*

8 May, at 8 p.m. *On the right flank the enemy tried to advance, but was repulsed by machine gun and rifle fire. In the centre of our position our units made a demonstration and found that there was no one in the enemy’s trenches. We took them, but had to withdraw to the previous position because of the strong artillery fire of the Allied ships. At the Ak-Monai station the enemy blew up a water tank and other railway constructions. Intelligence revealed that the enemy was taking everything possible out of Ak-Monai.*

10 May, at 10 o’clock. *Two of our armoured vehicles burst into the enemy’s outpost unexpectedly. The enemy lost more than 15 men killed, the rest scattered. Due to heavy artillery fire from the sea the vehicles drove back.*

11 May, at 20 o’clock. *Our planes conduct enhanced reconnaissance, dropping bombs in the rear of the enemy.*

12 May, at 8 p.m. *Our troops shot down an enemy aircraft, which fell 200 metres near Akmanai station. Our units tried to capture it, but the enemy Pullman which arrived repelled them. On the line of the village of Semisotka the enemy are digging trenches and erecting wire barriers.*



14 May, at 8 p.m. *Tonight we captured Akmanai station, but because of the shelling by the ship's artillery our units had to withdraw to their initial positions. Situation at the front is stable and the mood of the soldiers is above all praise.*

14 May, at 10 o'clock. *Enemy retreated behind Akmanai station and entrenched, having three rows of entrenchments and three rows of barbed wire. Akmanai station was blown up by the enemy and is currently a neutral zone. <...> In the Sivash area a motorboat again attempted to approach the Chongar Bridge, but was repulsed by accurate rifle fire.*

A peculiar episode took place on 31 May. On that day, the British destroyer *Montrose*, accompanied by the cruiser *Cahul*, approached the quay of the port of Feodosiya. White flags were hung on the ships. The town commander P. Grudachev, when he asked about the reason for the arrival of the uninvited guests, received a reply from a Russian officer that the destroyer had come by order of the English squadron commander to find out whether the depots of Feodosiya port contained submarines – allegedly brought from the Baltic Fleet and assembled in the port depots. This was followed by a threat that if the Feodosiya authorities did not allow them to ascertain this, they would bombard not only the positions of the Reds, but also the port and the city. The commander, understandably, categorically refused to let them inspect them. The officers then asked permission to talk to the headquarters of the Crimean Army, which they were allowed to do. The head of the Ak-Monai area, Shishkin, who arrived shortly afterwards, also categorically refused to allow an inspection of the depots. Grudachev called in a photographer to take pictures of the destroyer. During the filming the Russian officers hid in the hold and behind the turrets, to avoid being photographed and to “discredit the British command.” After an hour the ships left, the emissaries stated that ‘Feodosiya is not guaranteed against shelling’. However, no shelling followed. It was most likely a reconnaissance sortie. And the search for imaginary submarines was just a convenient excuse for a sortie.

It is clear from the reports that both sides did not stop harassing each other. The White side had mined the most dangerous areas. It should not be forgotten that there were many more military trained on the White side, especially officers. Therefore their actions were more professional and effective. As Almendinger wrote, “*Companies were preparing to attack the Reds' positions, and the approaches to it were being studied.*”



Chapter 3

Participation of Dybenko's Crimean Army in the Suppression of Grigoriev's Mutiny

The history of the Grigoriev Mutiny and its suppression is generally well known³². We will therefore dwell mainly on one of the little-known aspects, the participation of Dybenko's Crimean Army (KSA) in this campaign.

Kiev did not immediately realise the seriousness of the Grigoriev rebellion. As late as 13 May 13 *Izvestia VTSIK* reported that the head of the Ukrainian Defence Council, Bubnov, and the chairman of the Sovnarkom, Rakovski, had sent telegrams to KomFront Antonov, Forces Commander Khudyakov and Grigoriev, as commander of the 1st Zadneprovsk Brigade "with an appeal to defend Socialist Hungary". Not only that, the uprising of Grigoriev's staff almost coincided with the declaration of special thanks to the "heroic revolutionary units which fought under Grigoriev's command". Instead of those in Kiev, one of the first to organise any rebuff of the *Grigorievtsy* was L. B. Kamenev, who was at that time in the Ukraine with his "train" and engaged in a seemingly entirely peaceful activity – the procurement of bread for the starving north of the RSFSR. But this "peaceful occupation" of Kamenev was the main reason for Grigoriev's rebellion. Later, back in Moscow, Kamenev reported to the plenum of the Moscow Soviet:

"The Ukraine is not a proletarian country; the proletariat is grouped there only in a number of towns, the predominant element is the class of the prosperous peasantry, in which the kulak element is strong. This circumstance prompted these kulaks to rise up against those who demanded bread, when it was demanded from them. <...> Ataman Grigoriev's main aim was to cut us off from Melitopol, Aleksandrovsk, Perekop and Elizavetgrad districts, where many millions of poods of bread had been prepared for shipment to Russia. His [Grigoriev's] detachments were engaged in destroying our food organisations and shooting our people."

The very real problem of the relationship between the food collector and the local peasants had emerged much earlier. The Ukrainian Commissariat of Food Suppliers, under A. Shlichter, solved the problem of grain procurement head-on – they simply took the bread, relying on the force of arms. On 22 April the commander of the Ukrainian Front V. Antonov-Ovseenko put the question to the head of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the UkrSSR, Rakovski:

"I've been in Verbluzhki village today. The population is provoked by the actions of the food detachments. Much can be done simply by turning to the peasantry without using arms. I demand the withdrawal of the Moscow soviet food brigades. First organize power on the ground, and then siphon off bread with the help of this power. The tactics of Schlichter's detachments are causing a counter-revolution. Grigoriev's units and Grigoriev himself are angered by this policy ... It is impossible to hold the front if the policy pursued on the ground arms the counter-revolution in the rear."

But the leadership in both Ukraine and Moscow was not prepared for a "soft option" to resolve the bread question. For Moscow, this was simply a question of survival: "Comrade Shlichter... If you do not deliver by 1 May or 1 June, we will all die", Lenin wrote in a note during the Eighth Party Congress. The problem was to be solved head-on: no negotiations, but unconditional obedience to all demands of Red power.

In this situation it was important how the Makhnovists, i.e. the 3rd Brigade of the Zadneprovsk Division, would behave. This is the telegram which N. Grigoriev 5 addressed to N. Makhno on 12 May:

"Secret. Rodzhino of the postal and telegraph office of Gulyai-Pole, through Nikopol, Batko Makhno.

There was no escape from the commissars, the special workers, the communists were dictatorial, my troops could not stand it and started beating the special workers and chasing

³² Perhaps not so much in the English speaking world. The only book that I know that deals with it in any depth is the excellent, but now rather dated *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine: the Second Campaign, 1918–1919* by Arthur E. Adams, Yale University Press, 1963.



away the commissars themselves. All my requests to Rakovski and Antonov ended with them sending me commissars, and when they were 42 in number and I was tired of them – I just kicked them out. Then they outlawed me. So I, illegal ataman, am chasing them out of Ukraine.

At the fronts, I have been joined by several regiments and squadrons of the enemy's cavalry. Is it not time for you, Batko Makhno, to say a weighty word to those who carry out the dictatorship of a single party, rather than give power to the people. Nr. 349, Ataman Grigoriev, Deputy Ataman Gorbenko, Chief of Staff Bzenko."

However Kamenev, who had visited N. Makhno shortly before the mutiny, was sure that "Makhno would not dare to support Grigoriev now, but the ground for a revolt there is quite prepared", which he reported to Moscow. Events have shown that Kamenev was right. Note that the slogans of both the *Makhnovtsy* and *Grigorievtsy* towards the Soviet power were the same: down with the monopoly of the Communist Party, freedom for local elected councils, bread to be exported to Russia only at market prices and not through *prodrazverstka*³³, return to the peasants of the landed estates (which the Communists had transferred to state farms). The difference between the *Makhnovtsy* and *Grigorievtsy* was only in their methods of struggle: the *Makhnovtsy* were against the shootings of Communists and Jews, which were commonplace to the *Grigorievtsy*. "When we captured Elizavetgrad we found 3,000 corpses of civilians there, and in Znamenka there were 1,000 corpses. They shot Communists and Jews," Kamenev reported. The *Makhnovtsy* decided to send a delegation to the *Grigorievtsy* to clarify the situation on the spot. This is how Chubenko, one of N. I. Makhno's aides, describes the delegation's trip in a straightforward manner:

"...We arrived at Pyatikhatki station, and went to talk to Comrade Dybenko about going to Grigoriev, as we had orders to find out what the problem was. Comrade Dybenko told us: take a car and go to one of the villages where Grigoriev was yesterday. The village was 13 versts to the west of Pyatikhatki. We agreed, took the car and drove off. Before we reached the village we saw a mass of people behind the village, and the people rushed out as soon as they saw the car. We could not understand what was going on, but nevertheless we went towards the mass of people. When we drove up, we saw 161 corpses of Jews who had been murdered by the Grigorievtsy. Having seen this picture, it became quite clear to us of Grigoriev's moral nature and that these were not political people, but really just bandits. And so we decided not to go on, but to go back, as it was quite clear to us why Grigoriev had rebelled against the Soviet authorities and that Grigoriev could never be our ally.

When we returned to Gulyai Polje we made a report and on the same day a pamphlet was issued stating that Grigoriev was a counter-revolutionary and that we, as honest revolutionaries, must fight such an element mercilessly. Then Makhno wrote an article in a newspaper which was published in Gulyai Polje. The article was also directed against Grigoriev's pogroms."

The attitude of the Crimean Social Revolutionaries to Grigoriev's mutiny is interesting. Formally they did not support the rebellion. However, they claimed that the Bolsheviks themselves had given rise to it and had helped to make the slogan "down with Bolshevik power, long live the Soviets" popular among the peasants. "Under such conditions it was easy for the kulaks to lead the masses to protest in defence of the just demands of the peasantry." It was heard that "Kornilov was saving the motherland from the German boot, Grigoriev from foreign and domestic imperialism."

It should be noted that the Soviet authorities missed a few days at the outbreak of the mutiny: on 7 May, when Grigoriev's "Universal" (i.e. manifesto) had already been drawn up, Kamenev, not yet aware of it and decided to send his train to Grigoriev's headquarters in Alexandria to clarify the situation and negotiate. The next two days were spent in fruitless telegraph talks between Kamenev and Grigoriev's headquarters. It was not until late in the evening of 9 May that Kamenev received the first information about the Universal, and informed the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Antonov-Ovseenko, about it. By this time Grigoriev had managed to form 17 train-loads of his supporters and send them towards Yekaterinoslav.

³³ The policy under war communism of taking of produce, at this time largely grain and fodder, from peasants at fixed prices according to specified quotas set at the centre and taking no account of local conditions.



And the next day Antonov-Ovseenko had a telephone conversation with Grigoriev, who openly announced his mutiny and read out his universal. As Antonov-Ovseenko later wrote in his notes, during his telephone conversation with Grigoriev he was already “giving operational orders for the suppression of the uprising”.

The Kiev press did not report on the uprising until 11 May. The article “The impostor Grigoriev is outlawed” published a resolution of the Soviet of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Defence of 10 May. Paragraph 4 of the decree stated that, “Red terror is declared against leftist Socialist Revolutionary activists and against non-leftist activists”. In a lengthy telegram to Lenin, Kamenev reported on the first measures taken against the insurgents.

The events concerning the participation of the Crimean Army in the suppression of the Grigoriev mutiny should be taken from 10 May. The next day Dybenko left “on a business trip to Kiev”, so the above-mentioned orders clearly concerned him, as KSA commander, and also his chief of staff Petrenko.

Dybenko spent 13 May in Kharkov, and the next day Voroshilov, “who was ordered to go to Kiev to take command over part of the new formations”, met with him in Poltava. Dybenko was given a relatively modest force in Kiev,: the 59th Railway Regiment (only 150 bayonets), Koval’s artillery battery and Chernyak’s 5th Cavalry Regiment.

Meanwhile, the situation in Ekaterinoslav quickly became more difficult: from the morning report of 13 May it seems that the day before, the Black Sea Regiment had gone over to the side of Grigoriev. In addition, KomandArm-2 Skachko, whose headquarters was stationed in Ekaterinoslav, decided that Makhno had joined the rebellion as soon as he learned that Makhno refused to talk to him directly. According to Antonov-Ovseenko the result was: *“panic set in immediately. A feverish rush of haphazard and gratuitous evacuations began..”* Kamenev, for his part, informed Lenin more specifically about this: *“Skachko and his headquarters fled back to Sinelnikov <...> Skachko’s headquarters abandoned Ekaterinoslav and it was seized by the criminals. Skachko is undoubtedly a criminal ...”*

There was also unrest in Northern Taurida. From a message of the 18th from the Simferopol headquarters of the KSA to the headquarters of the 1st Crimean Division (in Dzhankoy): *“... According to information we have received from the military commander of Armyansk, something unimaginable is going on in the Trans-Dnepr district – some commanders are organising some detachments to help Grigoriev. There is strong agitation against Soviet power among the local population, most of whom are quite well-to-do, that is to say kulaks. We have sent a detachment under Popov to Armyansk. We are sending political workers to Dnepr district. In general, the Perekop district should be given serious attention.”* Undoubtedly, this related to the rebellion by Pavlovski³⁴.

The actions of the Red Army against the *Grigorievtsy* were closely monitored by Lenin. So on 14 May he wrote to Trotsky: *“Your telegram is extremely incomplete. What exactly has been done to suppress the uprising with more energy, when can we hope to end it? What is Sokolnikov doing? Is the mobilisation of the peasants south of the uprising going on...?”* The next day to him: *“... Very pleased with the energetic measures to suppress the uprising and especially with the assignment of the 33rd Division to do so.”* And, continuing his efforts to free the Donbas from the Denikintsy, added: *“In my opinion, you need to use all the forces raised against Grigoriev for the maximum and quickest attack on the Donbas ...”*

When Voroshilov was appointed commander of the Kharkov Military District Forces by the 14 May decree of the Ukrainian SSR Defence Council, he set more specific tasks for Dybenko’s group: *“I instruct Comrade Dybenko to take command of all the troops acting against Grigoriev from Aleksandrovsk to Ekaterinoslav.”* However, since the main strike of Grigoriev’s forces was precisely in this southern direction – towards

³⁴ Part of the 3rd Taurida Regiment (a punitive detachment) was sent to Melitopol district in early May. V. Pavlovsky was a member of this unit, and on hearing of Grigoriev’s mutiny, part of the punitive unit, led by him, broke away and went over to Grigoriev’s side. The rest of the punitive detachment returned to the regiment. In regions around Melitopol adjacent to the Dnepr, Pavlovski dispersed the local Soviets and led active operations against the Red troops.

After the murder of Grigoriev at Makhno’s headquarters (27 July) the remnants of Grigoriev’s detachments passed to Makhno’s command. Thus Pavlovski, a former Grigoriev commander, became an associate of Makhno, and in September he was the commander of the 4th Crimean Corps of Makhno’s Ukrainian Revolutionary Insurgent Army.



Ekaterinoslav and Aleksandrovsk – the Dybenko group, originally assembled from the units of the Kiev District, had to be reinforced by the Crimeans. The move of the 6th Division to the Grigoriev's camp contributed to this. In this context, KomandFront-Ukr Antonov-Ovseenko on 24 May ordered: *"... I order that the 6th Division to be removed from the lists of the Red Army. Its 5th Regiment, which refused join Grigoriev, is to be included in the 5th Division. Its 3rd Regiment, which refused to follow Grigoriev, should be included in the Crimean Army."*

Leaving for his mission, Dybenko appointed Petrovski, commander of the KSA's Zadneprovsk Brigade, as temporary commander in his place. The Chief of Operations, Klyarfel'd, replaced Petrovski as Acting Chief of Staff of the KSA. And the new KSA leadership immediately became involved in providing assistance to Dybenko's anti-Grigoriev group. Addressing Petrovski about the need for reinforcements, the People's Commissar of Defence for the Ukraine, Mezhlauk, specifically stipulated the sending of armoured trains. Therefore Petrovski ordered Lepetenko, the commander of the armoured train detachment, *"to leave immediately for Nizhne-Dneprovsk, where you will receive further instructions from KomandArm-2 Comrade Skachko."* On 14 May Lepetenko sent an order for the urgent repair of the armoured trains "Pamyat Sverdlov" and "Pamyat Uritski", while he himself was to go to Ekaterinoslav on armoured train No. 10 with his trusted detachment, at the disposal of Dybenko. The first to arrive from the Crimea in Ekaterinoslav were armoured trains "Grozny" and "No 10". On 18 May K. G. Markozashvili's cavalry regiment arrived. This regiment was at first sent to Aleksandrovsk, where the headquarters of the group was organised. The commander of the KSA Special Brigade, Fedotov, was also sent there to assist Dybenko.

