

Simferopol Officer Regiment in the Crimea

The first section of the history of the Regiment by V. Almendinger.

November 1918 - the Founding of the Simferopol Officer Battalion.

On 5 November 1918 Old Style (18 November, New Style) the Simferopol Officer Battalion was founded. The newly organised unit was enlisted in the Volunteer Army as the "Simferopol Officer Battalion" and Staff-Captain N. Orlov was appointed its commander.

It was announced at that time that volunteers would be enrolled into it. The ranks began to fill and the formation of the 3rd and 4th Companies began. Weapons, uniforms and materiel were obtained, by hook or by crook. An old armoured car was found in warehouses at the local airfield, was transported to the barracks, put into running order, armed and served as the basis for the battalion's auto-armoured platoon. It was named "Orlik"¹. The Germans, who were leaving the Crimea at that time, sold a howitzer battery – in full combat readiness. The artillery officers, who were made up as companies, received horses from the local fire brigade. They took over these guns, and in this way the Simferopol Officer Battery was created. Machine guns were found in the depots and a machine-gun team was created.

In mid-November Major-General Korvin-Krukovski arrived in Simferopol, appointed by General Denikin, first as commander of the Volunteer units in the Crimea and later as commander of the 4th Infantry Division (formed around the Simferopol Officers' Battalion). At the end of November it was ordered that all officers were mobilised; but the pace of recruitment was very sluggish, and relatively few of the numerous officers in the Crimea at that time showed up. At this time Colonel P. Morilov enlisted as a volunteer in the Army. He was appointed as battalion commander by Gen. Korvin-Krukovski, who knew Morilov from his service with him in the Finnish Rifle units, in order that he turn the battalion into a regiment.

Simultaneously with the organisation of the regiment in Simferopol there were other formations being raised in the cities of the Crimea. In Yalta, Captain B. Gattenberger (13th Life Grenadiers Erivan Regiment) formed two companies. These companies were assigned to the regiment and, as the 5th and 6th companies, arrived in Simferopol in the middle of December. They laid the foundation for the 2nd Battalion under the command of Gattenberger. In Sevastopol, Captain Kotter organised two companies and they were also included in the regiment as the 3rd Battalion. These companies, however, did not join the regiment until March 1919, when the regiment was fighting at Perekop. Kotter nevertheless provided invaluable assistance to the regiment by sending rifles, machine guns and cartridges, which were in short supply, from Sevastopol.

On the arrival of the companies of the 2nd Battalion at Simferopol, the Simferopol Officer Battalion was renamed the Simferopol Officer Regiment.

Until the end of 1918 the regiment was forming; from November, after the withdrawal of the German troops, the regiment carried out guard duty in Simferopol and the town was noticeably calmer.

By the beginning of 1919, when the regiment went into active operations in the Crimea, the first battalion was already fully formed, the second battalion had two full companies and a third under formation, and the third battalion had two companies in Sevastopol. In addition, a machine gun team with 16 machine guns, a communications team and a regimental headquarters were formed. The regiment also had an auto-armoured platoon and a howitzer battery.

¹ That is, Eagle.



The Beginning of 1919 and the First Actions in the Region.

First Actions – the Elimination of Banditry

At the beginning of 1919, with the Bolshevik front approaching, the situation in Crimea worsened: banditry and Bolshevik agitation began to grow. The first large manifestation of banditry was in Evpatoria – at the end of December 1918, ex-sailor Petrichenko settled down with his gang in the Evpatoria quarries and from there terrorised the surrounding population with robbery and murder.

The local authorities were powerless to do anything, and so the Army Commander sent a detachment under the command of Captain Orlov to Evpatoria to fight the bandits, with part of the 1st Company of the regiment with 2 machine guns, 2 guns and a demolition squad. The detachment set out from Simferopol on 1 January and combat activities began that day. In a three-day heavy battle, the bandits (183 men) led by ataman Petrichenko were killed and the quarries were destroyed. The detachment had two officers killed and one volunteer and two officers wounded. After completing the operation, the detachment remained in Evpatoria to carry out garrison service.

Almost simultaneously, in the area of the Toplovsky Monastery (near Karasubazar²), a new gang appeared and on 6 January the 4th Company was sent under the command Captain Turchaninov to eliminate it. Having successfully fought the bandits for several days, the 4th Company returned to Simferopol and on 15 January was sent to Evpatoria to replace the unit of Captain Orlov, which returned to Simferopol.

Headquarters without an Army

To explain some further events in the life of the regiment, I will dwell in some more detail on the general situation of that time in Simferopol. The regiment was stationed (except for the 3rd Battalion) in Simferopol, where it recruited individual officers and volunteers. The regiment obtained its materials (rifles, machine guns, cartridges, etc.) from abandoned warehouses. It carried out garrison service, which became harder and harder every day. Banditry and Bolshevik agitation grew more and more.

The local authorities' fight against the bandits and Bolsheviks, if not criminal, was in any event, sluggish, cowardly and inept. People like Murzak, Popandopulo and their comrades, the leaders of the Bolsheviks during their period of terror and plunder from January to April 1918, sat in prison. For some reason the authorities were afraid to try them. The local press, led by left-wing elements (the newspapers *Yuzhnye Vedomosti* and *Priboy*³), openly campaigned against the Volunteer Army. Terror was committed against some of the Army (volunteer Polishchuchenko of our regiment was killed).

Due to the tense situation overall, the relationship between the Crimean government and the local command of the Volunteer Army began to deteriorate, and instead of both being loyal to each other friction arose, sometimes quite sharp. General Borovski was commander of the Volunteer Army in Simferopol – at that time called the Crimean-Azov Army – with General Parkhomov as the Army Chief of Staff. The headquarters of the Army, which was very numerous, occupied the whole of the Hotel Europe (the largest in Simferopol). It was strange that at that time there was such a large headquarters without an army.

