

Shock vs Shock

I. I. Sukhov

The original of this was published in *сержант* (Sergeant) magazine Issue 5, but has since appeared many times on-line in Russian. This is a very rough and ready translation and should not be relied upon for details.

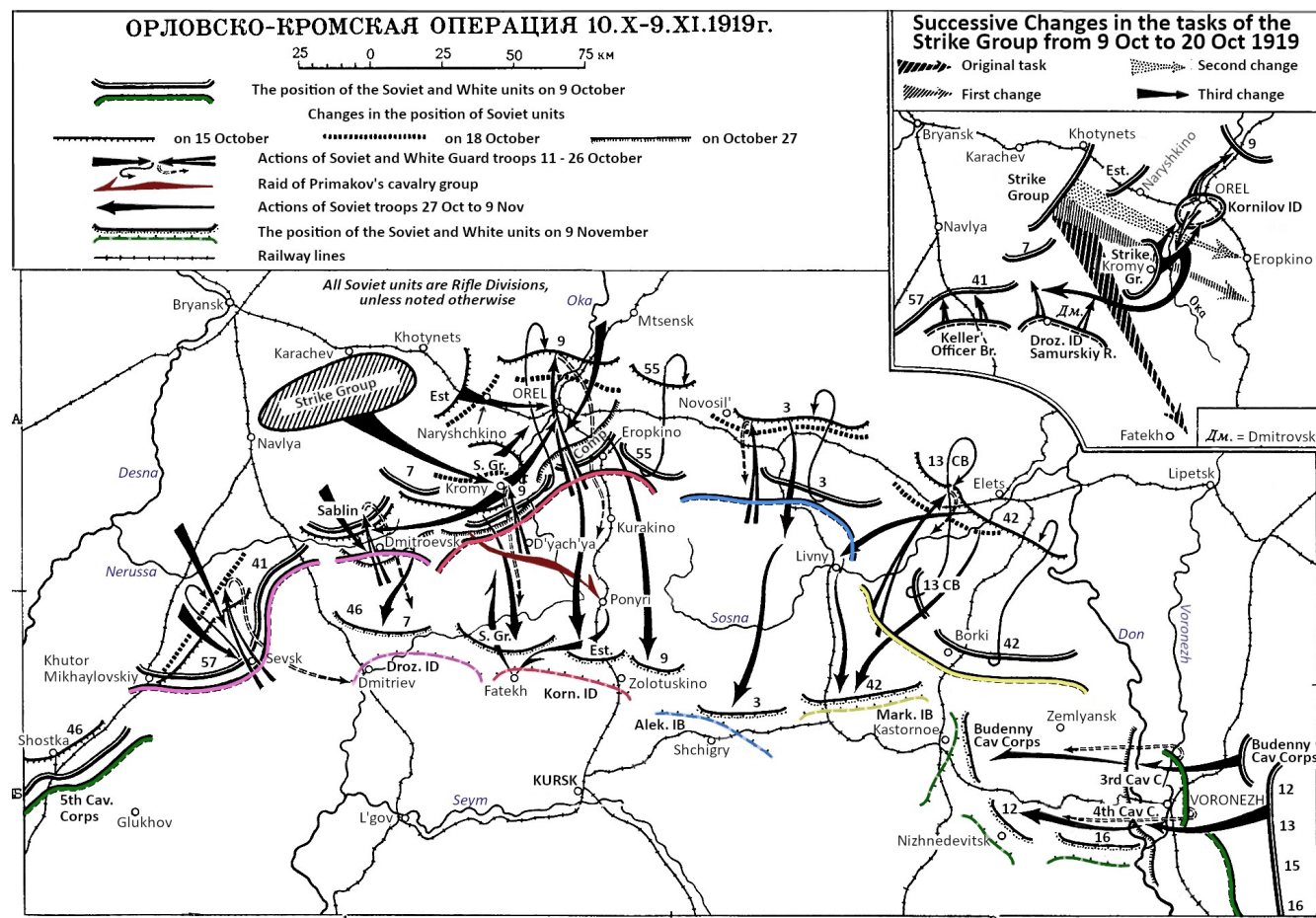
The title of the Orël-Kromy Operation reflects its name in Soviet literature. In English it is generally known as the Battle of Orël. Together with Budënný's breakthrough near Voronezh it spelled the end of the Armed Forces of South Russia's drive on Moscow. The outcome of the battle being so critical to both sides, and being between some of the most iconic units of the war, it has always been of great interest. Yet I have been unable to find any equivalent article on it in English.

The original article was followed by orders of battle for the two sides, which I have also placed on pygmywars.com.

The original maps were by I. Yu. Kudryashov, but the copies I have are poor scans and anyway in Russian, so I have redrawn them in English, keeping them identical in scale and positioning but adding colour.

All footnotes in the translation are mine.

This is Soviet era map that shows the wider scope of the battle, and helps put some of the article in a wider context.



The Orël-Kromy Operation, 10-27 October 1919

I. I. Sukhov, maps by I. Yu. Kudryashov

October 1919 was a fateful time in the history of Russia in the Twentieth Century. At that time the military successes of the AFSR – the Armed Forces of the South of Russia (the official name of General A. I. Denikin's army in 1919-1920) – and the Northwestern Volunteer Army¹ forced the Soviet authorities to worry seriously that their defeat was imminent. On the Southern Front the centre of gravity of events was in the area of Orël, which was being approached by the Volunteer Army's 1st Army Corps – the main shock force of the AFSR. From Orël up to Moscow is only 300 kilometres in a straight line. The operation which decided the destiny of Russia and Revolution now began.

Situation of the Moscow Directive² up to the Beginning of October 1919

The advance of the Volunteer Army, with a fast and effective capture of Kursk on 20 October 1919, forced the Revolutionary Military Soviet of the Republic³ to determine that its main task was to concentrate its forces to defeat the Volunteer Army. Thus the RMSR brought units from other fronts to the required area. This was possible due to the advanced rail network in the area – an advantage for the Reds, operating on internal lines – and because the Whites lost two months occupying the Ukraine. On 22 September the Latvian rifle division – one of the best Red units during the entire Civil War – began to transfer from the Western Front. On 26 September the commander of the Southern Front sent the Chervonno Cossack Cavalry Brigade and an independent Rifle Brigade to Orël from quiet sectors. At the end of September the Western Front transferred the independent Estonian Rifle Brigade (four rifle regiments and an artillery *divizion*) from the 15th Army. It was organised into the "Composite Division" under Pal'vadre with the addition of the 1st "Vseovobuch" Regiment and the 86th Rifle Regiment (10th Rifle Division) from the 7th Army.

The Red command's plan was that a Strike Force would attack the flank of the advancing White units, forcing them to stop the offensive. It was supposed to include the Latvian division and units from cadets of the military schools.⁴ In addition to the divisions and brigades of the Strike Force⁵ (11,000 bayonets, 2,000 sabres, 70 guns) the Voronezh area would receive Budënniy's Horse Corps⁶ – a unique unit of Red strategic cavalry, which included the 4th, 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions. The Red command threw everything it could to the front, announcing a "party mobilisation".

In total the Southern Front received at least 33,000 men.

Terrain Features of the Battle Zone

The area of operations covered some 10,000 km², including the Orël, Dmitrovsk, Malo-Arkhangelsk and Sevska districts, with the population of some 600,000 people. It is a hilly plain with average height of 200 m above sea level. Some hills reach heights of 250-300m.

The region is crossed in many places by minor ravines and streams, which are not obstacles for conducting operations. Of the rivers, only the Oka and two of its tributaries – the Navlya and Nerusa deserve attention, but even they are not particularly wide nor deep and are not major obstacles. The region is scattered with woods, which cover barely 5% of its area.

¹ That of Iudenich, outside Petrograd at the time.

² Denikin's stated "Drive on Moscow".

³ The supreme leadership of the Soviet Armed forces, with Trotskiy as Chairman and Kamenev as Commander-in-Chief.