Of the infantry regiments, on 13 May Petrovski first sent the most reliable – the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment (800 men) under the command of Vasiliev (recently their political commissar) – to the Grigoriev front. This regiment had previously been stationed at Sevastopol, guarding the coast. Petrovski's order stipulated that *"the regiment shall go to Aleksandrovsk at the command of KomBrig-2 Fedotov, where it shall await the orders of Dybenko."* The regiment arrived in Ekaterinoslav on the evening of 21 May. The Muslim company, which had previously guarded Simferopol and had proved its worth, was also sent with it. The next day, trains of the 1st Crimean Shock Regiment (800 men) reached Aleksandrovsk, which Dybenko had also requested from the anti-Denikin front (this regiment was stationed near Pologi station). Popov's special detachment was sent to Armyansk as a reserve.

Dybenko ordered that the units departing from the Ak-Monai front be replaced with the recently formed Sevastopol battalion, followed by the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Zadneprovsk Regiment. And the Khrapov detachment or, as it was officially called, "Comrade Dybenko's Special Purpose Squad", established by the Special Department of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Crimean Army, was sent to Sevastopol to reinforce the local garrison. Also in connection with Grigoriev's mutiny, a state of siege was imposed in the Crimea from 12 noon on 13 May by Dybenko's order.

On 15 May Dybenko was in Ekaterinoslav. On the same day he issued the first orders in his new capacity. In Order No. 1 of 15 May for the units of the Ekaterinoslav, Aleksandrov and Kherson areas.

"Pursuant to the order of the Kharkov District Defence Council, I have taken up my duties as commander of the forces in the Ekaterinoslavsk-Alexandrovsk-Kherson area against the bandit and White-guard staff-captain Grigoriev, who has raised the banner of revolt against the workers and peasants. Commander of the Crimean Army Dybenko."

On the same day three more orders were issued. Order No. 2, obliged all commanders and political commissars of units subordinated to Dybenko to immediately issue leaflets to the population explaining Grigoriev's rebellion. Order No. 3 outlawed any railway workers who assisted Grigoriev's units, and Order No. 4 declared citizens between 20 and 35 years of age, who had not been mobilized by the trade unions, to be mobilized for trench work.

Some idea of the situation of that period is given by the note "From the headquarters of the Special Group of Troops of Com. Dybenko of the Ekaterinoslav area" in the *Ekaterinoslav Izvestiya*:

"On the night of 18 May the enemy launched an attack on Zaporozhye station, where our units were located, but after being repulsed they was driven away by our units towards Verkhnedniprovsk. By midday the situation had worsened. Our units, despite resisting

stubbornly, were forced to retreat to Zaporozhye due to unfavourable combat conditions and superior enemy forces. By evening we engaged Zaporozhye station once again, but by 7 o'clock the enemy occupied it for good."

Here is an additional description of the situation in Operational Summary 37 of May 18:

"... After a vigorous attack at Verkhnedneprovsk station in the morning, our units by 15 o'clock were stopped by the hurricane artillery and machine gun fire of the bandits, who attacked backed by armoured trains. We were forced to retreat from Zaporozhye station to new positions ..."

Again we quote from a newspaper article:

"On 19 May the enemy attacked again at about 11 a.m. We successfully repulsed the attack."

It is necessary to note the valour of infantry units, especially of the N. Regiment, which, in spite of fatigue (they had to walk at least 40 versts to Verkhnedniprovsk and back), still had enough courage to take the offensive again by the evening."

Grigoriev's attack of 20 May was especially dangerous in this direction – the Reds had to retreat to Suhachevka station. But the main problem was that on that day the Red Army masses started to go over to Grigoriev's side. The first combat between Dybenko's forces and Grigoriev's men took place in the afternoon of 21 May near the Erastovka station, when during a repair of the railway lines Dybenko's units ran into a considerable enemy force. By the evening of the same day the 4th Zadneprovsk regiment and the "Grozny" armoured train had advanced 15 km and occupied the station in Pyatikhatka. By the morning of 22 May Yakovlevka station was already occupied, and as a result Grigoriev retreated to behind Verkhovtsevo station. On the Aleksandrovsk side, Dolgintsevo, Krivoy Rog, Karhavatka, Yanov and Apostolovo stations were occupied. The combat spirit in Grigoriev's camp of fell, and one train of troops refused to go on the attack.

As Antonov-Ovseenko notes, these actions by Dybenko's units "greatly assisted the onslaught of Egorov", who was able with his detachment to defeat the core of Grigoriev's forces in his "capital" of Alexandria.

By the evening of the 24th, units of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment had stormed Znamenka, and the next morning fully occupied it. This was the second most important concentration centre for Grigoriev. In the Dybenko's operation summary of the events of 24 May, notes of victory were already sounded: *"Pursuit of the enemy, [who] left a colossal booty: machine guns, rifles, a gun with shells, an armoured train with shells and several wagons with food, a serviceable car, which has already gone in pursuit of the fleeing gangs. The pursuit of the bandits continues. Some gangs have scattered to the villages, measures have been taken to disarm them and send them to the Kerch front to fight [together] with the Chinese and the kikes."* We note that the punishment mentioned to the former *Grigorievtsy*, in the form of sending them to fight on the Ak-Monai front in company of "the Chinese and kikes" was not yet the worst option. An article "L. Kamenev's train" mentioned a more serious formulation: *"Every tenth prisoner was shot"*. On the 26th the troops advanced beyond Znamenka towards Dolinskaya, thereby completely dislodging the *Grigorievtsy* from their home districts. On 27 May Dolinskaya station was taken. Here units of Dybenko and Egorov's units linked up. The Red armies went on to Novy Bug.

Following the capture of Znamenka, Dybenko's units were moved to another hotbed of rebellion, near Kherson. In this region the Grigoriev rebellion had risen on 14 May. And it was only on 29 May that the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment and Markozashvili's cavalry regiment managed to take Kherson. This group was commanded by L. A. Maslov (he later commanded 173rd brigade of the 58th Fedko Division). The *Grigorievtsy* were forced back towards Snigirevka. In the final stage of the fighting Dybenko personally took part in the operation, which had an unexpected consequence for him. After he carelessly reported in a telegram from Kherson on 30 May about the seizure of "colossal military property" there, Pyatakov and Bubnov complained to Moscow that Dybenko was "dragging everything to the Crimea", while there was a catastrophic lack of weapons for the defence of Kharkov. Moscow promptly responded by demanding that Dybenko send everything seized to Kharkov and report *"on the execution of this, and also report the general total of military property held by you in Crimea."* However, it should be noted that this did not help Kharkov – it was taken by Denikin on 25 June.



* * * *

As the immediate threat of the overthrow of Rakovski's government had passed, the campaign against Grigoriev was officially declared over. Appropriate orders from Antonov-Ovseenko, resolutions of the UTsIK and the Ukrainian government summing up the results of the suppression of the Grigoriev rebellion appeared.

The main rebel forces were indeed defeated, but this did not at all mean the end of the rebellion. The *Grigorievtsy* had not been completely suppressed – the combat operations had only driven it underground, and it had literally spilled over into the whole of the Ukraine.

In Order 45, on the liquidation of the Grigoriev rebellion, Antonov-Ovseenko assigned control of the Left Bank [of the Dnepr] to Yegorov; KomandArm Dybenko was entrusted with, *“the Right Bank section of the Dnepr from Kherson to Kremenchug inclusive and from Kremenchug to Dolinskaya inclusive ...”*.

That section was huge, but how serious was the struggle there and how valid were the official victory speeches? Indicative in this respect is the dialogue between Klyarfel'd, chief of the operational staff of the KSA, and Fedotov, commander of the anti-Grigoriev group of Dybenko's army, two weeks after the official defeat. So, Klyarfel'd asked Fedotov: *“How long will it take to liquidate the remnants?”* At first Fedotov replied cheerfully, *“Seven days.”* But after thinking for a while, he said: *“There are so many bandits here already that you could fight them for months. Their strength is large, their insolence is excessive and their brutality incredible.”*

Let us digress to comment on Fedotov's expression about the “unbelievable” brutality of the *Grigorievtsy*. Of course this relates first and foremost to the “bestial” anti-Semitism of the Grigoriev movement. In Grigoriev's “Universal” (manifesto), national representation was decided in a relatively civilized manner:

“The Council will include representatives of all nationalities in proportion to their numbers in Ukraine – 80% of seats in the Council are given to Ukrainians, 5% of seats to the Jews, and 15% of seats to all other nationalities. With such a distribution, there will be no domination of either party or nation. I deeply believe that this will be the true power of the people ...”

But practice strayed far from theory. In addition to the testimony above of Chubenko – where even the Makhnovists, who had seen a lot of things, were horrified by what was happening – let us refer to another example - Elizavetgrad. There the soldiers in Grigoriev's units were given an unofficial order: *“If Elizavetgrad is occupied, all the Jews over two years of age should be destroyed and the Communists completely exterminated.”*

Let us try to understand the reasons for such cruel anti-Semitism. To look for them in the literature proves to be a futile affair. But a search in the archives yields some results. The transcript of a report at the meeting of the Kiev Gubkom of the CP(b)U of 31 May 1919 relates:

“I will have to touch upon an issue which has been covered in all the reports from comrades who come from the districts. It is that the composition in the district [Bolshevik] organizations is predominantly Jewish, and that the Jewish proletarian youth is in a certain way noticed and stated to be spontaneously absorbed into the army. <...> ...Entire detachments, recruited from Jewish workers, have been sent into the countryside to suppress the peasants. These were special punitive units. This was extremely detrimental to the peasants, and had, in part, the effect of increasing peasant uprisings ...”

We remind our readers that under the laws of the Russian Empire the Jews had no right to work on the land or own it. This further alienated the inhabitants of the Jewish settlements and villages from the indigenous population.

Ultimately, anti-Semitism ruined Grigoriev's movement: the Makhnovists did not support him at the time of his maximum success, and only in July did they unite, when Makhno himself was also outlawed by the Soviet authorities, and only a pathetic handful of Grigoriev's units remained. This unification did not last long – having learned that Grigoriev was secretly collaborating with Denikin, the Makhnovists killed him.



Note that our main hero, Pavel Dybenko, was also “sick” with anti-Semitism. True, it was in a mild form. *“He doesn’t like Jews and doesn’t want them in his division. ‘I have no service for you,’ he told several technical officers of Jewish extraction who claimed places at the post office, telephone, etc.”* This was the testimony of White officers who had been captured by the Reds, served under Dybenko, and then defected back again.

* * *

Returning to the subject of the suppression of the rebellion after the official victory, let us list the sorties of Grigoriev’s supporters recorded in headquarters operational bulletins for the section of the front entrusted to the Reds by Dybenko:

For 30 May: Fighting in the area of Belaya Krynitsa. Grigorievtsy damaged the Kakhovka-Melidopol communication wires.

As early as 2 June, a request was received from Aleksandria from a member of the Executive Committee to not recall the 12th Moscow Regiment of the Cheka, which was to be transferred to Poltava. *“Grigoriev himself is in our county. On 31 May he spoke to me by telephone, it turns out that he is in the Dmitrovka-Bandurovka-Ivankovtsy area. He is organising his detachments...”*

For 6 June: Grigoriev’s detachment is moving to Melitopol, now 60 km away. About 500 infantry, 60 cavalrymen, 4 guns, 60 machine guns.

For 9 June: The gangs of Kovalev and Pavlovski are in the area of Askania Nova. A detachment under Zabirop is operating against them.

For June 10: In the Yavkin area we eliminated 3,000 bandits. In the Kherson area our units of the 4th [Zadneprovsky] Regiment have linked with the Dolgintsev Group at Blakitnoye station.

For 13 June: A skirmish with Doroshenko’s gang near Bereslav ... Kovalev’s gang acts is fighting Popov’s detachment.

Not surprisingly, Dybenko was forced to throw more and more forces against Grigoriev. So in addition to the 4th Zadneprovsk and 1st Shock Infantry Regiments already operating in May, as well as Markozashvili’s cavalry Regiment, in June the following appeared on this section of the front: Zabirop’s Armoured Auto Detachment and Popov’s Eastern International Detachment (both removed from the Ak-Monai front) and Khrapov’s Detachment (“Comrade Dybenko Special Purpose Unit”) to perform what would nowadays be called “mopping up” functions in the territories taken. *“From Znamenka to Alexandria our punitive detachments of 50 to 150 men are at the stations and on the passing trains”,* Dybenko reported.

Dybenko also demanded reinforcements from KomFront Antonov-Ovseenko. But due to the new threat – this time from Denikin, the answer was categorical: *“there will be no reinforcements - all we have is being sent to the Southern Front.”* And Dybenko also sent the newly formed 1st Sevastopol Regiment and three armoured trains to the Southern Front.

In connection with Denikin’s breakthrough, Antonov-Ovseenko sent the following order to Dybenko: *“... Leaving only strictly necessary forces to pursue the defeated bands, send the remaining field forces and the armoured train ‘Ten’ to Sinelnikovo [under] KomandArm-2.”* And after that he added on 2 June: *“Everything that can be removed from the Crimea, transfer to support the second army. Report exactly what has been done.”*

To understand how effective the fight with Grigoriev was at the “unofficial” stage of military operations, let us turn to the testimonies of high-ranking military officials. Their conclusions, to tell the truth, are unexpected. Thus, the commissar of the 2nd Ukrainian Soviet Army, N. P. Vishnevetsky (who was in January and February a member of the RMC of the UkrFront), attached to Dybenko’s headquarters, reported as early as 27 May: *“The majority of the population, of course, was sympathetic to the rebels. In particular, the peasants provided Grigoriev with food and voluntarily brought him thousands of poods of bread.”*

The slogans of Grigoriev’s “Universal”, despite their political illiteracy, also resonated with middle-class peasants and the workers with some property, i.e. with the majority of the Ukrainian population.



It was not only villages that greeted Red Army troops with rifle and machine-gun fire: it is known that the workers of Elizavetgrad also met the Red Army troops with arms in their hands.

There were so many people wishing to join Grigoriev's army that he was short of weapons.

Grigoriev's main slogan, "Down with the Cheka", proved particularly popular with the Ukrainian population. Many Red Army soldiers, most of whom were also middle-aged, agreed with this. Proof of that was the not infrequent cases of removal of the Cheka from the front. During the mutiny this happened everywhere. For example, the Kharkov *Izvestia* wrote about a train of Red Army men arriving in Aleksandrovska "from the south" to suppress the Grigoriev mutiny. But at the station, under the influence of agitators, the soldiers "dispersed the railway Cheka and freed the imprisoned criminals." They brutally beat the political commissar, Bondar, and sentenced him to immediate death by firing squad. The chairman of the local executive committee, Mikhalevich, who had arrived to negotiate with the mutinous train, was also in line to be shot. Only Lepetenko, who had just arrived from the Crimea on his armoured train, repelled the mutineers and freed Bondar and Mikhalevich. The mutinous train left the station without waiting for events to develop at Aleksandrovska. One positive development of the suppression of Grigoriev's mutiny did occur in the Ukraine, Rakovski decreed the end of the Cheka's operations.

For his part, Vyshnevetski, apart from military operations, could only offer increased political work with the population and the widespread seizure of weapons from the population.

Lenin was very harsh on this point. In a telegram dated 26 May to Rakovski in Kiev and Mezhlauk (Deputy People's Commissariat for Defence) in Kharkov, he instructed: "*Do not miss this moment of victory over Grigoriev, do not let any soldier from those fighting against Grigoriev go. Decree and enforce complete disarmament of the population, **shoot on the spot mercilessly for any concealed rifle.***"

Another participant of the anti-Grigoriev campaign, the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Soviet Division Lengovski talked of, "*the futility of combat operations against the insurgents.*" He wrote that in some districts the troops had already defeated the *Grigorievtsy* four or five times, inflicting terrible losses on them. But following the withdrawal of Red units to other districts, the insurgent units quickly reassembled again. "*Grigorievshchina has taken deep roots,*" he wrote, believing that these roots could only be torn out by systematic, thorough cleansing – district by district – and the immediate organisation on the ground of effective district commissariats that were be able to confront the *Grigorievtsy* and protect the population.

Ultimately, the fight of Grigoriev's supporters against the regular Red Army contributed significantly to Denikin's conquest of Ukraine. After all, on 26 May, when the anti-Grigoriev campaign was still in progress, the *Denikintsy* took Grishino station, and this breakthrough was followed by a rapid retreat by the Reds.