Formation of Volunteer Army Units in Simferopol

In Simferopol, in addition to the six companies and the teams of the Simferopol Officer Regiment, a Regiment of the 13th Infantry Division⁴ was being formed. By February it was still only very weak. At the beginning of the year the Simferopol garrison of was somewhat strengthened by the column that arrived

² Now Bilohirs'k.

³ *Southern Herald* and *Surf*.

⁴ This is a "composite" or "consolidated" unit, where a regiment was formed around officers largely from the old Tsarist division of that number.



from Yekaterinoslav led by General Vasilchenko, part of which later formed the basis of the Regiment of the 34th Infantry Division. These three regiments – the Simferopol Officers and those of the 13th ID and the 34th ID – were supposed to form the Volunteer Army's 4th Infantry Division under Major-General Korvin-Krukovski. In reality there were no complete units (except for several small military units sent from the Kuban and stationed in other cities of the Crimea), only cadres around which units still had to be created.

Unfortunately the leadership appointed for this purpose did little. The mobilisation of officers was carried out unsuccessfully and ineptly: there were very few combat-ready privates, and many cripples and older men were enlisted (for example, in our regiment four colonels were appointed, one of them was from the general staff and the rest were former regimental commanders in the Great War). Army Chief of Staff, General Parkhomov, unsuccessfully pursued the idea of arming the "trustworthy population". All these and many other reasons created an extremely tense situation. Local authorities awaited the appearance of the Bolsheviks. The Army Headquarters guarded itself with sentries and machine guns.

Report by Staff Captain Orlov and Captain Gattenberger.

The resulting general situation greatly worried the officers of the regiment, and so the battalion commanders, Staff Captain Orlov and Captain Gattenberger – taking into account the mood in the companies, where the majority were officers – reported this to the regiment's commander. The regiment's commander, Colonel Morilov, in view of the seriousness of the situation and to satisfy the battalion commanders' requests, submitted a report to the Army Commander. The report mentioned all the issues of concern to the officers and pointed at unsatisfactory work of General Parkhomov, General Faleyev and Colonel Kramarenko (the last two dealt with supply of the army). It should be emphasised that the report, being particularly important, was written directly to the Army Commander and submitted in secret in accordance with the "Regulations on Reports", along with a copy to Division commander, Major-General Korvin-Krukovski.

Life in the regiment went on normally, but some dark elements inflated tales about the report into a revolt. The headquarters armed themselves, on the orders of General Parkhomov, as he was informed that the regiment was about to arrest. Concerned about the situation, General Borovski ordered a gathering of the officers of the garrison in the Noblemen's Assembly the day after the report was submitted. General Borovski talked to the officers for more than an hour, evidently wishing to clarify the situation. His anxiety over the report was clear.

First Battalion Sent to the Front

On 6 February, a few days after the submission of the report, the regiment's commander received a telephone message from 4th Division HQ, No. 441, passing on orders from the Crimean-Azov Army for the dispatch of the regiment's 1st Battalion under Staff Captain Orlov to the front in the city of Melitopol, at the disposal of the 5th Division's commander, General Schilling. The 4th Company, located in Evpatoria, was hastily summoned to Simferopol to join the battalion, which was preparing to leave as quickly as it could. On the morning of 8 February General Brovski unexpectedly arrived at the premises of the 1st Battalion (in the building of the women's diocesan school) and saw for himself that it was ready to march. Battalion commander, Staff Captain Orlov, met with him and reported on the preparations of the battalion. Incidentally, the battalion commander, in the presence of the company commanders, asked General Borovski: "Your Excellency, is it true that sending the 1st Battalion to the front is the result of the report?" To this Borovski replied: "No, the situation there demands it." Meanwhile rumours circulated in the city and at Army Headquarters that General Parkhomov was afraid he would be arrested, and so the 1st Battalion, being rebellious, was being sent to the front at his insistence.

On the afternoon of 8 February the whole battalion was loaded into carriages and went by rail to Melitopol, where it arrived the next day. General Shilling happened to be at Melitopol station. The battalion



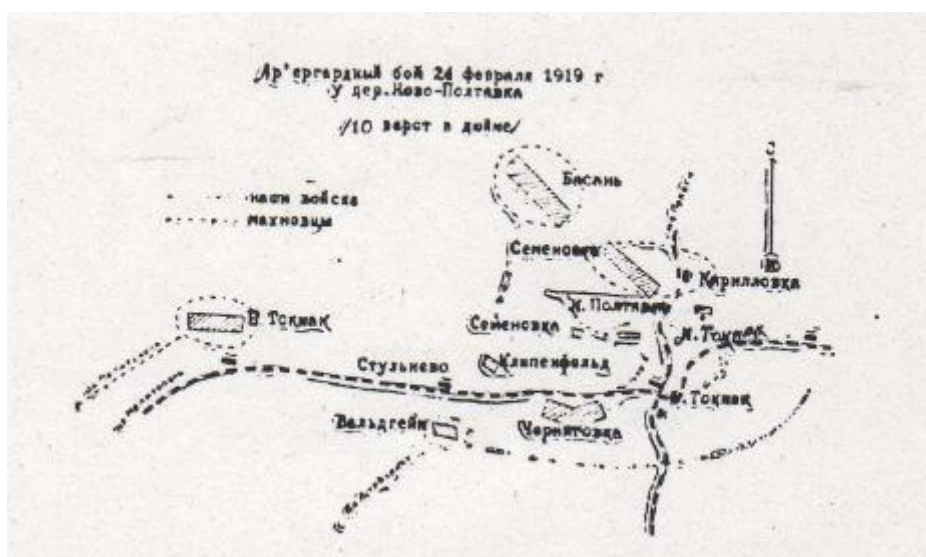
commander went to report being at his disposal, to the extreme surprise of Schilling, who said he had not asked for any help. The "situation" had become clear.