⁴ Usually called *kursanty*.

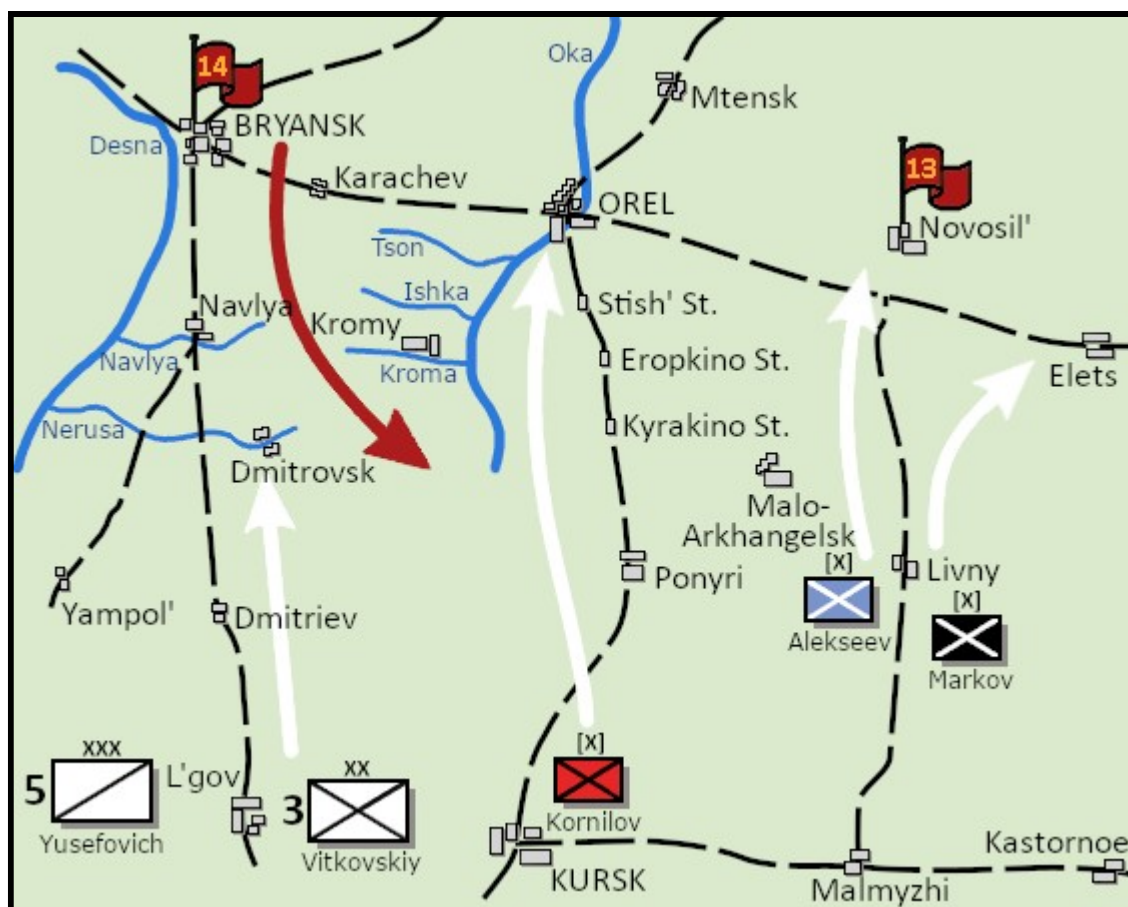
⁵ The word in question, *udarov*, has many alternative possible translations. Most often in this context it is translated as "Shock", and hence the title of the article, where the Red "Shock" force met the *Kornilovtsy*, who originated as a "Shock Regiment" back in WWI. However, as many of the units in the Reds' Strike Force were less than elite, I have gone for "Strike", which is what such a force would usually be called in English.

⁶ Soon to grow into the First Horse Army.



There were only a few cities – the provincial city of Orël (about 80,000 inhabitants), Sudzha, Malo-Arkhangelsk (6,000 each), Kromy and Dmitrovsk (5,000 each). The villages were large, as 63 % of them had more than 100 households. They were located along the rivers.

The rail lines ran mostly north-south: there was a double-track from Kursk to Orël and single-track from Stary Oskol through Malmyzhi and Livny and another from L'gov to Bryansk. Transversely there was one line double tracked from Bryansk to Orël then single to Elety. Highways connected the main cities. There were a lot of dirt roads, but they were in a poor state, especially in the foul weather. The area's food resources did not make it possible to rely on surpluses of bread, meat and forage. The troops were supplied from the rear.



Area of operations and plans of the opposing sides

The Opposing Sides

Whites

The Volunteer Army attacked across a very wide front. On its left was Lieutenant-General Yuzefovich's 5th Cavalry Corps – a unique grouping of AFSR regular cavalry – with the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions. In the centre was Lieutenant-General Kutepov's 1st Army Corps, and on its right flank, at Voronezh, was Lieutenant-General Shkuro's 3rd Kuban Corps, weakened by the detachment of the 1st Terek Cossack Division to the struggle with Makhno. Just returned from a raid on Talovaya was Lieutenant-General Mamontov's 4th Don Cossack Corps.

The 1st Army Corps had two infantry divisions – 1st and 3rd. The 1st Division was more like a corps in structure: at the beginning of October it had three Kornilov Shock Regiments, two Markov regiments (with one more forming), an Aleksiev Regiment (with one more forming), and the Black Sea Horse Regiment, while the Composite Rifle Regiment had been detached at the beginning of October for the struggle against Makhno.



It attacked on a front of up to 200 kilometres, operating with three operational groups. The 1st and 2nd Markov Regiments were aimed at Elety, the 1st Alekseev Regiment at Novosil' and all three Kornilov Regiments at Orël.

This huge structure lasted until 27 October, when the 1st and 3rd IDs were transformed, by the order of the ASFR Commander-in-chief, into four "nominal" divisions. Separate divisions named for Kornilov, Alekseev and Markov came from the 1st ID and a Drozdovskiy Division from the 3rd.

At the time of the Battle for Orël the *Kornilovtsy* had reached their maximum strength of the Civil War. The brigade HQ also had a cavalry squadron, a tank, and an engineer company available; along with the commandant's HQ unit.

The 1st General Kornilov Shock Regiment consisted of a 100 man officer company, the 1st Battalion – of 1,000 men – and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions – each with 600 men. In total, the infantry component was 2,300 men with 120 machine guns. Attached to the regiment were four batteries – the 1st Regiment's own, then two of captured light guns and one of howitzers. Two armoured trains were attached from the 2nd Train *Divizion*⁷ – the heavy *Ivan Kalita* – three guns of 107-mm, 127-mm and 152-mm – and the light *Officer* – three guns of 76-mm. A third, light, armoured train, the *General Kornilov*, acted on the Malmyzhi to Novosil' line, supporting the Alekseev Regiment.

The 2nd Regiment had an officer battalion of 750 men, three soldier battalions, each of 500 men, horse scouts (near a squadron in strength), one armoured car, and four batteries (two light, one of 107-mm and one of 152-mm guns). The regiment had a total of 85 machine guns.

The 3rd Regiment consisted of an officer company of 100 men, and three soldier battalions of 500 men. In total it had 1,600 bayonets and 60 machine guns. It was supported by two light batteries.

This gave a total of 6,150 infantrymen, several hundred cavalrymen, 265 machine guns and ten batteries. The staff of all of three regiments was on a high after the capture of Kursk with its many trophies. After receiving reinforcements it was quite combat-ready. The significant number of officers in the ranks gave additional durability, as did the number of machine guns.

Alongside the *Kornilovtsy* in the fight for Kromy was the Markov Regiment – this was the first battle for the regiment after its arrival at the front. The recently reformed regiment had around 1500 infantry, in three battalions, with 18 machine guns.