Chapter 4

The Whites Return to the Crimea

As early as April, Lenin warned the chairman of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom, H. G. Rakovski: *“About Dybenko’s plans, I warn against an adventure – I am afraid it will end in failure and he will be cut off.”* Dybenko’s plan envisaged a breakthrough to Kerch, from where it would be possible to launch an operation against the *Denikintsy* in the North Caucasus. The failure of such a plan can be seen if only by the fact that the Allied Fleet was in full control of the seas around the Crimea and would not allow the Reds to cross the Kerch Strait.

Dybenko was also able to entice the commander of the Ukrainian Front, Antonov-Ovseenko, with his plan. Antonov-Ovseenko, who later acknowledged: *“Of course, in the emerging situation we should in any case abandon active operations towards Kerch and two-thirds of P. Dybenko’s forces (up to 10,000 bayonets) should be transferred to the Taganrog area.”* But Lenin was right, as he often was: not only was the KSA unable to break through to Kerch, but it was from the eastern bridgehead (the Ak-Monai front) that one wave of Denikin’s offensive began – which eventually drove the Red Army out of the Crimea with some ease. As Lenin had anticipated, Dybenko’s adventure ended in failure.

The formal end of the Reds’ Crimean military epic, judging by Soviet reference books and encyclopaedias, looks quite neutral. By order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR of 4 June, the Ukrainian Front (KomFront Antonov-Ovseenko) was disbanded on 15 June. The 2nd Ukrainian Army of that front was retained as part of the Southern Front and renamed as the 14th Army. The commander of this army, A. Skachko did not remain at the head of the army, he underwent a medical examination on 21 May, was given leave for six weeks for treatment (surgery) and handed over his affairs to K. Voroshilov on 7 June. The other two Ukrainian armies: the 1st (KomandArm S. Matsilevski) and the 3rd (KomandArm N. Khudyakov) were subordinated to the Western Front.

In turn, the Crimean Soviet Army (KSA) led by KomandArm Dybenko, previously subordinate to the command of the 2nd Ukrainian Army, became part of the 14th Army as the Crimean Rifle Division (RD), soon (28 July) renamed the 58th RD. Much later, on 13 December 1920, this division was called the 58th Orlovk RD.

The actual events of the final phase of the Red Crimea’s existence in 1919, have practically nothing to do with formal transformations. We shall attempt to analyse them.

The majority of authors who have considered this subject, supposed that the reason of the rapid defeat of the Reds and their panicked escape from the Crimea was the surprise effect of Denikin’s attack. I consider that such approach is fundamentally wrong. Let us refer initially to the message of the Moscow *Izvestiya VTSIK* correspondent Richter-Durova from Alupka of 16 June: *“In connection with the events at the Donetsk front on the southern coast of Crimea, the mood was anxious, the provocative work of agents of the bourgeoisie increased noticeably; nervousness and confusion were evident in the activity of the Soviet authorities, but now all this has been replaced by a more confident and calm attitude to the events. Mobilisation of some Communists and workers was announced; measures were taken to combat malicious rumours and anti-Soviet agitation.”* From this note, it is clear that the famous landing on 18 June near Koktebel (we will dwell on it in more detail below) was not an unexpected event for Red Crimea and the Crimean army. The archival documents of the KSA headquarters also show that the headquarters exercised a degree of foresight, closely observing the enemy’s actions. In the period from 9 to 11 June, i.e. 10 days before Slashkov’s famous landing, orders on how to act in the case of the front being broken through were developed.

The KSA headquarters saw the main danger not on the Ak-Monai front but in the actions of the Volunteer Army north of the Crimea. Particularly the enemy’s intention to interrupt the Sevastopol-Kharkov railway line near Aleksandrovs, *“thereby creating a threat of separation of parts of the Ukrainian and Crimean armies and the danger of blockading the Crimea.”* The corresponding order for the Kerch area troops indicated the enemy’s breakthrough along the line Nogaysk, Verkhny Tokmak and Pologi with a force of about 3,500 bayonets and 2,000 sabres. The Ukrainian Front Command allocated the Pologi to Berdyansk section to the Crimean Army to eliminate the breakthrough.



A special forces group was formed for this direction by a separate operational order of 11 June (group commander G.A. Kochergin). The core of the group was the 1st Crimean Shock Brigade commanded by Kotov, consisting of three regiments, to which were added combat-ready and undecayed units of Makhno's 3rd Zadneprovsk Brigade, as well as KSA units removed from the Grigoriev front. A detachment of 4 aircraft and one armoured train were also attached to this group.

Nevertheless, a detailed plan of action in the event of failure was drawn up. It provided for specific measures for the organised retreat of the units, as well as for the evacuation of everything of value, and for the grouping of troops for the purposes of counter-strikes against the enemy in the area of Melitopol and Dnepr counties. In particular, it was envisaged that:

"Infantry units are to withdraw overnight to the Bulganakh River line, then continue to retreat (preferably in carts) under machine-gun cover ... in the direction of Dzhankoy and Armiansk.

...The main task is the quickest, organised retreat with the least losses from the Crimea to the prepared positions along the Chatavlyk River south of Yushun village.

All small units, garrisons and guard battalions of Feodosiya, Stary Krym, Sudak and Karasubazar should report to the commander of Feodosiya, creating a common group near Karasubazar and Prolom and thereby cover the right flank of the Kerch front."

At the same time, the order noted that *"there is no immediate threat of encirclement of the Crimea at the moment"* and the implementation of the order *"will be carried out only as a last resort."*

Sevastopol was also preparing for the forthcoming White offensive. As early as mid-May an order was received from the Armoured Train Brigade to the Sevastopol port workshops for the urgent manufacture of 5,000 shells. In order to expedite the order, a promise of additional flour for the workers was made. On 9 June the commander of the armoured train brigade, S. M. Lepetenko, asked Dybenko for permission to take shells, machine guns and other equipment from Sevastopol port for the brigade. Dybenko ordered, *"Issue as a matter of urgency, 10 June. The removal of shells and guns (including shipboard ones) are entrusted to the crew of the armoured train Pamyat Ivanov.*

A separate concern of the Defence Council was the formation of "Muslim military units from the proletarian and semi-proletarian Tatar masses" of the Crimea. However, it seems that the time for the creation of significant Red Muslim units was lost.

The movement of passenger trains in the territory of the Crimean SSR was terminated by the order of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs on 9 June. It seems that this order was due not only to the military situation but also to the limited supply of coal. The civilian commissariats were not forgotten: as early as 15-18 June Dybenko ordered that all commissariats should be at a half-hour readiness for the start of evacuation.

A separate Order No. 14 (dated 10 June) was prepared for the troops at the disposal of the district committees of the Crimean Republic. In addition to specific instructions on the actions of the units, the order stipulated the strictest secrecy of the order:

"This order is to be kept in the strictest confidence to those personally directed. When making preparations, under no circumstances should any order be motivated by the need to evacuate others. In the event of rumours and panic spreading in any of the districts about the impending evacuation which we alone intend to carry out, the district commissar will be solely to blame, which will result in his removal from duty and prosecution by the Military Revolutionary Tribunal."

It seems that the authors of this order went too far in making it secret: the penalties promised for the disclosure of the order were so great that not all the required executors were acquainted with it in time, and did not act correctly in the event of the real threat. Unlike the KSA headquarters, which had its own plan of action in the event of a White attack, the Party headquarters had no such plan and did not carry out preparatory work to organize an underground behind enemy lines. It did not have time to set up the necessary safe houses. In the rush, those Party members who had repeatedly spoken at rallies and

meetings, i.e. those easily recognised, were kept for the underground work, which made them unsuitable for clandestine efforts

* * * *

Denikin's Staff planned to launch an attack from the Ak-Monai positions on the Reds on 18 June. By this time significant reinforcements had arrived in Kerch. Thus on 31 (18) May General Borovski's order for the Crimean-Azov Army first mentioned the arrival of reinforcements for his army from the Caucasus, which made it possible, in particular, to turn the companies of the officer regiments³⁵ into battalions. Kuban plastun battalions and a unit of cadets from the Ekaterinodar school were added to the infantry, while a Chechen cavalry regiment was added as well. In total, according to the KSA intelligence, the Whites had up to 7,000 to 8,000 men at the Ak-Monai positions, which exceeded the number of Soviet troops.

Why was this date (18 June) chosen for the Denikin offensive? It seems to me that considerations of the forthcoming harvest played a major role. In a week's time, the harvest would begin in Taurida province and the harvest was expected to be excellent. The authorities of the White South intended to get this bread for "their own" while preventing the Red Crimean authorities from taking the bread to help the "enemy" - the hungry provinces of Red Russia.³⁶

It was noted that as early as the first days of June that the Allied fleet was very active on the eastern coast of Crimea. Thus, the operational summary of the KSA headquarters of 7 June noted the following observation results:

"On 4 June a dreadnought with an aerostat, a cruiser and two destroyers appeared in Feodosiya. 5 June – gunboat shelled Dvuyakornaya Bay with gunfire, no casualties. Near Cape St. Ilya, a transport flying the Andreevsk³⁷ flag is seen. Meganom lighthouse: two transports passed. 6 June, a dreadnought with a balloon fired at the Feodosiya-Vladislavovka railway line. 18 hours. - A dreadnought 4 miles from Feodosiya shelled the railway line, the villages of Kamyski and Nikolaevka ..." Even earlier an episode in Genichesk was reported: *"An enemy destroyer approached Genichesk and threw out the flag for negotiations and then opened fire; after firing up to 107 shells at the city it disappeared out to sea. There are dead and wounded."*

This is how the details of the landing operation of the Whites on 18 June look like in the version of the military historian of the White camp, P. Varnak. On the night of June 18 the cruiser *Cahul* took on board 160 men with ten machine guns under the command of Colonel Korolkov. Early in the morning the *Cahul*, escorted by an English destroyer, approached Koktebel and, with the help of the tugboat *Dolphin*, landed a party without resistance, which quickly moved forward and occupied the village of Pasynkoy. After that the *Cahul*, from a distance of 17 km, fired 20 shots at the village of Stary Krym, where the reserves of the Reds were located. In addition, having a telephone connection with the landing force commander, the cruiser provided him with fire support. About 17 o'clock the landing party connected with the left flank detachments of General A. A. Borovski who had broken through the front. The offensive on the isthmus was supported by artillery fire. From the Black Sea the positions of the Reds were bombarded by the dreadnought *Marlborough* and other British ships, while from the Sea of Azov the White Fleet ships: the *Graf Ignatiev* and monitors.

The Koktebel landing was largely a diversionary tactic. The main objective of the Whites was to break the front on the opposite flank, by Sea of Azov (left flank for the Reds, right for the Whites). As well as breaking

³⁵ In particular, on June 4 the Simferopol Officer Regiment, which had been re-formed into the Simferopol Officer Battalion, was restored as a regiment.

³⁶ Note that the White South also failed to take full advantage of the rich harvest of crops in 1919. But the reason for this lay in the financial sphere. Private banks in the Crimea were not liquidated by the Crimean SSR. They continued to operate even during the Soviet regime and after the Denikin's arrival in Crimea. These banks were fully prepared to finance the harvesting. But the difficulty was that their capital consisted mainly of "Pyatakov" banknotes delivered from Moscow in early June as well as Crimean signats off the Soviet press. For example, the Food Department of the Simferopol City Duma had about 85% of working capital in Soviet banknotes. And by order of the Finance Department of the AFSR on the arrival of the White Power, circulation of these banknotes was immediately suspended. And so there were no funds to fully finance the harvest.

³⁷ The St Andrew's cross, which had been the flag of the Tsarist Navy.



through the front and capturing the nearest station of Ak-Monai (Kamenskoye), the first day of the offensive was intended to take Islam-Terek (Kirovskoye), where the headquarters of the KSA's 1st Division was situated. This task was entrusted to the cavalry of Colonel I. M. Miklashevski.³⁸

On 18 June, after an hour of massive artillery fire from the ships onto the Red positions, the cavalrymen, with the 2nd regiment in the vanguard, together with infantry units, passed the unoccupied village of Dzhantori and broke through the front at Ak-Monai station, occupying the villages of Arbat and Turulchak. The Reds repulsed the infantry attack, pushing it to Sivash, but the attack of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment decided the overall outcome of the battle in favour of the attackers. "*The Reds could not stand to face the cavalry attack at all,*" commented the white gunner S. N. Shidlovski. By dusk, with the roar of thunder approaching, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment occupied its intended objective – the station of Islam-Terek.

The Reds retreated on the first day to Seytler station (Nizhnegorsk), while the White cavalry spent the night in the village of Kiyat, waiting for the infantry, which occupied Feodosiya and Vladislavovka that day. The next day, i.e. 19 June, Denikin's cavalry had to repel a fierce counter-attack by the Reds, who tried to at least restore the recent status quo. But in the end, the Reds had to retreat to a fortified position near Grammatikovo (Sovietski) station. The headquarters of the KSA's 1st Division, previously stationed at Islam-Terek, was moved there as well.

Following that the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was ordered to raid into the rear of the Reds and blow up the railway at Seytler station (Nizhnegorsk) to cut off the Reds' retreat from the front. For this purpose the regiment headed to the right of the railway and, bypassing several villages, marched in the planned direction. At night two cavalry squadrons, with two guns, made their way to the railway and blew up the line in five places near Karomin village. First a train of Red cadets³⁹ from Feodosiya, followed by the armoured train "Red Falcon" approached the place of diversion. The Whites had to retreat at first to the infantry line, but then the offensive was restarted. The Reds had to abandon the trains and retreat on foot to Dzhankoy, where they concentrated on 20 June.

There the White offensive was halted by a counterattack from Dzhankoy towards Kolay station (Azov) – one stop on the line from Dzhankoy to Vladislavovka and Kerch (about 40 km). Much credit for the success of this counterattack belonged to the armoured train *Rosa Luxemburg* (commander A. Shapilski), which covered the attack of Red soldiers. During the battle, which lasted an entire day, this station was temporarily occupied by the Reds. This freed the route for the trains moving up from Simferopol to exit via Dzhankoy. Two cavalry squadrons with one gun were sent by the Whites to Sarabuz to cut off the line from Simferopol and Sevastopol. But the Reds trains managed to escape to Chongar.

At dawn on 22 June the Whites attacked again, after which the retreating men had to withdraw to Perekop and entrench themselves in the Armenian Bazar (Armyansk). As S.N. Shidlovski recalls, on 28 (15) June an attack on the Reds' trenches began between the lakes north of Yushun (Ishun). The positions were taken by a cavalry raid and the Whites stormed into Armyansk. The Jewish Communist Regiment was active in the trenches, so 'no prisoners were taken'. There was also a "huge Jewish pogrom" in Armyansk.

* * * *

By this time the Kalinichenko's 2nd Soviet Regiment, defending the northern rear of the KSA, had arrived at the Armenian Bazaar to assist the retreating group of Reds. Under the cover of Kalinichenko's regiment the retreating group managed to escape to Chaplynka, and there too the Reds attempted to halt the Whites, they then withdrew to Kakhovka. At Kakhovka the Whites operated mostly cavalry: an officer cavalry regiment and a Tatar cavalry unit, while the infantry was Kuban plastun battalions. The Whites also had artillery there, "up to a dozen batteries of British guns ". Kalinichenko's regiment guarded the retreating

³⁸ Volkov records Miklashevski as commanding the cavalry brigade of the 4th Infantry Division, consisting of the 2nd Drozdovski Regiment (under Barbovich), the Composite Regiment of the Cuirassier Division (under Danilov), the 2nd Guards Regiment (under Kovalinski), and an artillery battery – in all about 1,000 sabres with four guns. He was wounded on 5 June, and Barbovich acted in his place.

³⁹ The author uses the word *yunkera*, which is military cadets, but generally only used for Tsarist and White ones. It is not clear if this is what would usually be called Red *kursanty* or not.



troops and escorted them to the Kakhovka crossing, which was a pontoon bridge across the Dnepr from Kakhovka to Beryslav. The 1st Crimean Rifle Battalion retreated in the same way from the Ak-Monai flank.

Institutions and state property also had to be hastily evacuated by the Reds, northwards through Perekop because the railway Simferopol to Kharkov by Lozovaya was cut by the enemy, who were advancing westwards from Donbass (which the *Denikintsy* took as early as the first third of May) and who first arrived to the Dnepr near Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk).