The situation on 23 February in the Melitopol region

The battalion was stationed in Melitopol and only a few days later (14 February) was sent to Verkhny Tokmak station at the disposal of General Tillo. The fight against Makhno's bands began on 16 February, ending with the occupation of the station and the villages of Kirilovka, Basan and Petropavlovka, with 2 officers killed and 4 officers and 1 soldier wounded from the regiment. Under pressure from the mass of the Makhnovists, the detachment retreated to the Mogila Tokmak⁵ – Novopoltavka – Semenovka⁶ line, and the battalion consolidated its position, occupying M. Tokmak to Novopoltavka. The detachment headquarters, having information that the bulk of the Makhnovists were concentrated in the area of Pologi, Konskiye Razdory, Basan and Orekhov⁷, prepared for a drive on Pologi and Gulyai Pole⁸ (Makhno's base). On 23 February the 3rd Company was relocated to Klippenfeld⁹. The attack was scheduled for 24 February, and the battalion was ordered to advance on the Novopoltavka to Klippenfeld front, in the general direction of Pologi. However, Makhno was warned of our attack: on 23 February he occupied B. Tokmak¹⁰ and cut off the detachment's communications with Melitopol. Our attack was cancelled.

Battle at Novopoltavka Village on 24 February

On 24 February, near the village of Novopoltavka, a rear guard action was fought by the detachment, which included the 1st, 2nd and 4th Companies, with two machine guns, two guns and the armoured train "Muromets".¹¹



Rear guard battle of 24 February 1919 near the village of Novopoltavka.

⁵ Now Tokmak-Mohyla.

⁶ Semenivka.

⁷ Polohi, Kins'ki Rozdory, Basan' and Orikhiv.

⁸ Hulyaipole.

⁹ A "German" Mennonite town, near modern Stul'neve.

¹⁰ Bolshoy Tokmak, which is now just Tokmak.

¹¹ Ilya Muromets is a knight in Russian folklore



About 12 o'clock, the detachment under the command of Captain Stolnikov was ordered to cover V. Tokmak¹² until the departure of the armoured train and our units from Belmanka¹³ station, after which the detachment retreated to Waldheim¹⁴ to join General Tillo's units for further movement to Melitopol.

At the same time, the Makhnovists launched an offensive on the railway sector in three thick chains on the road from V. Tokmak to Semenovka inclusive, having on their left flank, east of the railway, 150-200 horsemen supported by two guns. The 4th Company with two machine guns occupied M. Tokmak, and the 1st and 2nd Companies, with two guns, occupied Novopoltavka. The guns took up a position south of that village. The Makhnovists, despite their numerical superiority, advanced very slowly, opening gun fire from 2 to 3 km out. Our guns held back the Makhnovist's attack with well-aimed fire.

At about 15:00 the Makhnovists occupied the village of Semenovka, on their right flank, and began to assault our left flank. The cavalry advanced east of the railway from V. Tokmak to Belmanka. Our armoured train, heading from Belmanka, slipped away. Our chains and machine guns opened fire at 1,500 paces. Captain Stolnikov, seeing that our units seemed have left from Belmanka, that the artillery had shot all their shells and that the Makhnovists threatened the rear and the withdrawal routes to Chernigovka, ordered more rifle and machine-gun fire, which halted the Makhnovist offensive, then quickly led the companies to the southern outskirts of the village. From there, having mounted carts, they left for Chernigovka and from there to Waldheim, where they arrived at about 20:00. Artillery observers reported that at least 3,000-4,000 Makhnovists had attacked in this battle.

General Tillo's entire detachment was now in Waldheim. It turned out that Tillo was not in contact with General Schilling. Who controlled Melitopol – us or the Makhnovists – was unknown, and therefore a decision was made to bypass Melitopol to the east and move to the Crimea along the route Waldheim, Astrakhanka - Voznesenka - Konstantinovka - Lukovich farm - Rodionovka¹⁵.

March from Melitopol to Perekop

At dawn of 25 February the entire detachment set out on carts in the direction of Astrakhanka, with the 1st Battalion of the Simferopol Officer's Regiment as the rear guard. The detachment marched through Astrakhanka on the night of 26 February and moved on to Tikhonovka, then Voznesenka, Konstantinovka and Lukovich farm, which was decided as the point to cross the Molochnaya river.

We moved without reconnaissance the entire time, and as we approached Melitopol, General Tillo did not know who occupied it. In Konstantinovka, however, we learned that there were no troops in the city, and the station was occupied by our men. Tillo, not daring to send reconnaissance to the station, ordered to start the crossing. However, Captain Stolnikov went to the station at his own risk, where he found a detachment of Colonel Mikhailov (battery commander of the 13th Artillery Brigade) and clarified the situation. General Schilling telegraphed Tillo to contact him immediately via Akimovka¹⁶ station and not to move beyond Rodionovka.

In the evening of 27 February the battalion was detached from Tillo's detachment and moved to Akimovka station. From then until 5 March the battalion conducted rear guard actions along the railway line to Rykovo, from where on 5 March it was taken to Dzhankoy station in the Crimea. From Dzhankoy the battalion marched to Perekop to join the regiment, arriving on 8 March. During the retreat at Yuritsyno station the remnants of the Berdyansk Regiment (about 150 men) joined the battalion and were added to the companies of the 1st Battalion.

¹² Verkhni Tokmak

¹³ Bil'manka

¹⁴ In the area of modern Vladivka

¹⁵ Radyvonivka

¹⁶ Yakimivka



General Schilling, in the orders of the 5th ID for 8 March, commended all the ranks of the rear guard units and especially noted the work of the 1st Battalion of the Simferopol Officer Regiment.