The 3rd Infantry Division included some units of the Samurskiy Regiment, the armoured train *Thunder of Victory* with its own "landing party" and two squadrons of the Black Sea Horse Regiment.

A general characteristic of the 1st Army Corps as seen by the Reds:

They were a serious opponent, whose units manoeuvred quickly, acting boldly with sudden blows, which made fighting them difficult even for well trained troops.

Reds

1st Army Corps was opposed by all of the 13th Army and some of the 14th Army, both of the Southern Front. In A. I. Gekker's 13th Army there was the 3rd, 9th, 42nd and 55th Rifle Divisions; Sveshnikov's Composite Brigade;⁸ and the 13th Independent Cavalry Brigade – 17,907 bayonets, 1,755 sabres, 318 machine guns, and 86 guns. In A. I. Egorov's 14th Army there was the 7th, 41st, 46th, and 57th Rifle Divisions; Sablin's Group;⁹ and the 11th and 14th Independent Cavalry Brigades – 15,287 bayonets, 2,730 sabres, 462 machine guns, and 100 guns.

⁷ A *divizion* is a Russian unit between company/squadron/battery and regiment. It can often be translated as "battalion".

⁸ A year previously he had been commander of the Caspian-Caucasian Front, demoted to the post of the commandant of the troops of the Kursk Fortified District, from which this brigade was cobbled together.

⁹ Sablin had been one of the leaders of the appearance of Left Socialist Revolutionaries in Moscow in 1918.



The Strike Force was originally included in structure of 13th Army. It was largely made up of the units taken from the Western front. It was commanded by A. A. Martusevich, who combined that post with the command of the Latvian Rifle Division, which was the core of the force. That division included nine Latvian rifle regiments, a cavalry regiment, and 4 artillery *divisions*. It had a significant number of experienced veterans from the First World War's Latvian regiments, which helped keep internal discipline and stability. There were 1,400 Communists – a high number for the time. The percentage of ethnic Latvians in the units varied from 65% up to 95%.

The Chervonno Cossack brigade had grown from a regiment raised in the Ukraine.¹⁰ Its ranks were volunteers, many of them cavalrymen from the old army. It was distinguished by having good weapons and extensive experience of raids into the Petliurists' rear. On 21 October it was included in the newly formed 8th Cavalry Division, with the addition of two other cavalry brigades. In November the division made two raids into the rear of the 1st Army Corps which, together with the advance of the Red main front lines, compelled the corps to withdraw to Kursk.

The Pavlov Independent Rifle Brigade was the weakest unit of the Strike Force. It had been formed a month earlier, after the withdrawal from Kiev. It included many amnestied deserters but not enough commanders – and those had no combat experience. This poorly prepared and unsteady brigade had three regiments – Kiev, *Plastun*¹¹ and Composite – a cavalry *division* and two light batteries. From the 26 November the Pavlov Brigade was included in the structure of the Estonian Division.

Pal'vadre's Estonian Rifle Division – previously the "Composite Division" – had four Estonian regiments (with a fighting capacity at the level of the Latvian Division, but many fewer bayonets); the 1st *Vseobuch* Regiment,¹² recruited from Pulitov factory workers; and the 86th Rifle Regiment. In May 1919 the division had become "famous" for the defection to the Estonians of its commander, chief of staff, a brigade commander and 1st Regiment commander. It left its cavalry regiment in the northwest when it transferred to the Southern Front.

The weakness of the two Baltic Red divisions was their deliberateness, sometimes even excessive caution, but this was redeemed by their high combat resistance and devotion to the ideals of Bolshevism.

First Stage of the Battle (10-15 October 1919)

The commander of the 13th Army, carrying out his orders from the Southern Front, set his units the task of taking Kursk by 10 October. He demanded the Strike Force concentrate for an advance on Ponryi – Fatezh; the 9th RD aim for Malo-Arkhangelsk;¹³ Sveshnikov's Composite Brigade and the 55th RD were to also attack towards Malo-Arkhangelsk; and the 3rd and 42nd RDs seize Livny and link up with the 8th Army.

The aim of the operation was to be the encirclement of the main forces of the Whites' 1st Army Corps. The Strike Force was five or six marches from the front at this time. In the orders it specifically required that the shameful surrendering of entire units be stopped, mobilising all political forces for that purpose, and provided for all necessary food and ammunition. The weaknesses of the plan were that it ordered the unit commanders to capture geographical points, instead of defeating enemy units, and it also did not provide for possible counter-actions by the enemy.

In the meantime the *Kornilovtsy* continued to advance. On the eastern flank the 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment took Kromy. There it captured 10 heavy machine guns and a few prisoners among whom was a brigade commander – who gave indications about the location and structure of the Red Strike Force.

¹⁰ The Cossack was a reference to its independent creation in the Ukraine – it was not a Cossack unit, as such.

¹¹ *Plastun* usually refers to Cossacks fighting on foot. This will be a historical reference here to Ukrainian Cossacks, not the Cossacks proper of the old Empire.

¹² *Vseobuch* is an abbreviation of the Russian for Universal Military Training, which was a scheme where factory workers, and later poor peasants, were given military training at their work sites.

¹³ 70 km SSE of Orël.



In the centre of the deployment was the new 3rd Kornilov Shock Regiment which, operating with two battalions, took three villages. The Reds faced them with a training battalion, Berzin's 2nd Independent Rifle Brigade and some units of the 7th Rifle Division. The 1st Kornilov Shock Regiment arrived by rail, with support of two armoured trains. Their distance to Orël was now 25 kilometres.

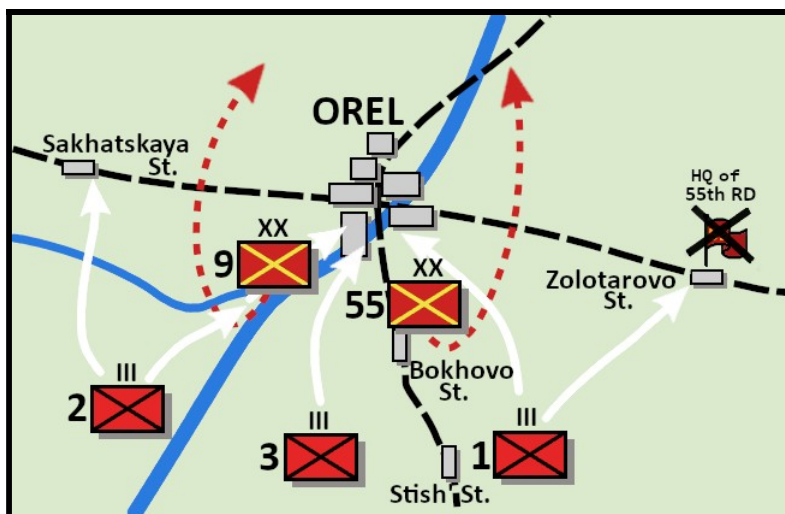
On 11 October the commander of the Southern Front demanded from Martusevich an acceleration of his units, who were moving quite slowly. The 83rd Samurskiy Infantry Regiment, of the 3rd ID, was heading towards them. The Strike Force, after marching 12-15 kms, has only made half of its required distance. By that evening clashes between White patrols and units of the Strike Force had already started. The *Kornilovtsy* continued their advance with all three regiments, taking a lot of prisoners.

In the morning of 12 October the 5th Latvian Rifle Regiment and 1st Chervonno Cossack Regiment fought with a battalion of the *Samurtsy* at the village of Melikhovo. A courageous mounted attack by the Red Cossacks resulted in the rout of the battalion: 100 were killed, 78 captured, and the equipment seized included three heavy machine guns and two hundred rifles. Soon after the 63rd RR of the 7th RD sent a report that it has taken Melikhovo.

The sluggish advance of the Strike Force was slowed down even more with fighting for every village against small units of *Samurtsy*. There was a first fleeting collision of the Latvian Cavalry Regiment with a battalion of 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment in the evening – the Latvian patrols' advance was repelled by rifle fire.