The cavalymen of the 2nd Regiment came to the Perekop peninsula in pursuit of the retreating Reds on 28 June, occupied Yushun (Ishun), and then the Armenian Bazar (Armyansk). S.N. Shidlovski writes that on 29 (16) June the Whites had already made it to Chaplynka, spent the night and from there proceeded to Kakhovka. The Bolsheviks were no longer there – they had crossed to Beryslav, from where their artillery was shelling Kakhovka. *“The inhabitants welcomed us with flowers and bell ringing ... Invitations to tea and supper poured out from all side s... Besides that, there was a wine warehouse in Kakhovka ... After 15 days of campaigning and fighting we had a fabulous respite.”*

In the central section of the front, the Reds' main fortified position had been near the village of Koy-Asan (Frontove) and Tsarkovo farm. The Simferopol Officer Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division, together with Composite Regiments of the 34th and 13th Infantry Divisions were ordered to advance there. The right advancing column acted to bypass the main enemy forces, and the left attacked the Reds directly, occupying the hill near the farm Tsarkovo. The forces of both columns took Koy Asan, stubbornly defended by the Reds. The Reds withdrew to Vladislavovka. The station changed hands several times, but was finally captured by the White by the evening of 18 June.

During the next two days the White infantry regiments of the central part of the front moved behind the village of Bakhchi-Eli (Bogatoe) to the village of Cherkez-Toboy. For two days (21 and 22 June) there were fierce battles near this village with the Red cavalry, which tried to envelop the infantry regiments from the flanks. Eventually, the Reds' attacks were repulsed, after which the Regiment of the 34th Division began to advance along the railway, while the Simferopol Officer Regiment advanced to the right. On 25 June the White infantry approached Dzhanikoy, from where the Reds had already withdrawn, and on 29 June they approached the Armenian Bazar. A week later these White infantry regiments had already advanced to the Dnepr near Kakhovka.

On the Black Sea flank of the Ak-Monai front, the Whites had regiments of the 4th Infantry Division, and in particular the 2nd Taman Regiment of the Kuban Cossack Army – as well as the aforementioned landing detachment of Korolkov. On the very first day this group succeeded in entering Feodosiya, in which the 2nd Taman Regiment played a major role. Thus, on the first day the Whites were able to capture all that had been planned by the evening: Feodosiya, the Vladislavovka junction station and Islam-Terek.

The assistance of the Allied seamen in the White's offensive operation on 18 June along the Ak-Monai front was not forgotten. In particular, many members of the crew of the British destroyer “Seraph” were awarded Russian medals in gratitude *“for their assistance in shelling the Ak-Monai positions from the Sea of Azov.”*

After the capture of Feodosiya, a group of Whites operating on the Black Sea flank fought their way along the Feodosiya, Sary Krym to Simferopol highway, aiming to occupy Simferopol. The Karasubazar detachment was one of the few Red units resisting the Whites on this route. This unit fought around Feodosiya, Koktebel and Sary Krym. First resistance was made by this detachment together with a small Sary Krym detachment under Piotr Grudachev on 20 June near Suuk-Saly village (Grushevka), which is 20 km to the west of Sary Krym. However, the next day the Whites advanced another 30 km with a series of actions to the village of Bakhchi-Eli (Bogatoe). The last battle in this area was fought by the Reds on 22 June near the village of Karasubazar (Belogorsk). There the detachment reorganised into an Independent Karasubazar Company, from where it withdrew to Perekop, and then to Kakhovka. No serious resistance was offered to the Whites and on 24 June they entered Simferopol. On the capture of Simferopol by the Whites we can read the 25 June report of Lieutenant Savin, from Simferopol, to Colonel G.I. Konovalov at the headquarters of the Crimean-Azov Army: *“Simferopol was occupied yesterday [24 June] evening. <...> The city railway station was also occupied yesterday evening. <...> A battle took place near Simferopol, the Bolsheviks suffered decent losses, leaving their wounded. The city is calm, the men are greeted with flowers,*



people are being baptized, saying that the saviours have come ...". It follows from the telegram that some Red units either did not have time to leave Simferopol, or were deliberately left as a barrier to delay the Denikintsy advance.

Writing about the Red retreat from the Crimea and, in particular, the abandonment of Simferopol, the writer Sergeev-Tsenski said:

"Numbered, grim-looking British cruisers appeared near the coast, cautiously but steadily launching black 'sausages' into the sky. Word from Kerch was that things were very serious there. "Cover!" said the Red Army men. In Sevastopol they were "keeping low" too ... And the Reds disconnected the telephones and retreated on the night of 21 June, to be in time to escape that bottle – the Crimea – through the narrow neck of the isthmus.

They left in cars, and four and two-wheel carriages; some people left their belongings and also their families; some had already been taken care of them, others took to the highway on foot, hoping to sneak by nightfall into the steppe, and from there to get lost for a while in a big city and wait their time, hiding."

But this is a piece of prose, that allows a story to be made up. But no less emotionally, the events that took place in Simferopol are described by another witness – the former instructor of the Crimean Commissariat of Internal Affairs, V. Goryunov – in a memo to the Central Committee of the RCP(b), that confirms the words of Sergeev-Tsenski:

"On the twentieth and twenty-first [of June] headquarters, infirmaries, motor units, and engineering units were all running away. Carriages are taken from drivers with revolvers, the public is running too, and all to the station ... At the station there was a fiasco with the carriages and trains, because the station master and his staff had fled their posts. Comrade Babichev, a Communist from the Caucasus, went to the station by chance, not knowing about this flight, and asked where the station master was. A railway worker told him that no one was there, they had all left. Then comrade Babichev, as a Communist, declared himself station master and took the last trains out of the station, leaving the last one for the commander of the Crimean army, Comrade Dybenko, to whom he reported before heading to Moscow."

Sergeyev-Tsenski also gave a sketch of how some citizens of Simferopol on the evacuation day met a car with the commissars of a provincial town:

"And they were quiet near the house of the city, which yesterday morning they called their own, in which yesterday their leaders worked – the Krymrevkom, from which business papers could go to them, the commissars. Now, of course, the bosses are gone, the city is almost empty, and in two or three hours, it will definitely be a not be theirs ... <...>.

A fat, well dressed man nodded mockingly at them and shouted, 'Have a safe journey!' Two ladies in an open window clapped their hands cheerfully at the sight of them and shouted: 'Hooray!' And a boy threw a stone at their passing, chanting shrilly:

*"Apple, the apple rolls. Today,
Soviet power is running away!"*

Once again we can back up the artistic prose with real evidence. The Bolshevik Kaganitski, who had come to the Crimea for treatment after being wounded on the Kolchak front, recalled the events in Simferopol in the first few days after the Volunteers arrived. Due to a shortage of Party personnel he had to do Party and economic work in Alushta instead of receiving treatment. From Alushta Kaganitski was evacuated to Simferopol, where he witnessed the arrival of the Whites in the city.

"As soon as the Cossack detachment entered the town, its first act was to hang a citizen at the corner of Salgirnaya and Ekaterininskaya Streets. The affair took place in this way. At the arrival of the Whites groups of people began to gather, and here among one such bunch of gawkers there was a young Jew. One of the Cossacks drew attention to him and asked who he was. He replied, "the concessionaire of the hotel." "Ah, the commissar." They immediately grabbed him, threw a rope over him and hung him from a tree. The crowd dispersed, and the wretched



concessionaire hung for three hours, serving as a decoration in the street to the delight of the liberated bourgeoisie and the amazement of the crowd. <...> The Cossacks roamed the streets, broke into houses, looted and searched for Communists. As soon as a member of the public pointed at some innocent person on the pavement and said he was a Communist, savage thugs would immediately shoot or beat him. It later turned out that many ordinary people were settling petty scores with their enemies during those difficult days. "Restoration of order" lasted for three days, after which the commandant, governor and other authorities were appointed.

It is difficult to describe the brazen joy of the bourgeoisie in these days. Ladies, dressed in their best gowns, offered flowers to the officers, thanking them for their deliverance. One could see property – such as the uniforms of generals and officers – being dug out of the ground. The clergy served prayers. The streets were full of the promenading bourgeoisie. In short, it was a feast of revenge for the fears experienced. The working population hid, and came out only in case of emergency. On the first day of the White's arrival, a procession was held, and the cry of "beat the Jews" could be heard. The spectre of pogrom loomed over the city. However, it was avoided.

Historian G. V. Vernadski, who was not at all sympathetic to Bolsheviks, also confirms the unrestrained jubilation of non-proletarian population at that moment:

"The police watch was cancelled, but arrests of suspicious persons and hunting of the remaining Bolsheviks began. <...> Several local Bolsheviks were hanged on poles near the station. Many ordinary people went to see the spectacle. It is said that some ladies, including two or three professors' wives, danced under the hanged men. We, of course, did not go there."

No less colourful is the fragment of the "Diary of the unknown" dated 28 June about the events in Simferopol:

"Up to 100 people were arrested yesterday. It's enough to point out someone is a Communist and he is immediately seized. Delegates to an education congress were arrested only because it had been called by the Bolsheviks. They say that in New Town several people have been hanged in the street. They say that tomorrow Chistyakov, Kotov and Khrapov will be publicly executed."

Meanwhile, strange events were also taking place in the Simferopol prison. On 20 June, 63 people, including criminals, were released by order of Deputy Commissar of Justice, I. N. Semenov. At the same time, a detachment of Red Army soldiers who brought this order demanded that the guards surrender their weapons to them, and the prison guards gave the detachment six rifles and 5 swords. Since the guards were left unarmed and could not offer any resistance, the chief of the prison, Brodski, with the agreement of his subordinates, decided to release all the remaining prisoners – since they were imprisoned on charges of counterrevolution and the Reds could have shot them before they left. Two prisoners already sentenced to death were hidden in the attic and released a day later. All prison officers were then told to go into hiding. When a Red Army detachment, led by a member of the Military Tribunal who had earned of the release, arrived at the prison the next day it found no one – neither the prisoners, nor the prison staff. Brodski told him the two convicts had been taken away by soldiers to be shot.

The first groups of *Denikintsy* who entered Simferopol announced the mobilisation of officers who had hitherto been hidden underground. As a result, two entire officer regiments were formed and immediately sent into battle.

* * *

As Denikin stressed in his memoirs, in addition to the advance of the 3rd Volunteer Corps from the Ak-Monai positions, a special detachment was sent to the Isthmus to cut the Reds off from the Crimean Peninsula. The Red troops were exiting the Crimea in the same directions as they had come, via Chongar and Perekop. But the evacuation did not last long through Chongar. I think it is important to determine why and when the evacuation by railway through Chongar Isthmus was stopped. In this regard White memoirists provide very contradictory information. Thus, V. Almendinger writes that as early as 26 June "the Reds hastily withdrew to Salkovo [a station outside Crimea behind Chongar] and Perekop." Kravchenko echoes him, assuring us that the reason for the difficult retreat through Chongar is that the White cavalry at



about the same time cut it off. But both of these memoirists were not on the Chongar sector – they were in their regiments pursuing the Reds retreating to Perekop. We should consider the memoirs of N. Alexeev, whose military unit went out specifically to check the Chongar bridge around 23-24 June. Volunteer Alekseev, who was a member of the reconnaissance group, personally verified that the bridge had been blown up by the retreating Reds by this time. And there were no White units there at that moment. When the scouts tried to approach the destroyed bridge by the concrete dam, they were met with fire from an ambush, and half of the scouts were killed. In other words, it is quite possible to trust this author and to consider with certainty that before 23 June the Reds had blown up the bridge. This is confirmed by the cited report of V. Goryunov from which it follows that the Reds had almost completely left Simferopol on 22 June. The same is evidenced by recalling that the Reds' counter-attack near Kola on 21 June allowed all the trains from Simferopol to pass through Dzhankoy.

Before the bridge was blown up, the troops not engaged on the Ak-Monai front were concentrated in Simferopol, from where they retreated in trains and on foot across the Chongar Isthmus. This was also how the government apparatus and many party functionaries left the Crimea. There was no railway across the Perekop at that time. After the passage of all the trains from Simferopol the Chongar Bridge was blown up to make pursuit by the Whites more difficult. Therefore, the troops of the Ak-Monai Front were left to evacuate solely through the Perekop. And one more circumstance: as there were already *Denikintsy* in Kharkov and to the north of it, the Crimean Reds had to withdraw to the right bank of the Dnepr. Units retreating from Crimea through Chongar crossed near Nikopol and Kichkas, while those leaving Crimea through Perekop crossed near Kakhovka. Units retreating through Chongar, managed with minimal losses to get out of the Crimea, because as early as 16 June, at an emergency meeting of the government and the military, Dybenko the withdrawal of the armoured trains to protect the Dzhankoy, Alexandrovsk, Ekaterinoslav railway. According to the Ukrainian Front headquarters, as of 22 June all three Shock regiments and the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment were on the Melitopol battlefield. For the Chongar group retreating along the Dzhankoy, Melitopol, Alexandrovsk railway, the Melitopol battle line played an important role. The group defending the railway line, was headed by G. A. Kochergin. The main fighting force of that group was the regiment formed by the Melitopol executive committee (the so-called 1st Melitopol Volunteer Communist Regiment). The 2nd Soviet Regiment of F.D. Kalinichenko and some other units, as well as the armoured train *Rosa Luxemburg*, were also attached to it.

Denikin tried to cut the railway line, to hold the Crimean army on the peninsula and destroy it. The defence by Kochergin's group was therefore vital to the preservation of the KSA cadre. But in the midst of the retreat of the Red Crimean troops, Kochergin was given a different task – the defence of Kharkov. Not only that, Voroshilov's 21 June order to the 14th Army commander, stated that for this purpose it was necessary to reinforce Kochergin's group with *"the regiments and artillery of Comrade Dybenko"*. And this order was to be executed *"in the shortest possible time"*. In other words, the retreating KSA was also to take part in the defence of Kharkov. It should be noted that this did not help Red Kharkov – at 16 o'clock on 24 June the city was abandoned by the Reds.

The next milestone of the retreat was the crossing to the right bank of the Dnepr River near Nikopol. Here the situation worsened. Here is what former members of the Melitopol executive committee testify about this crossing.

"It was a panicked flight, with staffs very often falling behind their units, looking for them and, conversely, it was not uncommon for troops to be unable to ascertain where their staffs were. Such retreating units very often attacked the wagons, took the best horses and fled on them. <...> Part of Dybenko's retreating army used to be under Makhno's command. On 27 June the front approached close to Melitopol. On that day the 7th regiment (Kurilenko) passed through the town, and on the 28th the last regiment of Dybenko's army, the 8th. "The 8th Regiment was infected with the spirit of Makhnovism. It disarmed the units retreating with it, plundered the property evacuated by the Executive Committee – and to protests about this the soldiers of the 8th Regiment replied: 'We are doing to them what they did to us when we left for the front'. The attitude of these soldiers to the Communists was more than hostile."

The peasants of Melitopol district, who were "for Soviet power, but against the Communists", were indignant at the Dybenko army running amok and robbing them, and demanded that the Melitopol



executive committee start to enforce strict military discipline: *“beat their faces, flog them and shoot them – so there is discipline.”*

“Dybenko’s HQ was in Nikopol at this time. Complete chaos and confusion reigned there ... Present were almost all of Dybenko’s army, over 18,000, including cavalry, armoured vehicles and artillery ... At the request of Dybenko’s HQ on 2 July the Melitopol Executive Committee’s supply wagons had to be turned over to HQ. “It was about 2,000 poods of sugar, a lot of flour and a column of manufactured goods. In Kamenka [a settlement on the left side of the Dnepr opposite Nikopol] a number of wagons with property and a large number of cattle which had accumulated, were driven north by the Reds⁴⁰. <...> Units, including cavalry, began seizing ferries, not allowing on the wagons with property and disrupting the crossing, thus creating panic.”

According to the recollections of N. Makhno’s aide, A. V. Chubenko, in the final phase of the retreat, Dybenko and Makhno became mortal enemies. In Chubenko’s account, the sequence of events was as follows. Retreating under the onslaught of the *Denikintsy*, the soldiers of Makhno’s 3rd Zadneprovsk Brigade retreated to Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye), from where they intended to cross to the right side of the Dnepr. However, the leadership of the city refused to let them pass, and Makhno decided to head for the Kichkas bridge, located 8 km southwest of Alexandrovsk. Three days later, Dybenko appeared there unexpectedly with a brigade commander of the Crimean Army. It was probably I. Kotov (in Chubenko’s memoirs he appeared under the surname Antonov). Makhno intended to kill him during a meeting with Dybenko. To his assistants he said: *“Let’s see what he (Dybenko) has to say. If he says anything untoward, then I will give the signal, and on it you should immediately kill Dybenko and the brigade commander.”* But at the meeting Dybenko suddenly announced that he had come to fulfil his word of honour. *“And therefore I put you on notice, Comrade Makhno, that if you do not leave Kichkas, troops will be sent after you. And I gave you my word of honour that if troops are sent after you, I will let you know about it. So I have come to tell you to get out of the area.”*

Then he wrote some kind of an undertaking, saying that Makhno and his staff should come the next day to get instructions as to how to proceed. *“When Dybenko left, however, Makhno kept going around saying that he had not shot him on purpose. Dybenko left. On the second day at 10 o’clock in the morning a military telegraph operator came to Makhno and told him that Dybenko wanted to lure him to Nikopol, to his headquarters, and there to kill him and his staff.”* The Brigade commander⁴¹ (in our version: I. Kotov) was then killed by the Makhnovists.