The Myth of the Perekop Fortifications

While the 1st Battalion of the Simferopol Officer Regiment took part in the operations with General Schilling's troops in northern Taurida, the rest of the regiment remained in Simferopol doing garrison duty as before. The abandonment of the Taurida by our troops and the approach of the Bolsheviks to the very limits of Crimea raised the question of the protection of the immediate approaches to Crimea, and thus the protection of the Perekop Isthmus.

The command of the 4th ID ordered the regiment's staff, 2nd Battalion and regimental teams (364 men) from Simferopol to Perekop on 2 March. The division commander drew the regiment's attention to the fact that, by order of the Army Commander, Perekop was already heavily fortified with several rows of wire fences.

On 4 March the regiment arrived in Perekop town and became a part of the Perekop Detachment of the Crimean-Azov Army, commanded by Colonel Lermontov, with the Colonel of the General Staff Petrenko as his Chief of Staff. Other than our regiment, it was hard to figure out the detachment's composition – there was some artillery and the small remnants of the Perekop Battalion. There were no other units known. The regiment's commander, Col. Morilov, bearing in mind the composition of the detachment, asked to be appointed to command it, as it actually consisted only of our regiment and artillery.

Immediately on arriving at Perekop, the regiment's commander began to study the position and the approaches to it, alongside the 2nd Battalion commander. To their horror they realised that the existence of the Perekop fortifications, or even just several rows of wire, was 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 author of this article delivered the personal report). The division's commander, General Korvin-Krukovski, and Chief of Staff, Colonel Dubyago were stunned.

Loss of Initiative at Perekop

On 8 March, after the 1st Battalion had joined the regiment, Colonel Morilov was appointed Chief of the Perekop Detachment.

The Bolsheviks began to become active, and on 10 March the 5th Company, which had occupied the Preobrazhenka farmstead, abandoned it under pressure from significant Red forces and fell back to Perekop, having lost two officers killed and four officers and one soldier wounded.

On 11 March the regiment had the following positions: the 5th and 6th Companies of the Simferopol Officer Regiment, under the command of Capt. Gattenberger occupied the area from Pervokonstantinovka¹⁷ (Hill 7.1) to the Chaplynka road inclusively, with a reserve at Poluhospital; the 3rd Company occupied the middle sector on both sides of the Perekop road to the Preobrazhenka hill, with a platoon in reserve at Perekop; the 1st Company occupied the "Koshara" sector with a half company in reserve at "Kordon"; the 2nd and 4th Companies were in reserve at Perekop. There were also four machine guns on Machine Gun Hill. The companies were relatively small (the 1st and 2nd Companies had 90 bayonets each, the rest only 60 bayonets each) and occupied their sector as guards with outposts.

Having occupied their sections, the companies did their reconnaissance work and reinforced their forward line, where the trenches were set up. However, there was no main line of defence and no work was carried

¹⁷ Presumably near modern Pershokostyantynivka



out for one. Brigadier Pisarev arrived in Perekop and the 4th ID Headquarters, headed by the division commander General Korvin-Krukovski, arrived in Armyansk.

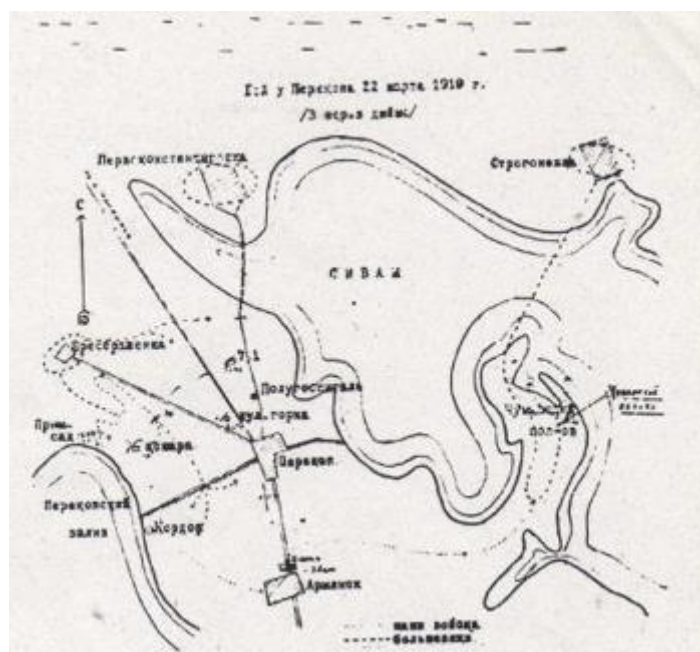
Information about the concentration of the Reds in Chaplynka and their preparations for an assault started to come in. We, in turn, were ordered to prepare for an attack on Preobrazhenka and Pervokonstantinovka to extend the bridgehead. During the night of 21/22 March our regiment was told to regroup and attack Preobrazhenka village at dawn the next day, covering it from the "Primorsky garden"¹⁸ side. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment and two armoured cars were to assist the regiment. The possibility of a Red attack was not taken into account, and no defence plan was prepared. The orders were simply to stay in the front line. The night of 22 March was dark and rainy. The 2nd Battalion concentrated on Hill 7.1 and the 1st Company at Koshara, sending a reconnaissance party to the "Primorsky Garden".

Around 4 a.m. our attack was cancelled. It was reported that armoured vehicles could not be used due to rain. The companies were ordered to take up their previous positions.

Red attack on Perekop.