On 12 October the 1st Kornilov Shock Regiment reached Stish' station, 10 km from Orël, having taken Stanovoy Kolodez' station the previous evening. The 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment moved from the Kromy area closer to Orël, with the regimental HQ in Spasskoe village.¹⁴ The 3rd Kornilov Shock Regiment took the villages of Lavrovo and Mikhaylovka.

In the morning the Reds created a group for a close defense for Orël (the units of the former fortified area had been disbanded on 28 September and the men transferred to the 55th Rifle RD). During the night the Whites raided the HQ of the 3rd brigade of 9th RD – only a few survived the attack, including the brigade commissar.



The Kornilovtsy Capture Orël

A resolute attack on Orël by the Kornilov Regiment began on 13 October. Its 1st Regiment, with the attached 1st Battalion of the 3rd Regiment (under Captain Adrianov), advanced along the rail line, with the support of the armoured trains *Ivan Kalita* and *Officer* and one tank. It entered the city at 17:00. The right flank regiment

¹⁴ In the Orlovskiy district.



simultaneously made a raid on Zolotarevo, broke into the station and captured the staff of the 55th RD, including the divisional commander, former Major-General Stankevich.

The 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment advanced on and took the village and station of Sakhanskiy, forcing a Red armoured train to retire to Orël where it was captured. At Kukuevka village an armoured car supporting the regiment was knocked out. During their approach to Orël the *Kornilovtsy* took 8,000 prisoners, 150 heavy machine guns, 21 guns and an armoured train. Captain Rostomov was appointed commandant of Orël, the brigade HQ was in the Skoropadskiy Palace, and a battalion was prepared for a move to Pesochna station.¹⁵

The day was a serious defeat for the Red 13th Army around Orël. In particular the 55th Rifle Division and Sevshnikov's Composite Brigade were particularly in disarray and were soon disbanded.

The Strike Force continued its advance forward during the day. Its command was concerned with its exposed flanks while completing the inexpedient task of heading for Ponyri – Fatezh. Martusevich asked that the impact point be moved to Malo-Arkhangelsk – Kurakino. When the commander of the 13th Army reported this to the front commander, he said: “it is unacceptable for a *KomDiv*¹⁶ to make such an independent decisions”, but eventually had to agree with the reasons for the change in the direction of the attack.

13 October was a truly black day for the Red Southern Front. A real threat hung over Tula. Some Red units were disorganized and the instability of the entire 13th Army was obvious.

In the night of 14 October an unsuccessful attempt by the Reds to recapture Orel took place. The attempt, with a battalion of 500 bayonets, failed to reach the outskirts of the city

During that day several units of the 1st Kornilov Regiment made a brief attack on Mtsensk. They quickly took the city, but soon departed, having shot the Red commandant, former General Sapozhnikov.

After the quick attacks on Mtsensk and Orël, for five days the task of the 1st and 3rd Kornilov Regiments was primarily to defend Orël. The armoured trains *Officer* and *Ivan Kalita* sometimes went to the blown up railway bridge beyond Pesochna station – from there to Moscow was 350 km by rail – and engaged in duels with four Red armoured trains – one of which, *Illrd international*, was hit.

The command of the Southern Front made the decision, due to the total disarray of the 13th Army, that from 2400hrs on 14 October Strike Force would come under the authority of the 14th Army. The new demarcation line was drawn up and the direction of the attack towards Malo-Arkhangelsk – Kurakino was confirmed. This threat to the rear of the White 1st Army Corps was supposed to distract it from advancing beyond Orël. It also predetermined that there would be battles between the Strike Force and units of the 1st Corps. The Reds also started a reorganisation of the units which had retreated from Orël, bringing them together into the 9th Rifle division with a new *KomDiv*, P. A. Solodukhin. This included remnants of the 55th Rifle Division, Sveshnikov's brigade, Berzin's brigade and others. The Strike Force continued its advance forward, holding its 3rd Brigade in reserve.

The 1st Brigade and the Chervonno Cossack Brigade were delayed by minor battles. On the night of 14/15 October, the 2nd Brigade finally made it to Kromy. The Strike Force had covered 50 kms in four days, advancing across a wide front – of up to 40 kms. The group had not yet shown “shock” characteristics, having failed to distract even one of the enemy regiments, having met only a blocking *Samurtsy* battalion.

During the day the 2nd Kornilov Regiment regrouped in the rear, even before the capture of Kromy, which the Reds took without fighting. Their positions were taken by the 3rd Kornilov Regiment. On 15 October the 1st and 3rd Kornilov Regiments held a defensive line on wide front to the north of Orël. The Reds put their units back into order. The commander of 9th Rifle Division received an order for a rapid attack and capture of Orël.

¹⁵ Now Stal'noy Kon'.

¹⁶ Division Commander. All the Red Army commanders were given “ranks” that specified their actual role, so a brigade commander was a *KomBrig* etc.



The Estonian Division had already arrived, with an order to advance to Khotynets station by 16 October, for a concentrated attack on Orël.

The neighbours of the Kornilovtsy, the blue-shouldered *Alekseevtsy*, having seized the town of Novosil', had reached Tula province, pushing back the Red 3rd Rifle Division. Persistent fighting occurred in the Elets area, where 1st and 2nd General Markov Regiments conducted a prolonged struggle against the 42nd Rifle Division – the best unit in the 13th Army.

It was only on 15 October that the Strike Force reached its deployment line, after covered 40-50 km in five days. During this excessively slow advance, the Chervonno Cossacks stood out as performing the best. It was on this day that the White and Red shock troops both found themselves north of Kromy.

Two companies of the 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Levitov) and two guns attacked Ageevka, while the 2nd Battalion occupied Shakhovo. Pavlov's Composite Rifle Brigade fled, retreating in disorder to Kromy. The situation was rescued by two squadrons and a machine-gun team of the Latvian cavalry, who compelled the *Kornilovtsy* to retire. Apparently, for the first time *KomDiv* Martusevich regretted being reinforced by Pavlov's rifle brigade. The advance of the *Kornilovtsy* forced the Red Strike Group to redirect the direction of its impact further north.

On 16 October, the Strike Group was ordered to advance to the Stanovoy Kolodez' – Eropkino rail line. But the counter movement of the 2nd Kornilov Regiment compelled the Strike Force to engage it in battle. Fighting at Orël promised the Strike Force every prospect for a successful outcome as it enabled the use of the superior numbers of two divisions – Latvian and Estonian – instead of blows into the void under the Southern Front's plan. By 16 October the Reds had the Red Cossack Cavalry Brigade and 1st Brigade in the south, the 2nd Brigade and Pavlov in the north, and the 3rd Brigade in reserve.

Second Stage of the Battle (16-20 October 1919)

The concentric approach by the Reds on Orël resulted in the withdrawal of the *Kornilovtsy*. The city was taken in the morning of 20 October. This was a turning point in the course of the AFSR offensive on Moscow, since it had no reserves for the development of success.

On 16 October the Southern Front was strengthened by the inclusion of the 12th Army, from which it was able to draw new units, although this measure was a little late. The 14th Army retained its structure. The Strike Force was in a dangerous position, as any further advance would create the threat of an encirclement.

By 16 October the *Kornilovtsy* – the 2nd Brigade of 1st Infantry Division – had advanced almost to north of Orël, but the loss of Kromy in the rear has compelled them to halt. The 2nd Shock Regiment's attack on the Strike Force's left flank was favourable to the Reds, as they had the advantage in forces, and they decline to advance further. This tactical miscalculation by the 1st Army Corps command soon became obvious.

The Southern Front's order to reach the railway 35-40 kms from Kromy by 16 October had been carried out, but here again the Latvians showed the sluggishness that Egorov found so irritating. The reason was a new attack by the 2nd Kornilov Regiment on the weak link of the Strike Force – the Pavlov brigades – on the Itska River. The Reds did not expect the blow. The vigorous midday attack of the *Kornilovtsy* resulted in a panic among the Kiev and Composite Regiments. Battle was very fierce and there were almost no prisoners taken. The Whites captured seven heavy machine guns, the staff of the Kiev Regiment and the infirmary, along with its personnel.