Due to the shelling of Kichkas by Denikin’s men, the Makhnovists withdrew to Khortitsa, (7 km to the south of Kichkas). Complementing the picture of the relationship between Dybenko and Makhno are the recollections of Slyadnev, a member of the Melitopol executive committee in the spring of 1919:

“On 3 July an announcement signed by Dybenko appeared in Nikopol, stating that Makhno was outlawed and his supporters and accomplices would be shot. This announcement was met with silence in Dybenko’s army, for there were many units sympathetic to Makhno. Makhno was very popular in Dybenko’s army, not to mention the local population. The mood was such that there was almost a rift in Dybenko’s army, and things almost came to a bloody clash.”

* * *

Not all of the troops retreating through the Perekop moved to Kakhovka to cross to the right bank of the Dnepr to Beryslav and continue the struggle with the Whites. Some of the former Crimean Reds moved on to Alyoshki (Tsyurupinsk), located at the mouth of the Dnepr opposite Kherson. There, most of the former Red soldiers scattered into the Kherson district and huddled in the rye, forming “Zhitomir regiments” (from the word *zhito*, i.e. rye), which engaged in outright robbery.

⁴⁰ One person recalled, *“we drove 18,000 sheep with us from Crimea, up to 8,000 heads of cows and bulls”*.

⁴¹ Chubenko gives his surname as Antonov, but there were no brigade commanders with this surname in the KSA. It is not Fedotov, as it is known that he later fought in the 58th Division, nor I. Fedko, or Petrovski, who by this time in Moscow. There is a mention that Kotov was “shot by the Reds”. It is not a stretch to consider that it was Kotov who was killed by Makhnovists then, since the Makhnovists fought on the side of the Red Army at that time.



Near Kalanchak (about 70 km from Perekop in the direction of Aleshki) they managed to assemble a detachment which temporarily delayed the White offensive and allowed the fleeing units to withdraw in peace. As it later turned out, the Reds had quite a lot of time to retreat across the Perekop Isthmus, as the Whites did not arrive at Perekop until 29 June, i.e. five days after the occupation of Simferopol.

Events in Sevastopol

The evacuation of Sevastopol, which had one of the few functioning enterprises in Crimea at the time, the Sevastopol shipyard, had its own specifics. We should pay attention to the orders of the Red director of the shipyard, A. Lysenko, before the evacuation. The entire administration, clerks and workers were to remain at their places and continue to work at the plant as usual. Lysenko reminds us of the necessity to take care of food supplies and procurement of firewood, not forgetting the families of the employees, who had left the plant. And again: *“Arbitrary taking of materials from the territory of the port and the yard is not permitted and I demand of the comrades workers to remember that you are the sole masters of the plant and the property, the same refers to fuel. In conclusion: Comrade workers must be workers and continue to work as their proletarian conscience requires of them.”*

For their part, the factory authorities deliberately distanced themselves from politics in an attempt to keep their factory in working order. The factory board, assembled at an emergency meeting on the occasion of the change of power, stated, *“The change in the political regime and forms of state rule should concern the factory industry to the least extent possible.”*

Some details about the evacuation of representatives of Red power from Sevastopol are revealed in the report of F.V. Borisov, City Water Transport Commissar, to the Central Committee of the RCP(b):

“... On June 21, the Sevastopol Council of National Economy received an order to submit payrolls for April and May. On 22 June it was required that all commissars report to the treasury at 2 p.m. for money to be paid promptly for the month of June. All the commissariats were to evacuate immediately to wherever they could, and, according to the comrades, Aleshki was designated as a collection point. I personally did not attend the meeting, I was busy distributing money. <...> At 2 o'clock the old time I left on the boat Boris Gausman to Evpatoria, hoping to link up with units there and go to the assembly point, but I failed because when I arrived in Evpatoria, there was no one there. Then I decided to leave on a departing yacht to Odessa, and from there to sneak into Aleshki. The crossing to Odessa went well, but on entering the bay the ship was detained by a French destroyer, with a Russian naval officer looking for Soviet workers, soldiers or weapons. I arrived in Odessa on 25 June, made a report to the executive committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' and Red Army Deputies, and then to the regional committee of water transport workers; I wanted to go to Aleshki, but a comrade from Aleshki arrived and told me not to go because our units had left. Then I went to Kiev...”

An unforeseen event occurred in Sevastopol on the eve of the evacuation, 22 June. A steamer carrying 4,000 soldiers of the former Russian Expeditionary Corps in France arrived in Sevastopol. The Bolsheviks held a rally and announced that they were leaving the city at 12 noon. Disembarking on the north side, the incoming soldiers reached Simferopol in twenty-four hours, where they were placed on a train and sent via Zaporozhye and Kiev to Moscow for dispatch to their homes. Another consignment of soldiers from France (1,500 men) arrived on 29 September by the steamer Peter the Great. Allegedly, no one volunteered to serve with the Whites.

As early as 13 June the commandant of the Sevastopol fortress signed an order on the state of siege. A couple of days later, a meeting of the city's activists was held at which there was one question – about the danger of the situation, to the entire Crimea and Sevastopol in particular. Meanwhile, for the time being peaceful life continued. On 14 June, Sevastopol's *Izvestia* wrote about the opening of a bookstore by the local Soviet of Deputies, about the congress of educators, about the prices for private theatres, circuses, and concert organizers, etc. The entertainment establishments were to *“send all repertoire and all programs and posters, as well as texts, for previewing.”*.. But the time left to the Red regime could be literally counted in hours. Unfortunately, no details of the occupation of Sevastopol by the White have

been discovered. We only know that on the morning of 22 June the Bolsheviks held a meeting which declared that they were leaving the city at 12 o'clock.

The Executive Committee of the Sevastopol Sovdep decided to complete the evacuation by 9 p.m. on 22 June. The Executive Committee itself, with the exception of a few individuals, left the city on the morning of the 23rd. On that day the Council of Trade Unions and representatives of individual enterprises in the city met in a joint session. The tone of the meeting was set by the Mensheviks, still in the lead of the unions. N. L. Kantorovich, chairman of the Council of Trade Unions, presided over the meeting. The main concern of the meeting was who would take over the power in the city. The Chairman of the Sovdep Executive Committee, Semenov, informed the assembly that the allegedly evacuated Red detachments were returning to the city by order of Dybenko. But it soon became clear that this had not happened. Gorshkov [probably Goryachko] who then spoke informed the assembly that he had received orders from Dybenko to take over both military and civil power as commandant of the city, but the assembly questioned his authority. The mayor, V. A. Mogilevski, stated that a one-man dictatorship in the city could not be allowed. Then the assembly turned to a discussion of current issues regarding the difficult situation with bread and the payment of allowances. It was decided to postpone the question of power until the evening session.

There is a version that on the next day, i.e. 24 June, the issue of power was resolved dramatically: allegedly a landing of Denikin's supporters from the destroyer *Zhivoy* seized Sevastopol. However, the events are described differently by the historian P. Varnek. Thus, according to his version, the *Zhivoy* did not appear in Sevastopol until 28 June. By that time the city administration and guards had already been established in the city. However, Varnek does not specify who formed these structures. According to GASS documents, the power in the city during the transition period was exercised by the Menshevik "Enlarged Executive Committee of the Council of Trade Unions." Apparently, this provisional governing body was formed on the evening of 23 June. And from 25 June, "*temporarily performing the duties of the Chief of the Sea in Sevastopol until the arrival of the new government*" was assumed by Captain B.E. Tyagin, who acted with the sanction of the Executive Committee of the Trade Unions above. It follows from this phrase that by 25 June, Denikin's forces were not yet in Sevastopol. Earlier (from 4 May) Tyagin held the position of the port commander in place of Sheikovski, who had left for Nikolaev on business. When the Reds withdrew, Tyagin voluntarily remained in Sevastopol. All of his activities were limited to the preservation of warehouses and ships from plundering. On 25 June Tyagin signed five relevant orders. Nevertheless, the landing party of the *Zhivoy*, which came ashore on 28 June, arrested Captain Tyagin and, without any investigation, shot him as an accomplice to the Bolsheviks.

Events in Yalta

Upon the retreat of the Reds from Yalta, we know that the evacuation of the party apparatus had to be carried out through Ai-Petri, as the Yalta residents had simply been forgotten, and the road through Alushta had already been cut off by Denikin. As a result, as M. F. Kaplan recalled, "*we were the last to arrive in Sevastopol and some of our comrades had to escape in submarines through the Perekop.*"

The change of power in Evpatoria was relatively painless, at least according to a Bolshevik memoirist. The evacuated Soviet of Deputies handed over power and protection of the city to the Council of Trade Unions, order was maintained in the city, all was quiet. A representative of the opposite camp recounted the events not without pathos:

"...I shall never forget that beautiful day when a rumour suddenly spread through the city [of Evpatoria] that the Reds were leaving! And indeed, soon their long wagon train was heading northwards to the city to Perekop. The ideological fighters for new power were leaving, followed by those who had compromised themselves through murder and looting. After a while there was a rumour that the Evpatoria wagon train did not manage to escape the isthmus and was intercepted by the Whites, who gave the Reds their "St Bartholomew's Night". Perhaps it was there and then that the Nemichi family was reminded of the tears of their Evpatoria victims. Several of the Nemichis fell into the hands of the Whites and were shot without ceremony."

* * *



If we are to compare speed of the capture of the Crimea by Reds in April (about 20 days) with speed of their leaving in June (about 10 days), keeping in mind the movement of the armies from Perekop to Ak-Monai and backwards, it appears that Reds left twice as fast as they came. How did the military leadership of the KSA explain such a rapid retreat? The political commissar of the Zadneprovsk Division, P. I. Lukomski, in his report to the Central Committee of the RCP(b), stated that the main reason was the lack of equipment, mainly ammunition. According to him "by 19 June there were only 4,000 cartridges in reserve for the whole division." Here we should add that, according to the White artilleryman Shidlovski, the Reds shot poorly, wasting a lot of ammunition and shells in vain. *"They could not shoot, neither the individual soldiers nor the artillery, and so despite the amount of ammunition and shells they fired we had minimal losses, while they suffered much more from our fire."*

It seems to us, however, that the failures were more likely to be due to the mood of the defenders. The primary cause of the change in mood was played by the "contamination" of the army with anti-Bolshevik, kulak elements from the recent Black Sea insurgents. As one of the participants in the events testified, this undermined the resilience of the other units. A criminal element allegedly involved in the struggle for workers' liberation, but in fact, *"loving to live at the expense of others and, most importantly, fond of drink. The number of forces which were fighting honestly on the side of the new power was not so large. And as soon as a threat came from Denikin, the element there only for their own profit ran away, dragging the conscious masses with them."*

There was another, rather unexpected reason, modestly omitted by Soviet historians. According to P. Taran, at the moment of the breakthrough of the Ak-Monai front by the Whites, panic in the retreating Red units was increased by cowardly behaviour of "the division commander of Kerch area", Ivan Kotov, who *"fictitiously wounded himself, abandoned the division and fled to Odessa by car."* And here is what a former member of the Simferopol City Party Committee, M.F. Kaplan, adds about the behaviour of Kotov at the time: *"I saw a certain Kotov who was extremely frightened by all this. He said that they were shooting from all the windows. He was so panicked that he thought they were shooting at him from the sky. He managed to get by vehicle to the first German colony, but there the motorbike got stuck in the mud, he took the two-wheeler from the Germans, and I don't know where he eventually ended up."* Among the names of the leading workers who passed through the documents of the Crimean Isthpart⁴² for 1919 is: "Kotov (shot by the Reds)...". We can only assume that Kotov was shot for desertion.⁴³

After Crimea was abandoned, the local Bolshevik organisation reported on the organisation of underground work. Allegedly, a small printing office in Simferopol was purchased for the underground, a warehouse of literature was set up and forged documents were prepared there. In addition, according to a report by Yu. P. Gaven, *"the Oblast Committee (through the Defence Council) allocated one and a half million rubles for the underground, of which half a million was distributed among the cells in Sevastopol, Yalta and Evpatoria, one million was left in the centre (Babakhan, Aktyrsky, Haikevich). However, Akim Aktyrski, despite recommendations of trustworthiness from his comrades in Kiev, turned out to be a provocateur – about 50 activists were killed."* The underground was also poorly paid: almost immediately after the occupation of the Crimea the circulation of Soviet money was stopped. This money was mainly the so-called Pyatakovs, i.e. rubles of the 1918 model signed by G. Pyatakov. Gaven's report goes on to read: *"The preparations went quickly – in 3 to 4 days. A "Foreign Bureau of the Crimean Regional Committee" was formed in Odessa – Gaven and Shulman. The Turkish Communists were sent to Turkey, while Otratdian and Mirny were sent to Bulgaria to establish links."*

Those Crimean government representatives who reached Kiev made reports on the situation to the Ukrainian Defence Council. In particular, D.I. Ulyanov reported at the meeting of 3 July on the evidently unfavourable condition of the Crimean army after the abandonment of Crimea. According to his report, it was decided *"to immediately deal with the purging and re-forming of the units retreating from Crimea."* Special attention was also drawn to *"the necessity of evacuating the property removed from the Crimea and located near Nikopol."* Shortly afterwards, the Communist Party Central Committee received an order from

⁴² Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the RCP (b)

⁴³ This contradicts the statement above the Kotov likely being killed by the Makhnovists.



Moscow concerning the Crimean party and state workers – they were to register, hand in their papers to the liquidation bureau and come to Moscow, at the disposal of the Party Central Committee.

The Soviet newspapers did not publish any information about the abandonment of the Crimea by the Reds. It was not customary to give such information.



Appendix 1

P. E. Dybenko and his Comrades-in-Arms

Dybenko, Pavel Efimovich (1889 – 1938)

Dybenko's acquaintance with the Crimea was peculiar. In the spring of 1918, when the Germans were in charge there, Dybenko arrived from Odessa intending to do underground work. He almost immediately fell into the hands of the Investigative Service, since he was a well-known figure – he had been, after all, the chairman of Tsentrobalt in 1917, and he had fought against the Germans near Pskov. After serving several months in the Sevastopol prison, he was exchanged for a batch of captured German officers and deported to a neutral area.

There he took control of several insurgent detachments which succeeded in taking Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) in late January 1919, and in February he organised the Zadneprovsk Division from his detachments. What happened to him next (the capture of Crimea and his activities during the Crimean SSR) is described in detail in the Military Panorama. His further biography can be gleaned from I.M. Zhigalov's books about him (1983 and 1987).

I will add only information about his Party membership: in connection with failures near Pskov on 18 March 1918, he was deprived of his Party card, but (which is little known) he was restored in the ranks of the Party on 3 January 1919.

Several characteristic fragments about Dybenko can be found in the memoirs of the White officer P. Makushev, who was taken prisoner by the Reds in the spring of 1920. At that time Dybenko commanded the 1st Caucasian Red Cavalry Division, which was a part of Budenny's *Konnarmiya*, the headquarters of which was situated in Maykop. So, Makushev about Dybenko:

"Above average height, athletic-looking handsome man with expressive dark eyes.

'Whether you are anarchists or monarchists is of no importance to me. I will take you into my service, but I warn you: Serve honestly.' And then all the captured White officers were given command positions.

A chin injury Dybenko gave to a clerk who spoke to him with a cigarette in his teeth, is evidence of his strict discipline. Dybenko rarely allowed himself to swear, and if he did, it meant that something had really put the Division Commander out of balance.⁴⁴

At rallies Dybenko speaks clearly, understandable to the crowd - he enjoyed success."

Makushev describes a story of the shooting of Jewish Red officers. After a drunken nightcap, Dybenko decided to shoot them, thinking they are captured White officers. His friend A. Kollontai⁴⁵ helped him out, the case was hushed up.

"He does not like Jews and does not want them in his division. 'I can't find service for you...', he said to the four Jews who were sent to him - technical officers who wanted to take over the post office, the telephone, etc."