In the sector of the 1st Company, the scouts discovered an accumulation of Reds near the "Primorsky Garden". Before dawn, the Reds opened fire at Perekop with two howitzers and then, after a while three red rockets¹⁹ were fired at the Preobrazhenka farm. The scouts reported to the 1st Company commander about the advance of the Reds on "Koshara", where the entire 1st Company was still located. The company took up position and opened fire. When dawn broke, a dense chain of Reds with machine guns was visible at 600-800 paces. With well-aimed rifle and machine-gun fire, supported by a horse-mountain battery, the Reds' attack was halted, and then a counterattack threw back the Reds to Preobrazhenka farm, and one machine gun was captured. The Reds did not advance in the other areas.

At about 12 noon on 22 March (see diagram no. 2) a number of Reds was noticed in the hollow south of Preobrazhenka opposite the 1st Company, mostly against the left outpost of the 3rd Company. A reserve platoon of the 3rd Company was advanced behind this outpost.



Fight at Perekop. Simferopol Officer Regiment. Scheme No. 2

¹⁸ Primorsky means seaside.

¹⁹ ? Flares, perhaps.



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. The 4 ID sent their entire reserve there to eliminate the Reds – the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and 2 armoured vehicles.

Diverting all our attention to the Chuvash and our rear by this manoeuvre, the Reds went over to the offensive along the entire front at about 14:00, directing the main attack at the junction between the 1st and 3rd Companies. In the sector of the 2nd Battalion, the Reds soon lay down and showed no activity. The 1st Company by means of rifle and machine-gun fire prevented the Reds from moving forward, the 3rd Company retreated to the Turkish Wall. The right flank of the 1st Company turned was made open by this, and the Reds began to close in on it, trying to push the company into the sea. Realizing the Reds' intentions, the commander of the 1st Company quickly moved his reserve platoon into a counterattack against the encircling enemy line, and ordered the other platoons to withdraw to "Kordon". The second platoon fulfilled its mission heroically, stopping the Reds and, only on receipt of the company commander's order, began to retreat to "Kordon" under heavy enemy fire.

The Reds, in pursuit of the 3rd Company approached the wall in the area between "Kordon" and the town of Perekop at almost the same time as the 1st company. The 2nd Company had been placed in this area by the commander of the Simferopol Officer Regiment, but during the battle was moved by order of the Brigade Commander or his staff to Machine-Gun Hill. So the Reds occupied the Turkish Wall with impunity. As soon as the 1st Company began to occupy positions near "Kordon", it was surprised as once again the Reds attempted to to push it into the sea, launched an attack on their flank and on Perekop – thus getting into the rear of the other companies on Machine Gun Hill and Hill 7.1. The commander of the 1st Company, having no contact with the regiment and not knowing the situation to his right, began to retreat with his company to Armyansk under the cover of machine guns.

The commander of the division, seeing the Reds attempt to get behind Perekop, quickly launched an attack by Captain Cotter's battalion. This had just arrived from Sevastopol and was to become the 3rd Battalion of the regiment. The battalion was ordered to halt the Reds and cover the withdrawal of our companies from Hill 7.1 and Machine-Gun Hill. The Reds were stopped.

Yushun Battle

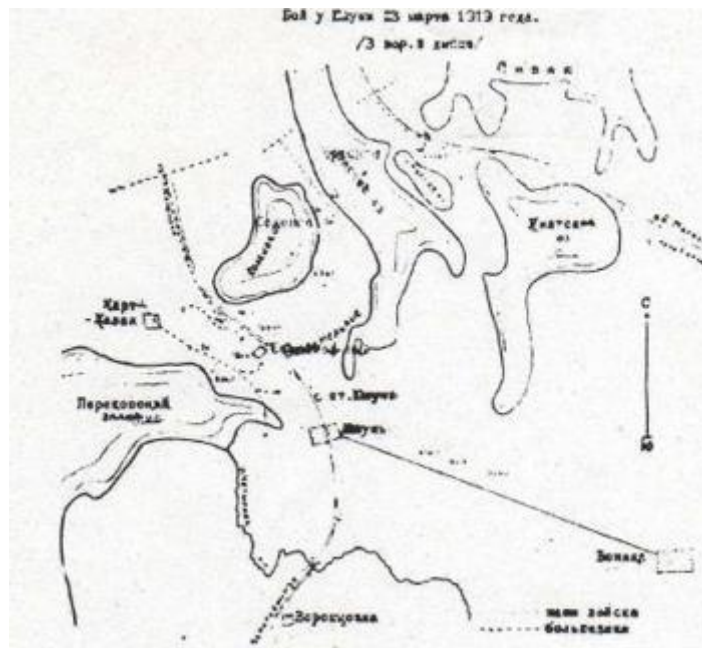
The regiment was ordered to retreat to Armyansk, and then further to Yushun. Although the situation on the Chuvash was restored, the Division commander ordered the withdrawal to continue. It must be stated that in this battle there was no control whatsoever: the regiment was commanded by its regimental, brigade and divisional commanders all at the same time. There was no observation of the battlefield. Reserves were moved from place to place and not used in battle. It was fear for the rear forced the division commander to order the retreat. Artillery took almost no part in the battle.

Having suffered serious losses in killed and wounded, the regiment withdrew with low spirits. The Simferopol Officer Regiment reached Yushun late at night, and settled down to rest. Its positions were: the 2nd, 5th and 6th Companies with a horse-mountain battery under the general command of Capt. Gattenberger were on the isthmus between the Krasne and Salt²⁰ Lakes; the 3rd and 4th Companies with a battery between the Salt Lake and the Perekop Bay; the 1st Company were in reserve in Yushun. To the right of the regiment, between Krasne Lake and Sivash, was the 2nd Cavalry Regiment with a battery.

In the morning of 23 March (Map 3) the Reds began to attack between Salt Lake and Perekop Bay.