After that battle Martusvich understood that that brigade was better off in rear than at the front, and allocated it to the reserve. The failure of the brigade was aggravated by *KomBrig* Pavlov being absent until the evening. The situation was rescued with by a counter-attack from the Latvians with strong artillery support. The commander of the 2nd Brigade took command of Pavlov's brigade, which has retreated to Kromy and Streletskaya.



The *Kornilovtsy* fell back to their previous positions. The 1st, 2nd and officer battalions, with support of six guns, had fought in the battle. The result was the refusal of the White command to attack north of Orël, turning its attention solely to the Kromy area. The *Kornilovtsy* stopped in Orël, simultaneously carrying out two tasks – holding the provincial city with the population of 80,000 people and fighting the Strike Force to their rear.

The Strike Forces front was aligned along the Itska River and the main forces now were aimed at the north. To the south was only a barrier force of the 1st and Chervonno Cossack Brigades. This first tactical success lifted the fighting spirit Latvian riflemen and the initiative in the battle began to pass to the Reds. The 14th Army command also appreciated the importance of the situation and sought to transfer another rifle brigade to the Strike Force and reinforce Primakov's brigade up to the structure of a division.

On 17 October attacks by the 2nd Kornilov Regiment on the Strike Force at times ended with obvious tactical success. The 2nd Battalion reached 3 km from Kromy. Having realised it was impossible for one regiment to beat two Latvian brigades, the command then gave the order to withdraw. But the acting regimental commander, Captain Shcheglov, undertook one more unauthorized attack, which brought only losses – 250 killed and wounded for the day. The Red cavalry captured the Whites' hospital convoy. The regiment retired to Spasskoe village. Red sources report that they captured 44 Whites and released 46 Reds previously captured by the Whites.

Uborevich, the 14th Army commander, again demanded that the rail line be taken. The 13th Army was strengthened by the Estonian Division which was tasked with taking Orël itself. *KomDiv* Martusevich, on his own account, ordered the strike zones to be reduced: the 3rd Brigade to Orël, the Pavlov brigade to the centre, the 2nd Brigade to Stish' station (10 km from Orël).

The advance was heavily contested, with constant battles fought all along the front. The Estonian Division continued to move forward, with orders to be at Naryshkino station by 15:00 on 18 October. The 9th Rifle Division was given a new *KomDiv*, P. A. Solodukhin. The commissar reported, that some units were completely out of action, but nevertheless still had 6,238 bayonets, 512 sabres, 79 heavy machine guns and 19 guns.

During these days the 1st Kornilov Regiment noted an increase in artillery and machine-gun fire from the Reds. The 3rd Regiment observed the same in its sector.

On 18 October the staff of the 14th Army received an intercepted order of the 3rd Infantry Division for 17 October. This revealed the locations of the White units and their plan to attack the Strike Force from two sides. The 2nd Kornilov Regiment would attack from Orël, the 3rd Markov battalion from the rail line, an armoured train "Thunder of the Victory" from D'yach'ya station with a landing party of *Kornilovtsy*. Meanwhile from the south would be the main forces of Major-General Vitkovskiy's 3rd Infantry Division and Colonel Barbovich's cavalry brigade from the 5th Cavalry Corps. Even the 3rd Division commander's escort was to be thrown into the battle. The line between the 1st and 3rd Divisions passed through Radubichi – Volobueva – Komarovskaya station.

Uborevich immediately ordered counter-attacks. The Estonian Division's commander, Pal'vadre, was ordered take Orël by the 19th. In order to rescue his battered army, Uborevich deliberately diverted two brigades of the Strike Force to the south. Martusevich's order demanded that the same forces be used to advance on Orël and the rail line.

The weak barrier in the way, just the 2nd Battalion of 3rd Markov Regiment had already taken losses – up to 25% – fighting for Ryshkova village.

In the 1st Latvian Brigade's sectors there were minor skirmishes. The Reds' reconnaissance revealed that there had been no Whites or armoured trains at D'yach'ya station since the day before. All day long the 2nd and 3rd Brigades slowly advanced, overcoming persistent defense with frequent counter-attacks. Relentlessly, using their artillery superiority (over 1.5-2 times as much), the Reds slowly advanced, covering about 5 kms. The Pavlov Brigade, in the centre, lagged behind, but 1st Latvian Cavalry Regiment established communication with



1st Petrograd Regiment of the Estonian Division. In this battle the Latvians – who in each brigade always held one regiment in reserve, and in each regiment a company¹⁷ – forced were to throw them into the battle.

But due to the stubborn defense by the 2nd Kornilov Regiment, the Reds did not reach their goal. The large losses to the *Kornilovtsy* were aggravated by death of the commander of 3rd Battalion, Lieutenant Sud'bin – a regimental veteran, who had just arrived from the rear after being wounded – while leading a battalion attack on horseback. At 17:00 the order came through to retire to Spasskoe – Yakovka. The inequality in forces had decided the outcome of the fighting. The 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment took heavy losses on 17 and 18 October – up to half its strength – which shook the *Kornilovtsy*, but confirmed the high military skill of both opponents.

On the 14th Army front there was persistent fighting, with variable success. The 57th RD took Sevsk, but the attack of 41st RD was repelled. The *Drozdovtsy* broke into Brasovo village and station. The Estonian division slowly advanced to the west of Orël, without contact with the *Kornilovtsy*. The 9th RD regained some fighting capacity. Solodukhin immediately gave it an order to advance and take Orël, Stish' station and to blow up the bridge. From 16 to 18 October the 9th RD did not take any active part in the battles.

On 17 and 18 October the *Alekseevtsy* took Novosil', in Tula province, having beaten out the 3rd RD. On 18 October the 42nd RD retreated a little in front of Elets, but held the town tenaciously, responding with counter-attacks. The former lieutenant colonel of the general staff, *KomDiv* I. K. Pauka, justified his surname.¹⁸

On 19 October the 1st and 3rd Kornilov Regiments prepared to abandon Orël, under the cover of a small rear guard from the 1st Regiment. They left in the direction of the rail line. The 2nd Regiment, holding off the Latvians, moved away into Sretensko – Lavrov. The losses for the day were 200 men. Communication was made with the Markov battalion.

Martusevich ordered the 3rd Brigade to move to Orël, and the 2nd to Stish' station, prudently having allocated the Pavlov Brigade as reserve. The 3rd Brigade received an order to approach to Orël, to send squadron forward to find out whether the city had been taken, and if it had then wait for further orders. The 2nd Brigade was to take Stish' station then, with the help of the Chervonno Cossack brigade's engineer *sotnia*, blow up the bridge. The Latvian cavalry regiment was to send squadrons to the 2nd and 3rd Brigades and then place two squadrons at the junction of the brigades.

In the evening the 3rd Brigade reached the Tson River, but all the crossings had been blown up. There some crowding, during which three stray regiments of the 9th RD – 74th, 77th and 81st – fired at the 3rd Latvian Brigade. There were brief skirmishes in front of the 2nd Brigade. During the night of the 19th the 9th RD began to advance, initially without combat, then meeting persistent resistance from the Whites' rear guard, who were behind wire obstacles. Once more the ordered goals were not reached. The 3rd Brigade was 10-12 km from the city, and the 2nd some 10 km from the rail line.

Actions to the south and north compelled Martusevich to act in a scattered fashion, since both the Red and White units were starting to dissolve. Combats took place at the battalion level, and it was the sum of those that determined the overall result of the battle.