This little biography does not do any justice at all to the character of Dybenko, so I have added some extra details:

Born to a Ukrainian peasant family. In 1907 he started working with a Bolshevik group, and in 1912 joined the Party. If he was educated, very little of it stuck.

⁴⁴ This would have been unusual in the Red Army, but especially the *Konnarmiya*, which prided itself on its "earthy" behaviour.

⁴⁵ Kollontai was actually his wife, having married the 17 years younger man early in the revolution. She was very well connected politically (briefly having been People's Commissar for Social Affairs), although she had fallen out of favour a bit at this time as she opposed some of the Bolsheviks' policies.



He spent some time in the navy, being imprisoned for a mutiny, and then in the army, again being imprisoned. After the February 1917 revolution, he returned to the navy and in April 1917, he became the leader of the Tsentrobalt. He was heavily involved in the October Revolution in Petrograd.

From this point on his career took off, because of his political reliability and connections in the Party, including his then wife, Alexandra Kollontai. He was briefly People's Commissar for the Navy, but in April 1918, he was dismissed from the government, expelled from the Communist party and put to trial for cowardice at the front against the Germans (this is the reference to Pskov, above). He was acquitted: apparently fleeing was acceptable because, "Not being a military expert, he was absolutely neither competent nor trained for the task."

He attempted to prevent the Brest-Litovsk peace and then was involved with a revolt against the Bolsheviks in Samara in May 1918. Most would have been shot for half of that, but he again survived. He was given a moderate rank in the army and sent where he could cause the least possible trouble.

By this time it must have been clear to everyone that he was incompetent, extremely violent and wilful politically. He frequently drank too much, and was likely alcoholic. That he got major command again speaks to how Lenin preferred Old Bolsheviks in the top jobs, even if they were clearly incompetent psychopaths.

Thus in early 1919, Dybenko was given command of the Zadneprovsk Division, apparently because he was Ukrainian, and Moscow wanted to give the impression that the Soviet Ukrainian Army was a locally grown force.

Dybenko looted and plundered his way across the Ukraine, wiping out all non-Bolshevik political groups wherever he could. He entered the Crimea without permission, and there formed the Crimean Soviet Army, effectively independent from the Ukrainian Front. He also created the Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic, but was unable to establish complete political control of it thanks to opposition by Lenin and Trotski.

The Crimean SSR was ineffective politically and militarily. Three months later Dybenko was forced to flee – with most of his army dispersing, joining Makhno or becoming independent Greens.

After a spell in the Red Army Academy he was given the 37th RD in late 1919. In March 1920 he was moved to the Caucasian Cavalry Division, and in May 1920 was given command of the 2nd Horse Army. This was a political appointment, to counter the suspected leanings of that army, which contained many Cossacks. Lacking much military skill in general, and none with cavalry, the result was the 2nd Horse Army suffered a serious defeat to Wrangel's cavalry under General Barbovich in the Northern Taurida. He was recalled to Moscow to complete his studies.

After the war he suppressed peasant uprisings – likely given the role because he was unconcerned by the many atrocities committed along the way. He rose steadily in the ranks of the Red Army until he became KomandArm.

A bloodthirsty and unsophisticated man, but loyal to the Bolsheviks, he was an ideal man for Stalin's regime. He helped run the military purges in the Leningrad district in the late 1930s.

In 1938 he too was purged, and shot.

Grigoriev, Nikifor Aleksandrovich

His real surname was Servetnyk. During the 1st World War, promoted to the rank of staff-captain. Served in the armies of the Central Rada, then for Hetman P. Skoropadski, and from December 1918 in the army of S. Petliura.

After the expulsion of the Petliura group from the right bank of the Dnepr, a government of the left-wing Socialist Revolutionary Party was established in Znamenka, called the Tsentrorevkom. Ataman N. Grigoriev led their armed forces, with his headquarters located in Znamenka.

In early January 1919, an agreement was reached between Grigoriev and the representative of the government of Rakovski, Petrenko. On 15 (2) January Petrenko reported to Aussem, at that time the commander of the Kharkov Group of Forces: *“Ataman Grigoriev accepted our condition to recognize the supreme power of the Provisional Workers’ and Peasants’ Government and the military command in the person of the Revolutionary Military Council, leaving the possibility of further negotiations with its centre ...”*, that is, the Tsentrorevkom.

Rakovski also reported this agreement to Moscow. Characteristically, Grigoriev in the course of further talks with Petrenko stated that he considered his association with the Red High Command merely operational. This reservation by Grigoriev was to be recalled at the beginning of May, when his mutiny began. Somewhat later (13 March) Grigoriev’s appointment as commander of the 1st Zadneprovsk Brigade was officially sanctioned by order No. 1 of the Provisional Government of the Ukrainian SSR.

In Soviet terminology Grigoriev’s defection from the Red Army is always termed “mutiny” or rebellion, but in his terms, like Makhno, they were only ever allies, regardless of the wishful thinking of the Soviets giving his men official Red Army titles (which he largely ignored). The final blows were Bolshevik requisitioning policies, which angered his troops, and being ordered to attack the Romanian army – with whom he had no beef.

While popular with the peasants, the Red Army threw quite a few resources against him, and within a few weeks he was in trouble. He decided to work alongside Makhno, but the political differences between them were too large. Makhno, or one of his closest aides, shot Grigoriev at a meeting.

Skachko, Anatoly Evgenievich (1879 -1941)

Born in Poltava into the family of a surveyor. He participated in the 1st World War, was a military journalist with the rank of captain.

On 13 January 1919 the Kharkov military group, headed by V. H. Aussem, was formed on the Ukrainian Front. A.E. Skachko was made the Chief of Operations for the HQ of the group. On 11 February Aussem retired because of illness, and Skachko took over the command of the group. When, by 15 April order for the Ukrainian front, the Kharkov Group of Forces was transformed into the 2nd Ukrainian Army, A.E. Skachko became its commander, i.e. in Soviet terminology he was *KomandArm-2*.

It must be said that Anatoliy Yevgenyevich’s opinion did not always coincide with the official position of the authorities. For example, on 18 April he wrote to the commander of the Ukrainian front, V.A. Antonov:

“In my opinion, a big mistake is now being made, that could ruin the whole business of the revolution in Russia. This mistake is that we, having the opportunity now to suppress the Don and occupy the line from Rostov to Velikoknyazhska, do not use this opportunity and have gotten carried away with the operations on the Western Front, carried away with the opportunity to work on an international scale, in direct contact with revolutionary Hungary, leaving the east and allowing the enemy, temporarily shaken, to strengthen and again restore a solid Eastern Front ...”

Antonov’s harsh reply was not long in coming:

“Once and for all stop your political exercises, given in such an intolerably neurasthenic tone. I do not recognise your correctness and composure...”

Note that some other Soviet functionaries agreed with Skachko. In particular L. B. Kamenev⁴⁶ suggested: *“Without being carried away by the Bessarabian and Romanian areas, let us concentrate all our forces in the Donetsk Basin and on conciliation within the country.”*

Commander Skachko’s short career also had its fortunate moments. For example, he earned the personal gratitude of Lenin himself. In March, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Soviet Army knocked out and

⁴⁶ The Red Army’s Commander-in-Chief at the time.

captured four French *Reno* tanks⁴⁷ at Berezovka Station in Odessa Oblast. One of them – intact – was sent to Lenin in Moscow. Skachko's envoys, accompanying the tank reported to him:

"Arrived in Moscow on the 24th [April], instructions fulfilled. On the 25th the tank was delivered to the Kremlin. On the 26th Comrade Tatko was with Comrade Lenin. Had a five-minute talk the same day. Have to be in Moscow till Thursday [31 April]. Comrade Lenin's written reply will be on Wednesday [30 April] <...> Military representation of the 2nd Ukrainian Soviet Army. Tatko, Kotov. Pass on the answer to the Commandant of the Kremlin."

On 1 May, under the command of one of the first Russian pilots, Boris Rossinski, the machine paraded through Red Square in honour of Workers' Solidarity Day. Lenin's reaction can be seen from his telegram:

"To the HQ of the 2nd Ukrainian Soviet Army and all the comrades of that army.

I convey my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the comrades of the Second Ukrainian Soviet Army for the tank sent as a gift. <...> Best regards and warmest wishes of success to the workers and peasants of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Red Army.

Chairman of the Defence Council V. Ulyanov (Lenin)."

But the fatal role in Skachko's career was played by N. Grigoriev, when he mutinied. In the first days of the rebellion the staff of the 2nd Army, headed by the commander, left its location in Ekaterinoslav in panic, mistakenly believing that N. Makhno had joined Grigoriev's mutiny as well. In fact, Makhno only temporarily refused to speak to Skachko by direct line, which the latter regarded as treason. Clearly, this behaviour did not add to Skachko's credibility with his superiors. On this occasion Kamenev reported emotionally to Lenin: *"Skachko and his staff fled back to Sinelnikov <...>. Ekaterinoslav has been abandoned by Skachko's HQ and captured by the criminals. Skachko is undoubtedly a criminal..."*. Therefore, Skachko had to take preventive measures: on 21 May he was examined by a medical board and was given leave for 6 weeks for an operation on a brain tumour. Nevertheless he remained a KomandArm for the time being.

By order of 4 June the Ukrainian Front was disbanded, with the 2nd Ukrainian Army transformed into the 14th Army and retained as part of the Southern Front. Skachko was commander of the 14th Army for a few days, then on 7 June he surrendered command of it to K.E. Voroshilov.

Petrenko, Sergey Ivanovich (Petrikovsky) (1894-1964)

Real name Petrikovsky. He was born on September 3 (15), 1894 in Lublin (now Poland) in the family of the teacher. He wrote about himself without false modesty: *"I consider myself a professional revolutionary. I prepared for it, took an oath to it in my young years and built my life in this way."* Graduated from Lublin Gymnasium, where under the influence of his teacher N. Krylenko (future Soviet Commander-in-Chief) became a Bolshevik in 1911. Studied at the physics and mathematics faculty of St Petersburg University. From 1913 was a liaison between the Bolshevik section of the Duma and Lenin, who was in exile in Krakow. In 1915 he was arrested and exiled to Yenisei.

In 1916 he was mobilized and sent to the 30th Siberian Reserve Regiment, where he was reunited with N. Rudnev. In 1917, he completed an accelerated cadet course, and was sent to Kharkov. In the autumn of 1917 he was appointed commander of the Kharkov garrison. Together with Rukhimovich and Rudnev, he organised fighting detachments of the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Republic for defence against the Germans.

Concerning his participation in the capture of the Crimea, Petrenko recalled:

"The Crimean Area Group, which took Perekop and Chongar on 4-5 April 1919, forcing the Sivash and liberating the whole Crimea, was directly commanded by me – although the group was part of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division –as Chief of Staff under Dybenko. I was Chief of Staff of the Division, commander of the 2nd Brigade and commander of the Crimean Area Group – as my 2nd Brigade was advancing towards the Crimea ..."

⁴⁷ Renault FT-17s.

In January 1919 I had advanced together with Pavel Dybenko, the commander of the Ukrainian Army, from Merefa to Lozova and then further. After our capture of Ekaterinoslav, in which I also took a direct part, I was seconded to him by the Commander of the Ukrainian Front as Chief of Staff of the division which we were instructed to form, and which included detachments of Ataman Grigoriev and detachments of Batko Makhno. <...>

I remained in the south for the first half of 1919, then in the Crimea until 10 June, when I signed the last order and handed over the positions I held to Comrade Fedko. ..."

In Petrenko's biography there is the following passage: *"In June 1919 he was arrested by order of Trotski for unauthorized negotiations with the enemy, but was released on the personal petition of Lenin."*

In reality Petrenko was not subjected to any repression, but continued his military career in the ranks of the KSA, as Chief of Staff of the Crimean Division. He remained in this position until 10 June, when he signed the last order and handed over the case to his successor Fedko. It soon turned out to be advantageous for Petrenko to present himself as a victim of Trotski's intrigues, from which he had allegedly been spared by Lenin. Actually, Lenin only marked the case files on the agreement with the French as "archived", leaving it to the military court to sort things out.

Petrenko later witnessed the death of Shchors (putting forward the version that the Soviet commander was deliberately murdered by his assistant, Ivan Dubov). In 1920 he stormed Perekop.

After the Civil War he held commanding posts, and was one of the founders of the Soviet aircraft industry and air force. Died of a heart attack on 25 January 1964. Buried at Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow.

Kotov, Ivan

The earliest mention of Kotov can be found in Ivan Zhigalov's story, *"KomandArm Dybenko"*. Zhigalov writes that in early February the commanders of partisan and insurgent detachments (in the Northern Taurida) were assembled at Dybenko's staff car. At this meeting, *"The former Feodosiya worker Kotov, a chiselled, medium-sized man, is appointed commander of the first brigade of the "Dybenko" Special Group. The commander of the second brigade is Makhno ..."* But this is fiction. Among the documents, Kotov is first mentioned in the record of talks between Dybenko and Skachko on 22 March. Dybenko calls Kotov the commandant of the division headquarters, "the one real nerve" of his staff. *"From the command staff I trust only that which has passed through the thorough filtering of the headquarters and Kotov's hands,"* stated Dybenko.

During the insertion of the 2nd Zadneprovsk Brigade into the Crimea, Kotov led a group of troops from the Perekop area. These troops showed extraordinary valour during the brilliant assault on the Perekop Isthmus.

The correspondence about the entry of Red troops into Yalta mentions, *"A proclamation signed by the chief of the Perekop Group of Forces [Kotov's position] urging them not to believe the rumours spread by counter-revolutionaries. The Soviet authorities guarantee the population complete freedom, peace and order."*

When the 2nd Zadneprovsk Brigade was re-formed into the Crimean Soviet Army (KSA) in mid-April, Kotov became head of one of the three KSA brigades – the Shock Brigade. Soon after Dybenko and part of his staff left for the suppression of Grigoriev's mutiny, and Kotov received a new task – on 11 May he was temporarily appointed head of security in the Crimea, with extraordinary powers: *"All armed forces of the Republic standing guard on the coast and inside Crimea, carrying garrison and guard duty, as well as all commandants of cities and all military commissars – are subordinate to Comrade Kotov,"* states paragraph 4 of Order No. 7 of 11 May.

At the beginning of June, the Volunteer Army with the forces of about 3,500 bayonets and 2,000 sabres broke through the defence of Red line from Nogaysk to Polohi, via Verkhny Tokmak. The section from Polohi to Berdyansk was to be defended by the Special Group of Forces (under the command of Korchagin). The core of the group was the 1st Crimean Shock Brigade, under the command of Kotov, consisting of three regiments, to which were added combat-ready and undecayed units of Makhno's division, as well as units



removed from the Grigoriev Front. This group was also assigned an air detachment of four aircraft and one armoured train. In connection with the dangerous situation then applying, on 8 June, Kotov was again appointed commander of the 1st Shock Brigade *“with the abolition of all other duties entrusted to him”*.

And in the course of these events the unexpected happens. P. I. Taran, commander of the insurgent detachment guarding the eastern coast of Taurida, testified that Kotov *“fictitiously wounded himself, abandoned the division and fled to Odessa (where he came from) by car, which spread further panic in the retreating units”* during the retreat of the KSA. Another witness, M.F. Kaplan, a member of Simferopol City Party Committee, wrote that Kotov *“managed to get by vehicle to the first [German] colony, but there the motorbike got stuck in the mud, he took a two-wheeler from the Germans, and I do not know where he eventually found himself.”* However, the memoirs of I. G. Genov, published in the collection of memoirs of old Bolsheviks, on the contrary, notes an encounter *“with a Red Army unit under the command of Vanya Kotov”*, retreating from Besh-Terek (Donskoe village) *“to Sarabuz and further to Perekop”*.

At the same time, among the names of the officials of the Crimea who were recorded in the documents of the Crimean Istspart for 1919 is: *“Kotov (shot by the Reds)...”* We can only assume that Kotov was shot for desertion.

However, another version is also possible. According to the memories of one of Makhno’s associates, A. Chubenko, in early July, during the retreat of Dybenko and Makhno’s detachments to Kichkas, Makhno was visited by Dybenko with one of his brigade commanders. Chubenko gives his surname as Antonov. The Makhnovists killed this brigade commander. But there were no brigade commanders with that surname in the KSA. It is not Fedotov, as it is known that he later fought in the 58th Division, not Fedko and not Petrovski, who by this time was in Moscow. It is not a stretch to consider that Kotov (Antonov), killed by Makhnovists, was in a way *“shot by the Reds”*, as the Makhnovists fought on the side of the Red Army at that time.