²⁰ I think the is the current Stare Lake.





Fight at Yushun. Simferopol Officer Regiment. Map 3

The attack was held back by our fire, but at about 12 o'clock the Red masses pushed back the 3rd and 4th Companies, inflicting significant losses on them. First the 1st Company was moved on to the counter-attack, and then the approaching Brest and Vilna²¹ Companies and, finally, a Greek Company²². Capt Gattenberger, seeing the retreating chains of the 3rd and 4th Companies and fearing for his rear, began to retreat to Yushun.

The 1st Company, reaching the Bezzemel'nykh farms, turned to the west of the road and began to energetically push back the Reds. The 4th Company recovered and advanced to the east of the road. The regiment commander ordered Gattenberger to move forward. To the left of the 1st Company, the Vilna Company advanced in echelon. The 3rd Company retreated to the Perekop Bay under pressure from the Reds, and the Brest company, armed with French rifles, advanced to that point. The Reds retreated in disarray in the area of the Yushun-Armyansk road. Finally, the Greeks appeared behind us, also advancing along the road for some reason. So basically the whole of our forces was concentrated on the road. There were no reserves.

The 1st Company almost reached the trenches left by the 4th Company, and was preparing to rush it with bayonets when the Vilna Company, advancing in echelon behind their left, began to retire quickly. It turned out that the Brest men did not have enough French cartridges and they withdrew, exposing the flank of the Vilna men. The Reds, taking advantage of the terrain, took their left flank and forced them to withdraw. There was no way to resist, and the 1st and 4th Companies began to withdraw, as the Reds sought to occupy the Bezzemel'nykh farm. Only battery fire prevented the Reds from advancing. It was impossible to get the Greeks into the action, especially as their company commander had been killed and they faltered. Finally, everyone was ordered to withdraw.

To the right of the Simferopol Officer Regiment, the Reds also pushed back the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. The division commander ordered a retreat beyond the Chetyrlak River, and at about 6 pm Yushun was evacuated. The regiment concentrated and spent the night in Vorontsovka.

²¹ These are named for the regiments of the Tsarist 13th Infantry Division that had been stationed in the Crimea, the 49th Brest and 52nd Vilna Infantry regiments, and were part of the Composite Regiment of the 13th Infantry Division.

²² The Greeks were part of the Intervention forces in Odessa and the Crimea, under the command of the French.



The battle at Yushun further undermined the spirit of the regiment: everyone could see our superiority and only poor management ruined the whole business. Again, three commanders were present on the battlefield, giving orders independently of one another. The junior commanders were not kept informed and again had no contact with the commander of the Simferopol Officer Regiment.

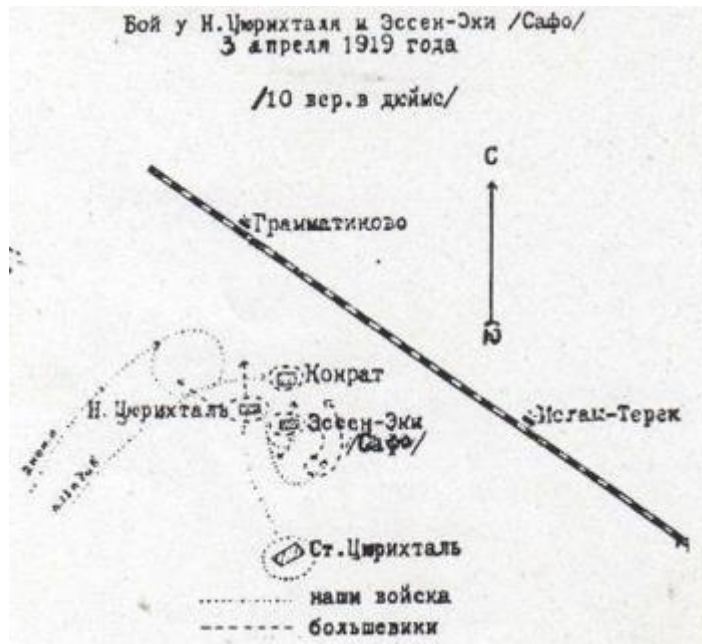
Battle at the Village of N. Zurichtal

On 24 March the Simferopol Officer Regiment was ordered to withdraw to the village of Dzhurchi, where it arrived at 10 o'clock. At about 12 o'clock an orderly arrived there with a package from Colonel Slashchev addressed to the commander of 4 ID. It contained a report from Slashchev of 18:00 23 March that he, with a detachment of 500 men and a battery, was advancing along the road B. Magazinka²³ to Armyansk. The report reached the division chief in Aybary²⁴ too late, at 15:00 on 24 March. The regiment was nevertheless ordered to move urgently to the Vorontsovka area, but by the evening it turned out that Slashchev had retreated, and in the night of 25 March the regiment moved to Aybary.

Lack of communication and the indecision by the command again created a failure. The regiment withdrew with a heavy feeling.

The regiment used carts to move quickly along the Aybary, Biyuk Onla to Karasubazar road, where it arrived on 27 March. On the night of 1 April the regiment, under pressure from the Reds, withdrew from Karasubazar to St. Zurichtal²⁵, where he stayed on 1 and 2 April.

At 1 am on 3 April the regiment was ordered to march on N. Zurichtal, to attack this village at dawn, defeat the Reds and drive them back to the north. The Reds were putting a lot of pressure on 5 ID, which was withdrawing along the railway to Vladislavovka, and tried to cut it off from 4 ID; therefore we made a decision to attack from the north. The Combined Crimean Infantry Regiment and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment advanced to the left of the regiment (see Map 4).



Fight at N. Zurichtal. (Scheme No. 4)

A guide brought the regiment to N. Zurichtal at dawn, where it was found that the Reds were not expecting the appearance of our troops and were resting, guarded only by outposts. Our artillery opened fire at first

²³ Mahazynka.