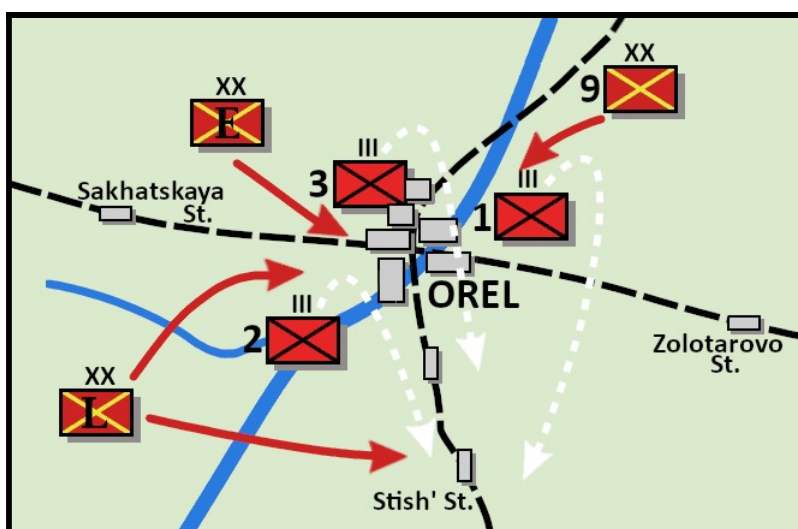
On 20 October, Uborevich again ordered the capture of Orël and Stish' and Eropkino stations, simultaneously fighting the 3rd Infantry Division. Spreading out across a front up to 40 kms weakened the Strike Force. In the morning the 9th and the Estonian RDs came close to city. Small White covering forces left after a skirmish, with the main force leaving at night. The *Kornilovtsy's* week in Orël was over.

The 76th Rifle Regiment of 9th RD was the first into the city (at 10:10), then at 10:30 the 5th Estonian Regiment and at 11:00 the 3rd Latvian Rifle Brigade. But the award – a months salary to the regiment – was received by Estonians as the 9th Rifle Division, apparently, were punished for its previous surrender of the city.

¹⁷ This was fairly standard Soviet doctrine.

¹⁸ Pauka is spider.





The Reds Capture Orël

There was no combat in Orël himself. The 5th Latvian Rifle Regiment of the 2nd Brigade also arrived, from the south, and the 6th Regiment took Stish' station at 15:00. The first attack of the *Kornilovtsy* was beaten off, and it was only the combined impact of all the regiments, with the support of an armoured train, which forced the Latvian regiment to fall back. The command of the 2nd Brigade decided to retake Stish' station the next day. The White manpower, escaping from the blow, was located on the approaches to Orël. Egorov had greatly hoped for a stubborn defense of Orël by the *Kornilovtsy*, but they denied the Red *KomFront* that gift even as – in the expectation of that crushing defeat – all forces headed to that city. Egorov had thought that the capture of Orël would automatically also mean a crushing of the *Kornilovtsy*.

At this time the *Drozdvtsy* became more active in the south. The 7th Rifle division could barely hold off their impacts. The Latvian 1st Brigade and the Chervonno Cossack Brigade also had a hard time of it. In the afternoon, near Volch'i Yamy village, the strong impact of Colonel A. V. Turkul's shock group broke the 59th Rifle Regiment of the 7th RD. Two artillery pieces were taken and the regiment scattered.

The offensive by the 3rd ID (1st Army Corps) disturbed Egorov greatly and he promptly gave the Latvian division orders to attack Malo-Arkhangelsk – Shchigry. The 9th Rifle division was to attack Livny and all units of 13th and 14th Armies to go over to the offensive.

There was a change of command of the Latvian Division and the Strike Force during the day. Former major-general Martusevich was dismissed by Uborevich. At 15:30 the post was handed over to former Staff Captain Kalnins,¹⁹ the commander of the 1st Brigade.

The *Kornilovtsy* had been forced to withdraw from Orël, but at that time they perceived merely as a tactical move, since the city was an important intermediate point on the approach to Moscow. The battles by the 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment with the Strike Force were heavy for both sides, but despite of the continued superiority of Latvians in both infantry and artillery, not a single unit of the regiment was broken.

In general the second stage was a turning point for the entire battle. After a long chain of failures, the first successes cheered up the personnel of the Southern Front, which also received new reinforcements.

At the same time the Volunteer Army 1st Corps did not receive enough reinforcements, and those they did were mostly low quality. There was even a case at Kornevo village when two platoons of the march companies of the training battalion of the 3rd Division passed over to the Reds, after killing their officers.

¹⁹ Kalnin'sh in the Russian version of his name.



Third Stage of the Battle (21-27 October 1919)

On leaving Orël the 1st Army Corps sustained losses, but were now in a more concentrated position and was not going to retreat. For a week there were persistent individual battles across the 80 km of front – from Dmitrovsk to Stish' station. The protracted nature led to varying success for the two sides.

On 21 October Red intelligence reported to the Strike Group HQ about the enemy forces. They estimated them as: 2nd Officer General Drozdovskiy Rifle Regiment (4 battalions with 1,500 bayonets, 24 heavy machine guns and 8 guns); the 83rd Samurskiy Infantry Regiment (3 battalions with 1,200 bayonets, 120 sabres, 30 heavy and 12 light machine guns, 13 artillery pieces, and two armoured cars); two battalions of the 3rd Officer General Markov Infantry Regiment (600 bayonets, 12 machine guns); the 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment (3 soldier battalions and one officer battalion, with 1,800 bayonets, 100 sabres, 45 heavy machine guns, 13 guns, and 2 armoured cars); and the 3rd Kornilov shock Regiment (1,600 bayonets, 200 sabres, 27 machine guns and 9 guns). The reserve for the 1st ID was the 1st Kornilov Shock Regiment.

In the morning Egorov gave orders for a pursuit of the Whites, withdrawing the Estonian division to the reserve. The Strike Force was to go by rail, to the east of the 9th Rifle Division. The obviously premature opinion that the Whites had suffered a crushing defeat was disproved during the day. There were two strong combats at Stish' station and the Dmitrovsk area. The 2nd Latvian Brigade advanced on Stish' at dawn, and at 06:40 the station was seized by two Red battalions with four guns. An hour later two attacks by the *Kornilovtsy* were repelled, but the third attack at 10:00, supported by two armoured trains (*Ivan Kalita* and *Officer*) and two 6" guns forced out the Reds, who began a disorderly retreat. After fixing the track, the two armoured trains almost reached Orël.

The Latvians took considerable losses – there were around 80 killed and wounded in the 5th Latvian Rifle Regiment during the day. *KomBrig* Freyberg was absent, so Pavlov took command of the two brigades and deployed them on the line Zhizdra – Lavrovo – Mikhaylovka – Muzyka. The 3rd Brigade marched from Orël to Kromy.

During the day the commander of the 13th Army gave orders that the 9th Rifle Division attack to the east of the railway and strongly demanding that the Estonian division strike at Elets, as the 42nd RD was fully occupied and the 3rd RD was very weak – only 793 bayonets, 134 sabres, 55 machine guns and 21 guns. *KomandArm-13* focused his attention outside of Orël and along the rail line – once more a pursuit into space. But Egorov later gave orders to shift the strikes to Stish' station and Stanovoy Kolodez'.

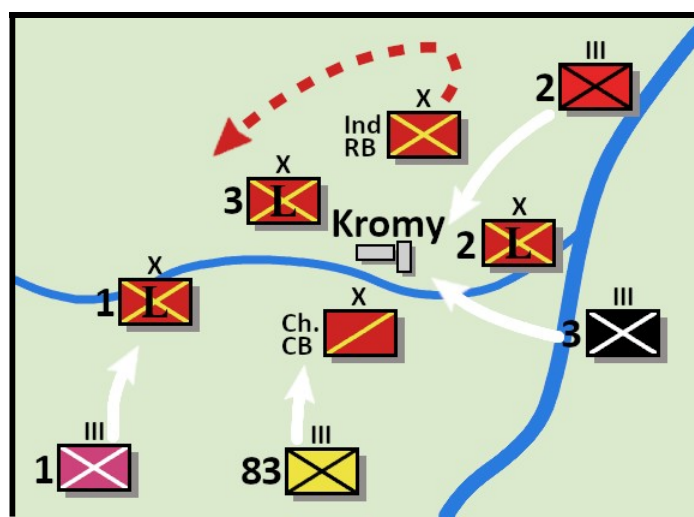
During the day the 2nd Kornilov Regiment's positions were visited by Mai-Maevskiy. Trying to cheer them up, he joked: "we shall take the raven by the tail!" (meaning the Red Strike Force) and, saying goodbye from his train, shouted: "Let's meet in Tula!" Pashkevich, the regiment commander, who had not quite recovered from his wounds, arrived with a colonel's shoulder-boards.