There had been reports of Kotov’s reckless behaviour before. On 21 April the commissar of posts and telegraphs, Mamigonov, reported to the Revolutionary Committee, to the political commissar Kan and to the regional party committee, that the commander of the Force Group Kotov used *“vulgar language”* to the telegrapher, then insulted Commissar Mamigonov, then a member of the party Central Committee, Kovalchuk-Ivanov. Mamihonov asked that Kotov be *“put on trial”* and requested the Obkom *“for the exclusion of Kotov from the Party as discrediting the Communist family”*. An extract from the telegraph tape was attached as proof. However, Dybenko invariably stood up for his protégé. The following telegram was sent to the Revolutionary Committee, the Commandant of Simferopol and Commissar Mamigonov: *“Any agitation against KomBrig Comrade Kotov will be regarded as a vile provocation. № 6841. 22 April 1919, NachDiv Dybenko. Authenticated, Group Chief of Staff Dobritski.”* Laura’s resolution was neutral: *“Take note, 24 April.”*

More serious charges followed later. In a bulletin for the Central Committee of the CP(b)U dated 12 June (as of 19 May), Shuster, a member of the Crimean Regional Committee, reported the execution of the KSA Shock Brigade’s brigade’s political commander, by Kotov. Shuster further writes: *“Kotov, at a congress of political workers in Dzhankoy, when asked about the reasons for his actions with a comrade, threatened to shoot everyone. Kotov, now head of the Crimean Coastal Forces, is none other than the bandit known in Crimea by the nickname Vanka Sych ...”*.

Pavlovski, Vsevolod

During the World War Vsevolod Pavlovski was allegedly promoted to the rank of *feldsfebel* (sergeant-major, however, his rank was variously referred to anything from petty officer to colonel). He was known as a commander of a rebel detachment against the Germans and Austrians in Ukraine from the summer of 1918. In June 1918 his detachment supported an uprising near Zvenygorodka in Kiev province, and in August 1918 a detachment of about 5,000 men under the command of Pavlovski and M. Shinkar went to Korsun in the Kanev district. We know more about him as commander of the 3rd Taurida Regiment, taking part in the battles for the Crimea in April 1919. His activity (the battles at Perekop and near Sevastopol) is

described in the main text. By the way, we should note that he took command of this regiment in March 1919 at the insistence of the Red insurgents, instead of Grigoriev's preferred Mosenko.

After the capture of Sevastopol, the 3rd Taurida Regiment (under the new name of the 3rd Crimean Shock Soviet Regiment) was stationed in that city to protect the nearby Crimean coast. Part of the regiment was transferred to the Ak-Monai front, where it successfully acted against the *Denikintsy*. Another part of the regiment (a punitive detachment) was sent to Melitopol district in early May. It is reported that the activities of this punitive detachment caused severe displeasure to the local peasant congress, but the details of this are unknown. Pavlovski was a member of this unit, but on the news of Grigoriev's rebellion, part of this punitive unit, led by Pavlovski, split off and went over to Grigoriev's side. On 13 May the rest of the punitive detachment, led by Timashevski, found themselves in Melitopol and from there returned to the regiment.

According to a report of 14 May, Pavlovski dispersed the parish councils in five parishes in the Melitopol district adjoining the Dnepr. In connection with this report, Acting Commander of the KSA Petrovski ordered that in the case that "Grigoriev's accomplice Pavlovski, or any of Grigoriev's agents" is seized, they should be kept under heavy guard in Armyansk. Should Armyansk be threatened, "you are instructed to shoot the aforementioned persons." Then, on 15 May, there was information that a band with Pavlovski had been conducting reconnaissance near Perekop, from the Sivash coast, and the next day (16 May) it was reported that Pavlovski had been arrested. For some time Pavlovski was indeed kept under arrest (most probably in Armyansk) by Fedotov, who commanded the Crimean group fighting Grigoriev. But somehow he was released and no later than 9 June his detachment was in the Askania Nova area.

After assassination of Grigoriev at Makhno's headquarters (27 July) the rest of Grigoriev's detachments passed to the command of Makhno. Thus Pavlovski became an associate of Makhno, and in September he was now commander of the 4th Crimean Corps in Makhno's Ukrainian Revolutionary Insurgent Army. There is no reliable data on Pavlovski's fate, but there is some information recording his death in 1921.

Petrovski, Mikhail Alexandrovich

Real surname Mikhail Aleksandrovich Piotrovsky. (1880-?). Metalworker. An anarcho-syndicalist from 1906. One of the leaders of the Odessa Federation of Anarchists (1917), organiser of factory and workplace committees. A delegate of two All-Russian Conferences of Factory Committees. Participant in the October Uprising in Petrograd, member of the Military Revolutionary Committee. In early 1918 volunteered to join the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

By the beginning of 1921 he demobilized and returned to Petrograd. Worked in the Union of Metal Workers as a "Soviet anarchist". By 1922 the unions created by the anarcho-syndicalists were disbanded, and their printed editions were shut down. We have not been able to ascertain the fate of Petrovski. He is not on the list of those repressed in the 1920s and 1930s. No later than 1927 Petrovski becomes a "silent person", i.e. he is not mentioned in Soviet publications.

Commentary on the Official Accounts

The essence of the disagreement between the anarchist-syndicalists and the communists lay in their different approaches to the organisation of trade unions. The anarchist-syndicalists regarded traditional trade unions as an obsolete form of the labour movement, contrasting them with factory committees (*fabzavkoms*). In their opinion, with the help of the Factory Committees the proletariat would be able to establish genuine workers' control, and then to establish independent production and distribution, to reorganize the whole economic life of the country in the spirit of stateless socialism – a future with popular self-government in federations of Factory Committees (syndicates), that is, trade unions of a new type.

The Bolsheviks disagreed with this approach. In particular Trotsky, who made an opening speech at the First All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees which took place from 17 to 22 October 1917, that is, a few days before the October revolution. In all, 137 delegates attended the conference, of whom 11 were anarcho-syndicalists, i.e. 8%. Petrovski (at this time under the surname Piotrovski) spoke twice at this conference.

In the debates Piotrovski, on behalf of the Odessa anarcho-syndicalists, made the following remark:

“The trade unions want to gobble up the factory committees. There is no dissatisfaction with the committees, but there is dissatisfaction with the trade unions. The practice of the trade union movement leads to conciliation, no matter how organised they are. For workers, trade unions are an external imposition, [while] factory committees are close to them. Anarchists believe they must create and develop the cells of the future. <...>. Factory committees are the cells of the future. They will govern, not the state...”

Looking ahead a couple of years, we note that this disagreement with Trotsky cost him dearly. Note that the list of participants in this conference, given in the appendix to the 1927 edition quoted above, does not mention the name of Petrovski (Piotrovski). Only five delegates from Odessa are listed. It follows that by 1927 our hero becomes a “silent person”. And just a few months later, the same term would correspond to his main opponent, Trotsky. As for the phrase “participant of the October revolt in Petrograd, member of the Military-Revolutionary Committee” in the official information about our hero, we were able to find in the three-volume “Petrograd Military-Revolutionary Committee” (1966) only the following mention:

October 30, 1917. *“The MRC hereby certifies that comrade Petrovski is appointed commissar of the firearms depot at the village of Rybatsky and that issues from this depot require his permission.”* Petrovski was in this position until 17 November, when he was replaced by another commissar. It is most likely that some documents about Petrovski have not been included in the collection.

The Work of Petrovski in the Rear and the KSA

In his memoirs, Antonov-Ovseenko claimed that in early March 1919 Petrovski had no connection with Dybenko’s army headquarters and *“was not allowed to work in the army”*. In this we see the echoes of his “wrong” behaviour, either he was indeed “associated with the Makhnovist movement”, as stated in the biographical information about him, or he was not liked by Antonov for some other reason.

According to K.S. Bessmertny, by the winter of 1918-1919 the anarchist-syndicalists began to gather in the Ukraine to defend the Ukrainian revolution from within the ranks of Makhno’s Insurgent Army. Indeed Petrovski (or his namesake without initials) is mentioned once in Makhno’s memoirs among his other comrades-in-arms. But during the existence of the Zadneprovsk division, Makhno’s men were not only recognized as supporters of Soviet power, but were included as an independent brigade in this division.

At the beginning of 1919, Petrovski was engaged in “setting up the supply apparatus” of the *Zadniprovtsy* from Odessa. In February, during the capture of Ekaterinoslav, he spoke at rallies there, and was already on the staff of the Zadneprovsk Division. Dybenko appreciated Petrovski, but on more than one occasion he had to defend him, alleging that as an anarchist he had not been entrusted with responsible areas of work. On the other hand, it is known that no later than March 1919, he became Chief of Staff of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment of the 2nd Zadneprovsk Brigade. This regiment entered Sevastopol at the end of April and a telegram about this important event is signed by him.

When Dybenko left the Crimea to suppress the Grigoriev mutiny, Petrovski, already Chief of Staff of the KSA, replaced him.

During the Crimean military campaign of 1919, the label of anarchist stuck firmly to Petrovski. Thus every complaint began with a reference to his anarchism. For example, the summary of the Crimean Regional Committee for the CC CP(b)U⁴⁸ on 19 May, compiled by M. D. Shuster, mentions the *“hidden struggle” of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee with the headquarters of the KSA*. It emphasises that the main role in these actions of the headquarters is played by *“the anarchist Petrovski”*. But judging by the surviving documents, his behaviour was not at all anarchistic. He stood up for legality in any military episode.

A letter of 25 May can serve as an example of his activity as KSA Deputy Commander; it had three addressees: Lenin, the Deputy Chairman of the RMC of the RSFSR, Sklyansky, and the Chief of Military Supplies, Sudjin. The letter is also signed by D. I. Ulyanov, Presovrnarkom of Crimea, and Tolmachev, member of the RMC of the Crimean SSR. The letter sets out a view of the current military situation and a

⁴⁸ Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine.



request for military and technical assistance to the KSA from the Centre. The letter also bears the resolution of B. N. Muravin, Military Commissar of the Artillery Directorate of the Moscow Military District and at the same time Commissioner of the Central Supply Department of the RSFSR. Muravin, who was in Crimea with an inspection, in his resolution confirms what was set out in the Crimean letter and names the specific amounts of military equipment to be sent to the KSA as a matter of urgency.

Trotsky's pathological hatred of anarchism and anarchists prompted him to issue an order for the execution of Petrovski. Let us recall that the initiator of the case against Petrovski and Astakhov for the unauthorized conclusion of an armistice with the Allies in April 1919 in Sevastopol was Rakovski, then joined by Chicherin. Then Trotsky, in early June, issued an order for the arrest of Petrovski and Astakhov.

Petrovski's actual transgression was an attempt to distance himself, and ideally to achieve complete independence of the Crimean Army from its recent patron, the Ukrainian Front under the command of Antonov-Ovseenko. Petrovski also had personal motives in this respect: unlike Dybenko, he was not friendly with Antonov-Ovseenko and did not enjoy his patronage.

In a letter to Lenin on this subject, D.I. Ulyanov expressed himself more mildly, saying that Trotsky's order "was caused by the previous conflicts of Comrade Trotski with Comrade Petrovski". Ulyanov further testifies:

"The recent activities of Petrovski, which took place before my eyes, certainly deserve careful consideration with regard to the accusations levelled against him. Although he is an anarchist, he has not shown any real negative attitude towards Soviet power; and as an example we can point to his speeches in the Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Deputies and at Red Army rallies, with slogans for Soviet power and full discipline in the army. Petrovski is well known to Zorin, and Comrade Kamenev has also had some time to get to know him. Following Comrade Trotsky's order Petrovski has been sent to Moscow at the disposal of the Defence Council. We ask that he be given the opportunity to explain himself to you personally, or to someone at your direction."

The letter of Ulyanov to Lenin of 9 June, with a request to deal with the accusation of Petrovski and Astakhov, was brought to Moscow by Petrovski himself, together with B. N. Muravin, who had returned to Moscow. On 14 June Petrovski and Muravin had an appointment with Lenin and handed over the above letter. This follows from Lenin's note of the same date: "Comrade Smilga! This letter from my brother was delivered to me by Comrades Petrovski and Muravin, who came from the Crimea. Please give legal action to this application and arrange for the case to be sent to the Moscow court, if possible, and for trial. Your Lenin."

To this note Lenin attached a letter by Ulyanov of 9 June 1919, for submission to the court; while he crossed out the first part of the letter (about Knipovich) in blue pencil, as irrelevant to the Petrovski case, and in the text he notes that Gaven and Wolfson are members of the Crimean government, so their opinion should be listened to by the court.

The files of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party contain the following traces of correspondence on the Petrovski case:

On 16 July the Serpukhov Military Prosecutor's Office (Revvoentribunal) requested the Secretariat of the Central Committee: "Please inform immediately what assignment Comrade Petrovski has received," addressed to Moscow, Central Committee; the Secretariat's stamp reads: "Handed on by Pisevich".

The next day (17/UP) a question follows from the Secretariat (ref. No. 4152): about which Petrovski this related to. The reply from Serpukhov: "To the division chief of staff in the Crimea, who signed an agreement with the Allied command in Sevastopol."

Since the RCP(b) were not going to make any further appointments for Petrovski, the Secretariat of the Central Committee did not reply to the Serpukhov Revvoentribunal.

It is clear that Petrovski was unable to return to the Crimea by the time the Reds evacuated. Apparently, after the trial he demobilised and moved to Petrograd. We only know about the fate of Petrovski from www.makhno.ru (see above).



KSA leadership and other military personnel mentioned in the book

Antonov-Ovseenko, B. A. – from 4 January to 15 June 1919 he was commander of the Ukrainian Front. Unofficially many strongly opposed his appointment and wrote to Lenin for his removal.

Nevertheless, Antonov remained in office until the liquidation of the Ukrainian Communist Party.

Anders – at KSA headquarters (Simferopol).

Averkin – Chief of Staff, 1st KSA Division, Dzhankoy.

Baisha, S. Ya. – Commissar, 1st Special Crimean Soviet Regiment.

Belozubov, Stepan Stepanovich – Commander of the 9th regiment.

Bespyatov, Georgiy – Political Commissar of the 3rd Shock Crimean Soviet Regiment.

Bobenko – Commander of the 3rd Reserve Regiment.

Budnik – commander of the 3rd Taurida Ukrainian Soviet Regiment.

Chaika – commander of a Red detachment in Taurida.

Chaika, Grigory Nikolaevich – commander of the 1st Shock Regiment (3 battalions, 9 companies). On 3 May transferred to the headquarters of the 3rd Brigade, i.e. to Makhno.

Chernyak – commander of the 5th Cavalry Regiment after Vasilyev.

Dobritzki – Chief of Staff of the 1st Division.

Dybets, S. S. – Commissar, 4th Emergency Brigade, 58th Division.

Fedotov, A. – commander of the group acting for Dybenko against Grigoriev, taking over from Parkhomenko on 25 May. Brigade Commander of the 2nd (Special) KSA Brigade. The 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment was based in Sevastopol under him.

Fedko, I.F. – Commander of the 174th Brigade, 58th Division.

Filippov, S. V. – Chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Fuks – commandant of the army headquarters from 20 May.

Ganzen – commander of the People's Commissariat of Defence.

Gavrilov – commander of the cavalry *divizion* at Ak-Monai.

Gorishny, Emel'yan – his artillery battery was attached to the 3rd Taurida regiment.

Gubanov, M.K. Commissar of the 3rd Crimean Brigade; Commissar of the 173rd Brigade.

Ionin – Deputy Chief of Crimean Aviation.

Kalinichenko, F.D. – the 2nd Crimean Soviet Regiment operated in the Kherson-Kakhovka area under his command. The retreat of the Crimean group from Armyansk to the Kakhovka crossing was covered by the 2nd Crimean Rifle Regiment under his command.

Kan, (Kleiman) David Mikhailovich – Commissar of the 4th Zadneprovsk at the passage of Chongar. Political Commissar of the Crimean Area Forces.

Karpenko, V.N. – commander of the 3rd Taurida Soviet Regiment. Commander of the 522nd Regiment of the 58th Division in autumn 1919.

Kaganov (Koganov) – commander of the Simferopol International Battalion, renamed the 1st Crimean International Reserve Regiment (at Army Headquarters).

Kaydetskiy – commander of one of the detachments at Perekop.

Khrapov (Haginos – ?) – Chief of the punitive detachment (*sotnia*) named after Dybenko, formed in Melitopol in March 1919.



Kipa (Kippa) – Chief of the garrison in Genichesk.

Klyarfeld – Chief of the Operational Division of the KSA Headquarters, Acting Chief of Staff.

Kozyrev, G. G. – member of the Revolutionary Tribunal, provincial governor of Kherson.