²⁴ Voikove?

²⁵ Now in the region of Zolote Pole.



light, and the regiment stormed the village. The Reds had no time to prepare for battle and fled to Grammatikovo²⁶ station in panic. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment pursued them, inflicting huge losses. Then chains of Reds appeared to the right of N. Zurichtal. It turned out that Esen-Eki (Safo) was occupied by the Reds and so they were able to advance towards rear of the regiment, directly at the artillery. To avoid encirclement, the regiment was ordered to retreat south.

The 1st Battalion in its turn moved to the flank of the reds at this time, and the regiment vigorously attacked them. A heated battle ensued. Reinforcements from the north approached for the Reds. At the same time, advancing to the left, the Combined Crimean Infantry Regiment came up to the line of our regiment and attacked the flank of the Reds. The latter could not resist the blow and quickly retreated, pursued by our regiment. Around 15 o'clock our regiment occupied Safo village. The Reds retreated to Konrath. Further attack was suspended. Five Soviet regiments were defeated in this battle and the Reds halted their advance.

With the onset of darkness, the regiment was ordered to move to the Petrovka and Tambovka areas and occupy the heights to the west of them, which was carried out by the evening of 4 April.

The spirit of the regiment was excellent: everyone was convinced of their power when led by skilful management – in the battle of 3 April the regiment was controlled exclusively by its own commander. The order of 6 April 1919 for 4 ID wrote: "The glorious Simferopol Officer Regiment with a dashing attack during a raid defeated the Red regiments that occupied N. Zurichtal."

Holy Easter was 6 April. Early in the morning the regiment was ordered to quickly withdraw to the railway line Vladislavovka to Feodosia and then at night to the Ak-Manai positions²⁷.

²⁶ In present Sovietskyi.

²⁷ Ak-Monayskiye is basically modern Kam'yans'ke. It is another very defendable isthmus (and was defended as such again in WWII).



The Ak-Manai positions, Exit from the Crimea and Dnepr Offensive

Our Verdun

On the morning of 8 April 1919 the regiment occupied the middle, most important, sector of the Ak-Manai position.

On the same day, the site at the height of "Kosh-Oba" was visited by Col. Konovalov from Army HQ. He explained that the regiment was entrusted with the defence of the most critical sector, as "Kosh-Oba" was the key to the entire position. Then he and the commander of the 1st Company, which occupied "Kosh-Oba", examined the area in more detail and checked the siting of the machine guns.

The importance of the area occupied by the Simferopol Officer Regiment was reconfirmed by the fact that almost daily visits were made by senior command personnel up to and including the Army Commander. 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. By May our position was not inferior to a well-fortified position during the Great War, and therefore the Kosh-Oba height, which was especially well-fortified, was called our Verdun.

The Reds took up a position at Koi-Asan²⁸ outside our artillery fire.

On 14 April, in order to ascertain the enemy's forces, a cavalry raid on Vladislavovka was made. Our 2nd and 4th Companies were attached to support the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. The Reds were not expecting it, and our companies occupied Koi-Asan, with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment pursuing the Reds, even breaking into Vladislavovka. By evening our units withdrew to their starting positions, having established the Red forces concentrated at Vladislavovka.

Regiment to Battalion to Regiment

On the same day, 14 April, an order of the Crimean-Azov Army (dated 11 April 1919) temporarily reorganised the Simferopol Officer Regiment as the Independent Simferopol Officer Battalion, of four companies. Colonel Gvozdakov was appointed battalion commander instead of Colonel Morilov, who had commanded the regiment up to this time and who was transferred to the reserve ranks at the Division Headquarters. Colonel Gvozdakov took over the battalion on 16 April. The regiment, however, did not consolidate into 4 companies, as a reversal of the order was expected to occur soon.

On 17 April, the Reds took advantage of an unusually thick fog and attacked the Ak-Manai positions at dawn. The scouts, having discovered the build up of Reds in the village of Parpach, opened rifle fire. The Reds, believing that they had already reached our positions, rushed forward with a cry of "hurra!". The companies, quickly readying themselves for battle, repulsed the attack with rifle and machine-gun fire, and we captured one machine gun.

On 19 April the Reds attacked the right flank of the Ak-Manai position again, advancing along the railway, which was to the right of our regiment's sector. The attack was repulsed by the Composite Regiment of the 34th ID, and our companies helped with rifle and machine-gun fire from the Kosh-Oba hill. After these unsuccessful attempts the Reds did not bother us anymore. Landmines and traps were laid in the area, and our scouts constantly harassed the Reds. The companies prepared to go on the offensive – the Reds' positions, and the approaches to them, were studied.

²⁸ Koi-Asan is under the modern Frontove Reservoir.