The fighting in the 3rdID's sector, with counter-attacks by the *Drozdovtsy* and Latvians, were fierce. The 1st Latvian Brigade, the Chervonno Cossack Brigade and the 7th Rifle Division were forced to retire, with the 7th RD – as usual – getting the worst of it. The *Markovtsy*, with the support of a squadron of the Black Sea Horse approached Kromy.

The next day new defensive tasks were given to the 1st Brigade (with new brigade commander Vaynyanis²⁰) and the Chervonno Cossack Brigade. The crisis in the 7th Rifle Division – its five regiments had only 518 bayonets – compelled its commander to bring all that remained into one rifle regiment and take them away to reform. Uborevich promised to send several march companies. A 10-15 km retreat by the 58th and 60th Rifle Regiments of the 7th Rifle division meant the day was lost for the Reds, with two failures on different flanks of the Strike Force's 40 km front. Most dangerous was that the White command had again seized the initiative.

²⁰ Perhaps Vaināns in the Latvian form.





Capture of Kromy

On 22 October Primakov, recently promoted to commander of the 8th Cavalry Division, while simultaneously commanding two brigades of the Strike Force, gave orders to attack Dmitrovsk. That order indicated that the 3rd Brigade would arrive in the Kromy area by 18:00. But the battle went badly for the Reds. The *Drozdovtsy* advanced once more and, by attracting to themselves more Reds, they contributed to the advance of the 3rd Markov regiment in the Kromy area.

During the night for 23 October the 3rd Latvian Rifle Regiment left the town. Units of 7th Rifle Division retired almost without resistance. *KomBrig-1*, Vaynyalis, was compelled to give the order:

Regimental commanders and unit commanders are to mercilessly shoot all those who leave their positions without orders and cause panic.

In the morning of 23 October the 7th RD began to move to the rear for reformation. Four brigades of the 41th RD replaced it. The 3rd Latvian Brigade had still not reached Kromy. In the Stish' station area a morning attack by the *Kornilovtsy* was repelled, but two villages fell to them and the Latvian cavalry was compelled to withdraw. A Red afternoon attempt to attack Stish' station with the 1st Petrograd Regiment of the Estonian division, the 505th and 76th Rifle Regiments from 9th Rifle Division and units of the Independent Rifle Brigade was repulsed, with many of the attackers fleeing in panic. The 5th Latvian Rifle Regiment covered the withdrawal. The 2nd Latvian Brigade lost 220 men killed and wounded. Units of the 9th Rifle Division retired to Orël itself. The Estonian Division advanced to the front on its own initiative.

It was a heavy day for the 3rd Kornilov Shock Regiment, with 400 killed and injured, but that was compensated in part by arrival of reinforcements, which even allowed a 4th Battalion to be generated.

In the evening Kalnins gave orders to form a "Stuchki subgroup" under *KomBrig-3* from the 2nd and 3rd Latvian Brigades to operate around Stish' station: its task was to break into the rear and interrupt railway communication. If the 3rd Brigade arrived in Kromy, it was to swap places with the Pavlov Brigade.

During the day the 3rd Markov Regiment lost 128 men, attacking the dense town of Kromy. All the officers in the 3rd Company were put out of action.

On 23 October the positions of the Primakov Group were attacked, despite an order for a partial counter-attack. In addition the units of the 7th Rifle Division were moved to the fourth brigade of the 41st Rifle Division. The 7th Latvian Rifle Regiment drove the 3rd Markov Regiment from Kromy.

In the Stish' station area, the 9th Rifle Division and 4th Latvian Rifle Regiment attacked the *Kornilovtsy*, facing strong fire from two White armoured trains. The 3rd Regiment held the station, having repelled the attack. It was supported with reinforcements from the 1st Kornilov Shock Regiment at Stish' station.



On the other sectors of the 14th Army there was something of a turning point, due to the withdrawal of almost all the 3rd Infantry Division's units. The Reds took Brasovo station.

The Strike Force's orders for 24 October demanded an attack on a wide front with all possible energy, assisting the neighbouring units.

There was a meeting engagement during this day in the Primakov Group's sector. A forced withdrawal of the 1st Brigade and individual successes by the Red Cossacks, including capturing an artillery piece near Krasnaya Roshcha were outweighed by the *Drozdovtsy* capturing Tsvilinevo and the subsequent engagement near Kromy. A counter-attack by the 3rd Markov Regiment was repelled. The 7th Latvian Rifle Regiment then approached close to Kromy, but was met by strong assault from the 2nd Kornilov Regiment, compelling the Reds to retreat.

The 8th Latvian Rifle Regiment, at Kozlov, had a long-running battle with the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd Kornilov Regiment. The village changed hands four times. Having lost two hundred men, the Red unit retired to Pan'kovo. The *Kornilovtsy* lost up to 150 men. Pressure on the flank compelled the 7th Latvian Rifle Regiment to leave Kromy, taken again by the 3rd Markov Regiment at 20:00. In the area around Stish' station there were two unsuccessful attacks by the Reds from the northwest, where the bombardment from the armoured trains in the open country prevented them from coming close. Therefore *Kombrig-2* concentrated his efforts at striking for the next station, Stanovoy Kolodez'.

An assault by the 9th Rifle Division was also repelled. The positions of 4th Latvian Rifle Regiment received 380 shells in one hour, including 16 chemical rounds, compelling the regiment to withdrawal.

So the offensive as a whole failed, but the effectiveness in combat of Pavlov's Brigade should be noted.

The White forces were the same as before – the three regiments of the Kornilov division. The assaults on Stish' station by the 4th Latvian Regiment and the Brigades of the 9th Rifle Division were not synchronized, which allowed the *Kornilovtsy* to repel them individually – and even to counter-attack and occupy Mikhaylovka on the frontage of the 9th RD.

A second attack by the 2nd Brigade of 9th RD was partially success in the evening: the 78th Rifle Regiment forced the Whites from two heights. On the other hand, a counter-attacks by the Whites resulted in the Strike Force giving way in the centre and on the right flank by 8 to 10 km. The left-flank positions were retained. The reasons for the Red failures were the protracted length and the weakness of the front, units attacking in isolation, and the absence of reserves. The combats at Stish' station were particularly poorly managed.

The 3rd Markov Regiment took Kromy during the day, having been abandoned by the Latvians, but two rifle battalions without artillery were too few to hold 5 km of frontage. Both battalion commanders reported this opinion to the regimental commander. The answer was: "Hold the town!". Feeling, that it could become a trap for a weak regiment, the battalion commanders left two exposed companies in front of the town, with their other forces holding the crossing.

On 25 October both divisions of General Kutepov's 1st Army Corps received offensive tasks. In particular, the *Kornilovtsy* were commanded to seize Orël.

The Red command of the Southern Front made a late decision to re-direct all the Strike Force forces onto the 3rd Infantry Division, and so the struggle with the *Kornilovtsy* was given to the 13th Army, having also been given the Estonian Division. The new boundary between the 14th and 13th Armies was from Sakhanskaya station through the mouth of the Rybnitsa River up to Ponyri station. This covered all the brigades of the Strike Force, except for the 2nd, which was ordered to advance and to take Kromy.