Kochergin, Grigory Antonovich – commander of a regiment formed in Melitopol. Fought in Berdyansk and Pologi/Melitopol areas. 4th Emergency Brigade of the 58th Division.

Krepko – Political Commander of the headquarters in Aleksandrovsk.

Kulakov – Commander of the volunteer battalion in the village of Seytler.

Kupyansky, P. – commandant of Sevastopol.

Kvotchenko, Nikolai – Commander of the 2nd Special Crimean Soviet Regiment formed in Vladislavovka from the 1st Melitopol Reserve Regiment of volunteers. Commander of the 4th Zadneprovsk Regiment at the passage of Chongar.

Lavrentyev (Leontyev-?) – formed a detachment near Melitopol.

Lorup – commander of a cavalry unit from 14 May.

Lukomski, Petr Illich – Commissar of the 1st Zadneprovsk Rifle Division from March 1919. District Military Commissar of Yalta from November 1920.

Lunev – Commander of the 5th Zadneprovsk Regiment during the passage of Chongar and later at Ak-Monai.

Markozashvili, K. G. – commander of a cavalry regiment. Until mid-March 1919, commandant of Melitopol.

Maslov, L.A. – commander of the Group operating against Grigoriev in the area of Kherson and Snygirevka. Commanded the 3rd Crimean Brigade on the line Novospasskoye, Molchansk, Bolshoi Tokmak. Later chief of the 173rd Brigade of the 58th Division.

Moshnyak, Yakov – Commander of the cavalry *division* stationed near Feodosiya.

Moiseenko, I. S. – regional military commander, Melitopol. Commander of the 1st Special Crimean Soviet Regiment.

Moiseev – commander of the Special Regiment (most probably I. S. Moiseenko, see above).

Mokrousov, A. V. – Commander of the 174th Brigade of the 58th Division after A. Fedotov.

Muravin, B. N. – Military Commissar of the Artillery Directorate of the Moscow Military District (OKARTU), and at the same time at the Central Supply Administration of the RSFSR.

Ognivtsev – at the headquarters of the 1st Division in Dzhankoy.

Ostroukhov – Head of the Operational Department of the KSA Headquarters, Simferopol.

Panchenko – Commandant of Simferopol from 10 May.

Parkhomenko – from Kharkov. Fought against Grigoriev in Ekaterinoslav. Led the local recruitment (?) of the military. On 25 May he handed over his affairs to Fedotov.

Plaksin – battalion commander, Armyansk.

Podskrobko – commander of the 3rd Crimean Soviet Shock Regiment (Sevastopol).

Popov – commander of the Eastern International Detachment (at Perekop during the retreat). Assistant to Kaganov. Commander of the Simferopol International Battalion, renamed the 1st Crimean International Reserve Regiment (at Army Headquarters).

Rogov – district commander of Perekop.

Sandomirsky – Commandant of Chongar District. Commander of the Sivash District Security Detachment, his headquarters was in Chongar. 21 March the commandant of Melitopol.

Sergeev – (?) near Kherson, acting Chief of Staff of the KSA. Left-SR. Formerly at Sablin's headquarters in Moscow during the Left-SR Rebellion.

Shapilski, A. – commander of the armoured train "Rosa Luxemburg", which at the end of June retreated from Fedorovka station near Melitopol to Novoalekseevka, from there to Kakhovka and Kherson, and further (in August 1919) to Odessa.

Shebyakin – military commander of the garrison in Yalta.

Shishkin, Alexander – commander of the 5th Zadneprovsk when passing Chongar; deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal; Chief of the entire Ak-Monai combat area.

Shishkin, Andrey – regimental commander.

Silka – commander of the International Regiment.

Sladkevich, Ya. – Chief of the garrison in Yalta, military commissar, executive editor of the Red Star (Yalta).

Slepchenko, Nikolai Andreevich – commander of the cavalry platoon for the protection of the Black Sea coast on the territory of Evpatoriya district. He then served in the 58th Division. Proposal for the award of the Order of the Red Star was signed by Nakhodkin.

Snarskiy – Deputy Chief of Staff of the KSA.

Sokolsky, I. – Treasurer of the Field Treasury.

Stupakov – Political Commissar of the 5th Zadneprovsk at the passage of Chongar. Chief of Staff of the Zadneprovsk Division, Deputy to Petrenko.

Takhtamyshev – commander of the 4th Kerch Regiment.

Taran, P.I. – commander of the detachment at Perekop; the line from Tenderovo Spit to Evpatoriya was guarded by his partisan detachment.

Timashevsky – commander of the punitive detachment of the 3rd Taurida Regiment.

Tkachenko – commander of the detachment acting against Grigoriev in Elizavetgrad. Commander of the partisan detachment of the 1st (i.e. Grigoriev) Brigade of the Zadneprovsk Division.

Vasiliev – commander of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, which arrived in Sinelnikovo on 24 April. Replaced by Cherniak.

Vasiliev – Commissar of the 4th Zadneprovsk at the passage of Chongar and at the capture of Sevastopol. Commander of the 517th regiment of the 58th Division.

Volodin – commander of a detachment that joined Kvotchenko's regiment.

Zakhovsky – Chief of Crimean Aviation, his assistant was Ionin.

Zabiro – commander of the Auto Armour *Divizion* (particularly fighting at Perekop).

Zelenov – Assistant Chief of the Operations Department of the 1st Division. Group commander (Chaplynka, Kakhovka).

Zinchenko – Deputy Regimental Political Commissar.



Appendix 2

The Crimean Cheka in 1919

With regard to the Crimean Cheka, here is the opinion of the Kremlin in Moscow of the Ukrainian Chekists. It turns out that it was, to put it mildly, disapproving. Lenin wrote to the chairman of the All-Ukrainian Cheka M. I. Latsis on 4 June 1919: "... *Kamenev says – and states that several prominent Chekists confirm – that the Cheka in Ukraine has brought great evil, being created too early and letting a lot of useless people in. Its composition needs to be more strictly controlled – I hope Dzerzhinski from here will help you with that ...*". In the Crimea, however, things took on their own shape, both in terms of the composition and actions of the Cheka.

Let us begin with the official reference data: The Crimean Cheka (Simferopol group) was established in April 1919. It was abolished by the Decision of the SNK of the Crimean SSR on 21 May and was placed in the Special Office of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Crimean Soviet Army. The chairman was Gorev (April to 9 May). Let us try to expand on this meagre information.

The initial period of the second Red invasion of the Crimea was characterized by the dual power of the purely military and civilian Extraordinary Commissions (Cheka). On the one hand, the so-called "front-line" Cheka (there were three of them) continued to operate there, and on the other hand there was the Taurida provincial Cheka. The "front-line" Cheka was brought in by Dybenko's troops. As P. I. Lukomski, the political commissar of the 1st Zadneprovsk Division later reported, his predecessor D. M. Kleitman (who used the pseudonym Kan) concentrated all his work on "*completely unnecessary [Cheka] emergency work*". The front-line Chekists presented their task as "*supervising the actions of the local front-line authorities*". What really stood behind these words is best illustrated by the illiterate orders of the front-line Cheka (see Appendix 1). Naturally, the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee did not tolerate the interference of the front-line Cheka in its affairs and a conflict broke out. The reason for it was trifling: Order No. 2 suggested that private hairdressing salons should be transferred to the hairdressers' union "in order to cleanse this branch of labour from exploiters and allow the Union, whose activities would run under your control, to operate." Laura's (E.R. Bagaturyants) reply to the front-line Cheka was very sharp, summarising her attitude to the encroachment on the rights of the Revolutionary Committee:

"In view of the fact that all supreme civil authority belongs EXCLUSIVELY to the Simferopol Military-Revolutionary Committee, we suggest from now on that you not give instructions on matters outside the circle of your activity."

Not only that, Laura soon succeeded in convincing Dybenko to eliminate the front-line Cheka completely. The corresponding order of 8 May bears the signatures of both Laura and Dybenko.

"To all district and city Revolutionary Committees and Sovdeps of the Crimea.

All three frontline Emergency Commissions on the territory of the Crimean Soviet Republic are deemed unauthorised and invalid. <...> All questions of a special nature are supervised by the Special Department at the staff of the Crimean Soviet Army.

May 8, 1919. № 8488.

People's Commissar of the Army of the Crimea Dybenko.

Chairman of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee Bagaturyants."

The document bears the seal of the Revkom. For a more accurate version (and earlier) of the text, see Order No. 2 for KSA Staff, dated 6 May. Thus, the functions of the military ("front-line") Cheka were transferred to the Special Office of the newly established Crimean Soviet Army.



One of the first meetings of the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee (15 April) was devoted to the organization of the city Cheka, which soon became the Taurida Province Cheka. According to the minutes, a report on this subject was made by the instructor of the All-Ukrainian Cheka I.V. Durandin. At the same time the headquarters of the Cheka was approved, and candidates for the Cheka were discussed and approved. It was decided to publish a newspaper article on the subject. At first, the Cheka was headed by Durandin himself, soon after Kupaigorodski was confirmed as chairman. Thus, with the approval of the Revolutionary Committee, the Cheka was staffed not by random but by well-known people. However, it should be recalled that this was against a background of very tentative legitimacy of the Revolutionary Committee itself. Some of the responsible persons of the Taurida Cheka are listed in Appendix 2. The entire period of operation of this Cheka (initially a city Cheka, but soon a provincial Cheka), was controlled by the Revolutionary Committee. An indirect result of the lawful work of the Simferopol Cheka was the acquittal of Laura at the trial when the Denikinty returned to Crimea.

The papers of the Provincial Cheka do not have the flamboyance and illiteracy inherent in the orders of the front-line Cheka, but the essence of the activity remains. Thus during searches and arrests they took, *“weapons, jewels, military articles, liquor and stills, medals, all silver, gold and copper coins. All weapons taken away must be handed over to the Military Commissariat according to lists and protocols.”* Reasonable orders also occurred: the closure of gambling clubs and prohibition of gambling; the *“registration(!) of moonshine and stills”*; prohibition of drunkenness on the streets. In the *Izvestia* there is a characteristic announcement that anonymous and unsubstantiated denunciations will be ignored.

The spirit of the previous era was not without its influence: janitors were liable for concealing counter-revolutionary organisations and speculations, just like in the tsarist times.

Almost immediately after the transfer of power from the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee to the government chaired by D. I. Ulyanov, the Taurida Cheka was dissolved. By 22 May the head of the Crimean Provisional Government of Ulyanov and People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs Y. P. Gaven signed a decree abolishing it⁴⁹.

To complete the picture, let us look at what the Simferopol Revolutionary Committee did in terms of policing. The security of the Revolutionary Committee itself and the organisation of visitors was initially provided by the student militia P. Novitsky recalled for the period: *“Masses of student and worker youths with red armbands on their left sleeves filtered visitors and let them into the offices. A youth guard served the Revolutionary Committee.”* But at the insistence of the Obkom, the student guard was disbanded for class reasons. The Jaeger Brigade⁵⁰ of German-colonists guarded the Crimea until 23 April. The minutes of that date state: *“For the 10 days which the Jaeger Brigade had been at the disposal of the Revolutionary Committee, to settle accounts with it.”* At the same meeting, *“Instructions were given to Mr. Bogdanov on the formation of a ‘workers’ and peasants’ militia for Simferopol.”*⁵¹ The previous officials – the head of the city guards and the head of the city police were to urgently hand over their cases to Bogdanov, who became the head of the militia.

In mid-May the detachment of the Provincial City Militia numbered 375 policemen and had an incomplete set of rifles (215).

At the time of the Reds’ second arrival Special Purpose Units (ChON) had not yet been deployed in Crimea. The reason was simple – there were not a significant number of Bolsheviks around which such units could

⁴⁹ Resolution of the Crimean SNK at the meeting of 21 May “In accordance with the proposals made by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Sevastopol Revolutionary Committee resolved:

1. To deprive all special army departments and control stations of the right of trial and shootings, making them investigative bodies...”

⁵⁰ Supposedly 1,700 bayonets, actually 800 (the rest were on leave). Made up of rich peasants with German officers (not communists) left by occupation forces. It operated on behalf of the 40,000 German colonists in the area.

⁵¹ How many peasants were in Simferopol?



be formed, and they were meant to be mostly Bolsheviks with pre-revolutionary experience. Only the headquarters of the Crimean ChON had been picked. The first Crimean ChON detachments were created only in August 1919, during the reorganization of the Crimean Soviet Army, which had retreated from Crimea.

Let us now turn to the work of the Cheka in Sevastopol. After the withdrawal of the Allied ships from Sevastopol the City's Emergency Committee headed by Y. M. Krupchitsky (Torba) started its work on 28 April as it reported in its order No 1. The surrender of all weapons within three days was Order No. 2. The third Order 3 is interesting and informative.

The first part forbade, *"arbitrary searches, arrests, seizure of private flats, any lynchings, including those against former members of the Volunteer Army, requisitions, confiscations and other violations of the Revolutionary order."*

The second part suppressed attempts to sow national discord: *"All appeals and speeches against a particular nation will be punished with the full severity of the Revolutionary laws up to and including firing squad."*

Order No. 4 stopped, *"the sale of drinks, both spirits and wine."*

According to the documents of Sevastopol Cheka all was well. Among its orders there was even a decree on the prohibition of all kinds of begging. But in the middle of May the it became notorious for summary executions. We refer to the report on the activities of the Sevastopol Cheka at the meeting of the City Revolutionary Committee. The chairman of the Committee, B. Zanko, reported that *"nine people were shot without trial by the Red Army and four by the Extraordinary Commission. Two of them as bandits and two as counter-revolutionaries."* A discussion ensued. The Communists demanded that the perpetrators of the shootings should be brought to justice and that in future no further shootings should be carried out without the sanction of the Revolutionary Committee. In the opinion of the Mensheviks, the Revolutionary Committee had no right to sanction shootings at all, as it took no part in the investigation or in the trial, and a revolutionary tribunal must be created for that purpose. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik Aleksakis, followed by the Left S-R I. Semenov, demanded that the Revolutionary Committee approve or annul each verdict of the tribunal.

In connection with the shootings in Sevastopol, the Crimean Sovnarkom, on the proposal of the Sevastopol Revolutionary Committee, decreed on 21 May:

1. The removal of the right of trial and execution from all army special departments and control posts, making them investigative bodies.
2. Organising as a matter of urgency a Military Revolutionary Tribunal of the Army and a Revolutionary Tribunal of the Crimean Republic.
3. Henceforth no firing squad can be carried out without the trial of a Revolutionary Tribunal.
4. To appoint an Investigative Commission with extraordinary powers consisting of representatives of: the People's Commissar of Justice, the People's Commissar of Control and the Military Revolutionary Council of the Republic, to investigate the causes of shootings and bring those responsible to the strictest accountability.
5. To instruct the same commission to investigate the unacceptable behaviour of certain members of the military authorities in relation to the workers' organisations of Sevastopol. This refers to the protest by the metalworkers' union against the actions of the head of the army's artillery supply, Mr. Polivanov.

In contrast to the provincial Cheka, local Chekas were created independently, sometimes from quite random people. And as such Chekas had enormous powers, this could lead to abuses. Such a case took

place in Feodosiya. We do not have any reliable information about the Feodosiya Cheka, but “White” newspapers testified about its particular cruelty. Allegedly in Feodosiya, *“brutal executions, shootings and torture were carried out en masse. The arrival of Volunteers made it possible to witness the horrors of the disgusting work of the Communists, to make photographic images and to bury the bodies in a Christian way.”*

Unfortunately, we find confirmation of the bloody events in Feodosiya not only in V. B. Veresaev’s novel “Stalemate” (the novel is a work of fiction, which gives it the right to distort), but also in a publication dedicated to the reading and discussion of this novel by the highest officials in Soviet Russia. Kamenev, Dzerzhinski, Stalin, Kuibyshev, Sokolnikov, Kurski, Voronsky, Bedniy, Kogan and others were at the reading and discussion in the Kremlin on 1 January 1923 of “Stalemate”. Stalin was in favour of publishing the novel, not by the state but by a private publishing house. During the discussion Dzerzhinski inquired about the reality of Iskander, head of the Feodosiya Cheka and his fate, intending to give a legal trial for the atrocities. Veresaev explained that after the arrival of the Whites, Iskander was tracked down and shot by Dashnaks⁵² near a barbershop where he was trying to change his appearance. In response to the reproach that Veresaev was allegedly slandering the Cheka, Dzerzhinski remarked: *“Comrades, between us – that’s how it happened!”* Although the head of the Crimean Interior Ministry reported to Moscow that the Revolutionary Committee in Feodosiya consisted of Communists, this did not seem to help avoid abuses in the Cheka there.

⁵² An Armenian political party.