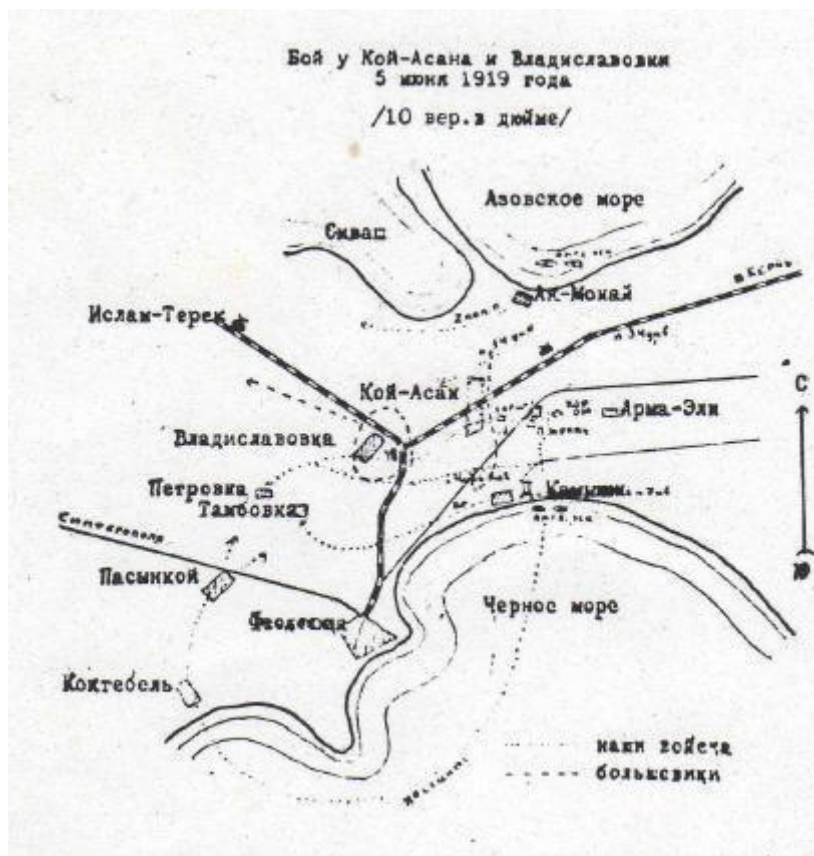


On the basis of the order of the CiC of the AFSR of 22 May 1919, the battalion once again became the Simferopol Officer Regiment. The Regiment by this time had 6 companies, and with its teams had 575 soldiers.

The Long-awaited Offensive

Our long-awaited general offensive began at dawn on 5 June 5. The Simferopol Officers' Regiment was ordered to break through the Reds' position at Koy-Asan and Tsarkovo Farm and advance on Vladislavovka.

General Anguladze's column, the Regiment of the 13th ID with our 2nd Company attached to it, advanced to our left. The Regiment of the 34th ID and 2nd Cavalry Regiment advanced to our right. Our regiment advanced in two columns: the right was commanded by Capt. Stolnikov with the 1st, 3rd and 4th Companies; the left was commanded by Capt. Gattenberger with the 5th and 6th Companies. A battery of artillery moved with each column. At daybreak the British ships' artillery opened fire on the Koy-Asan area. The right column was advancing on Parpach, Hartsiz Shibah and Koi Asan; the left on Tsarkov farm. The left column quickly knocked the Reds off the heights near Tsarkov farm and continued their advance towards Vladislavovka, threatening the flank and rear of the Reds in Koy-Asan. The right column vigorously attacked Koy-Asan, stubbornly defended by the Reds, and with the help of the left column shot up the Reds who were retreating to Vladislavovka station.



Fight at Koi-Asan. Map №5

After that both columns, crossing the railway south of Lake Achi, attacked the station and village of Vladislavovka. Around 12 o'clock Vladislavovka was taken by the 1st Battalion, and the Reds retreated to the heights to the north-west. The Regiment of the 34th ID, which was advancing to the right, was delayed 1.5 to 2 km to the north-east of Vladislavovka because of the failure of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. The Reds saw our comparatively weak units in front of them and launched a counter-attack, forcing our regiment to retreat to the heights southeast of Vladislavovka. Approximately at about 15 o'clock our regiment advanced to Petrovka, where we spent the night, with sentry guard on the heights to the west. During this advance



we captured a gun and machine guns. Our 2nd Company, advancing in the head of General Anguladze's column, occupied the village of Tambovka after a short battle and spent the night there.

Next day, the regiment took the Petrovka, Koletchi mosque, Bahchi Eli, Ortay road, and after occupying Ortay they stopped there. By evening the 2nd Battalion, with a howitzer battery, had occupied Nadezhdino.

The Retreat of the Reds from the Crimea.

The Reds were in retreat. The regiment attacked along the Nadezhdino, Konrat, Cherkez Tobay²⁹ road on 7 June in pursuit of them, and took the later by the evening. The Reds occupied the heights to the north-west and grouped in the area of Grammatikovo station – our forces performed night reconnaissance there and detected considerable Red forces. The 6th Company took the village of Koronki.

On 8 June at 14 o'clock the Reds vigorously attacked our position near Cherkez-Tobay village, trying to wrap our left flank with cavalry. The attack was repulsed by rifle, machine-gun and artillery fire from close range. Our 6th Company arrived from Koronki and secured the left flank of the regiment. The night passed quietly, but on the next day, 9 June, the Reds attacked Cherkez-Tobay again, trying to cut off the Simferopol Officer Regiment from the Regiment of the 34th ID, which was advancing along the railway. The advance was repulsed with the help of the Regiment of the 13th ID, which arrived in the midst of the battle for the village to occupy the gap between our regiment and the Regiment of the 34th ID.

On 10 June the Simferopol Officer Regiment advanced along the Nadezhdino, Ichki³⁰, Kirliut road and occupying the latter by evening. There was a short battle near the village of Ichki. Next day the regiment moved to the village of Totonai.

The Simferopol Officers' Regiment was then ordered to assist the advance of the Regiment of 34th ID on Kolai station. On 12 June the regiment moved from the village of Totonai to Neimen, throwing out the Red forces there, and sent the 2nd and 4th Companies to flank Kolai Station. The rest of the companies continued their assault on Dzhankoy. By the evening, the regiment occupied the village of Aksyura-Konrat, where it put up pickets. The next day, the 1st Battalion of the regiment took the village of Ajay Kat, and the 2nd Battalion took Jurin (Mirnovka). The Reds swiftly retreated to Salkovo and Perekop.

²⁹ Chapajevka.

³⁰ Sovietskyi.