Vaynyalis's 1st Brigade fought long battles all day in their positions. Overcoming the resistance of the *Drozdovtsy*, the 1st Latvian Regiment took four villages and the 3rd Regiment took three. The Chervonno Cossack Brigade fought for Deryugino. In the 2nd Kornilov Regiment's area, around Kozly (Vyselok) there was fighting with the Pavlov Brigade. In the morning the Reds advanced on Stish' station with two regiments of the



Estonian division (5th Petrograd Rifle and the 5th Estonian) and 2nd Brigades of the 9th Rifle Division. The *Putilovtsy* took Mikhaylovka, but at 16:30 they were pushed out by a counter-attack of the *Kornilovtsy*, with the support of an armoured train. Even the arrival of the 2nd Estonian Regiment could not prevent the 3rd Kornilov Shock Regiment and some divisions of the 1st Kornilov from pushing back the Reds.

The reasons of the failures were the absence of coordinated actions between the Red columns and the absence of heavy artillery to oppose the White armoured trains, which were able to drive up to the Red chains and conduct devastating flanking machine-gun and artillery fire.

In the evening the Estonian Division was strengthened with the 2nd Brigade of the 9th Rifle Division, and tasked with reaching the rail line. The 9th Rifle Division was supposed to attack on the left, securing the Estonian flank.

The day ended in a draw, but the Reds were able to stop the furious offensive of the main forces of the 3rd Infantry Division with an active defense on the right flank. The regiment held Kromy all day.

It should be noted that the Latvians had good use of their artillery. Almost all the light batteries were permanently attached to the regiments.

On 26 October General Kutepov threw into the fight almost everything that he had.

- At Dmitrovsk he had the 3rd Infantry Division:
 - The 1st Officer General Drozdovskiy Rifle Regiment (1,500 bayonets and 24 heavy machine guns);
 - The 2nd Officer General Drozdovskiy Rifle Regiment (1,800 bayonets and 24 heavy machine guns);
 - The 3rd Officer General Drozdovskiy Rifle regiment (1200 bayonets, 15 machine guns and 70 sabres);
 - The 83rd Samurskiy Infantry Regiment (1,600 bayonets, 30 “Maxims”, 12 “Lewises” and 150 sabres).
 - The division had a total of 25 guns.
 - Cavalry was the 19th Arkhangel Dragoon Regiment and Colonel Barbovich’s brigade.²¹
- 1st Infantry Division operated in the Kromy area:
 - The 3rd Officer General Markov Regiment (1,080 bayonets, 18 machine guns and 3 guns);
 - Two squadrons of the Black Sea Horse Regiment.
- The *Kornilovtsy*
 - The 1st Kornilov Shock Regiment (1,000 bayonets and 32 machine guns),
 - The 2nd Kornilov Shock Regiment (1,800 bayonets, 180 sabres and 47 machine guns).
 - The 3rd Kornilov Shock Regiment (1,600 bayonets, 200 sabres, 24 “Maxims”, 8 “Colts”).
 - Two armoured trains were at Stish' station and one at D'yach'ya station.
- Around Elets were:
 - The 1st Officer General Markov Infantry Regiment (800 bayonets and 24 machine guns);
 - The 2nd Officer General Markov Infantry Regiment (830 bayonets and 12 machine guns);
 - The 1st Partisan General Alekseev Infantry Regiment (1,000 bayonets and 32 machine guns).
- In a reserve at Livny was the 2nd Pskov Life-Dragoon Regiment and at Shchigry was the 2nd General Alekseev Regiment.

²¹ These numbers are given from Red intelligence.



- On the extreme right flank were the remaining squadrons of the Black Sea Horse Regiment.

On 26 October Uborevich ordered the Strike Force to attack vigorously in area of the Orël – Kromy – Fatezh highway, particularly seeking to destroy the enemy instead of just taking territory, and demanded pursuit.

The Latvian Divisional Commander, Kalnins, ordered the 1st Brigade to attack Ivanovo – Nizhnaya Fedotovka, and the 3rd Brigade to take Kromy. A heavy battle on the positions of the 1st Brigade ended with its slow advance to the line of the Kroma River. On the extreme right flank, already in darkness, the 3rd and 4th Brigades of the 41st Rifle Division seized the town of Dmitrovsk.

In the morning of 26 October the 3rd Brigade attacked Kromy. Three attacks by the 7th Latvian Regiment were repelled, but a midnight attack succeeded. The 3rd Markov Regiment left the city. The Latvians stated that they captured two hundred prisoners but the *Markovtsy* recognized losses of no more than 50 killed, wounded and missing. The Latvian Cavalry Regiment which was supposed to strike into the White rear, could not execute its orders.

The 2nd Brigade did not attack the *Kornilovtsy*, expecting to be replaced by the Estonians. The Pavlov Brigade beat off a small *Kornilovtsy* attack. The Estonian Division, strengthened by the 2nd Brigade of 9th Rifle Division, moved to initial positions for an attack on Stish' Station but, having been four hours late (arriving at 16:00), the attack did not begin.

In the evening of 27 October, after seven days of persistent defense, under strong pressure from the Estonian Division, the *Kornilovtsy* left Stish' Station, and on 28 October abandoned Stanovoy Kolodez' Station and retreated to Eroplino Station. Thus there was no longer an possibility of an attack on Orël.

In the sector of the 3rd ID the Reds, having occupied Dmitrovsk and Kromy, have were now in an advantageous position for flank attacks, thereby stopping the *Drozdovtsy* and *Samurtsy* offensive.



Positions of the two sides at the end of the operation

Results

So the Orël-Kromy Operation – or the Battle of Orël – which took place from 10 to 27 October 1919, was over. The Reds had won on points, having stopped the advance on Moscow, and forced the Volunteers to withdraw. Though the 1st Army Corps kept its fighting capacity and could still make strong attacks, a wearing down of the best shock regiments had nonetheless taken place. The outcome of the struggle was decided by the



introduction of fresh Red reserves, brought into action when the Volunteer Army's 1st Corps was completely exhausted.

The Whites owed their success in the first half of October entirely to the actions of Lieutenant General Kutepov's corps. The leading role in the offensive was played by the infantry, showing high mobility, completing their decisive manoeuvres with resolute attacks, without long artillery preparation. In defence they tried to deliver short counter-attacks, finding the weak points in the opponent's positions. In general they avoided long fights, having come across strong Red resistance, the "coloured" units could repeatedly attack, showing tremendous persistence. The usual manoeuvre of the "coloured" units was to seek envelopments and flank attacks, successively getting into the rear of each Red unit, so generating a breakthrough on a wide front.

The White artillery was divided out to assist the infantry, even down to quite small units. Their armoured trains were successfully applied on the Orël – Kursk line and on the branch to D'yach'ya Station. Their support contributed equally to both to offence and defence around Orël.

Perhaps the one mistake of the White command was that the Orël area did not see any large cavalry forces. The cavalry corps covered the flanks of the Volunteer Army (3rd under General Shkuro, 4th Don under General Mamontov and 5th under General Yuzefovich).

In the fighting from 6 October to 10 November the 1st Kornilov Regiment lost 725 men, the 2nd lost 1,560, and the 3rd lost 646. It is necessary to add to this some killed, wounded and missing in the artillery units, armoured trains and other divisional units. The 3rd Markov Regiment lost about 500 men. There is no exact data for the *Samurtsy* and *Drozdovtsy*, but they also were considerable. In total, probably at least 5,000 men.

On the Red side the Latvian Division took the majority of the losses – 5,000 men killed and wounded. The Chervonno Cossacks lost around 400 and the Pavlov Independent Rifle Brigade around 600. If the losses of all the divisions of the 13th and 14th Armies are added, the resulting losses are not favourable to the Red side.

However, at the end of the battle the Reds could claim to have achieved their main task – stopping the White advance and wearing down the strike power of the best enemy units. Though the plan to "cut off the salient" and to completely crush the White "shock troops" had failed, Denikin's advance to Moscow was stopped near Orël.

