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# **Report to Comrade Lenin by the Commission of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Defence on the Reasons for the Fall of Perm in December 1918**

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## **GENERAL PICTURE OF THE DISASTER**

That disaster was inevitable was already apparent towards the end of November, when the enemy, after having surrounded the Third Army in a semi-circle along a line stretching from Nadezhdinsky, through Verkhoturys, Baranchinsky, Kyn, Irginsky and Rozhdestvensky, to the left bank of the Kama, and making strong demonstrations on his right flank, launched a fierce attack on Kushva.

The Third Army at that time consisted of the 30th Division, the 5th Division, a Special Brigade, a Special Detachment and the 29th Division, totalling about 35,000 bayonets and sabres, with 571 machine guns and 115 guns (see "Order of Battle").

The morale and efficiency of the army were deplorable, owing to the weariness of the units, the result of six months of continuous fighting without relief. There were no reserves whatever. The rear was totally insecure (a series of demolitions of the rail way track in the rear of the army). The food supply of the army was haphazard and uncertain (at the most difficult moment, when a furious assault was launched against the 29th Division, its units were in action for five days literally without bread or other food).

Although it occupied a flank position, the Third Army was not secured against envelopment from the North (no measures were taken to post a special group of units on the army's extreme left flank to guard it against envelopment). As to the extreme right flank, the neighbouring army, the Second, being immobilized by a vague directive from the Commander-in-Chief (not to involve the Second Army in action after the capture of Izhevsk and Votkinsk, because it was to be given another assignment), and compelled to remain immobile for ten days, was not in a position to render timely support to the Third Army by advancing at the most crucial moment, before the surrender of Kushva (close of November).

Thus, left to its own devices (in the South) and open to enemy enveloping operations (in the North), weary and battered, without reserves and without the rear being at all secure, poorly fed (29th Division) and abominably shod (30th Division) at a time when the temperature stood at 35 degrees below zero, drawn out along a vast line stretching from Nadezhdinsky to the left bank of the Kama south of Osa (over 400 versts), and with a weak and inexperienced army headquarters, the Third Army could not, of course, withstand the onslaught of the enemy's superior and fresh forces (five divisions), which, in addition, were led by experienced commanders.

On November 30 the enemy occupied Viya Station, severing our left flank from the centre, and annihilated practically the entire 3rd Brigade of the 29th Division (only the brigade commander, the chief of staff and the

commissar escaped; armoured train No.9 fell into the enemy's hands). On December 1 the enemy occupied Krutoy Log Station in the Lysva sector and captured our armoured train No.2. On December 3 the enemy occupied Kushvinsky Zavod (Verkhoturys and the whole northern area, being cut off from the centre, were evacuated by our forces). On December 7 the enemy occupied Biser. On December 9 - Lysva. Between December 12 and 15 - Chusovskaya, Kalino and Selyanka Stations, the 1st Soviet Replacements Battalion going over to the side of the enemy. On December 20 the enemy occupied Valezhnaya Station. On December 21 - Gori and Mostovaya, the 1st Soviet Rifle Regiment deserting to the enemy. The enemy approached Motovilikha, with our forces in general retreat. On the night of the 24th-25th the enemy occupied Perm without a fight. The so-called artillery defence of the city proved a farce, leaving 29 guns in the enemy's hands.

Thus, in twenty days, the army in its disorderly retreat retired more than 300 versts, from Verkhoturys to Perm, losing in this period 18,000 men, scores of guns and hundreds of machine guns. (After the fall of Perm the Third Army consisted only of two divisions, with a total of 17,000 bayonets and sabres instead of 35,000, with 323 machine guns instead of 571, and 78 guns instead of 115. See "Order of Battle.")

Strictly speaking, it was not a retreat, still less could it be called an organized withdrawal of units to new positions; it was an absolutely disorderly flight of an utterly routed and completely demoralized army, with a staff which was neither capable of realizing what was happening nor of foreseeing the inevitable disaster, incapable, too, of adopting timely measures to preserve the army by withdrawing it to prepared positions, even at the price of territory. The noisy laments of the Revolutionary Military Council and Third Army headquarters that the disaster was a "surprise" only prove that these institutions were out of touch with the army, had no inkling of the fatal significance of the events at Kushva and Lysva, and were incapable of directing the army's actions.

All these factors account for the unparalleled confusion and inefficiency which characterized the absolutely disorderly evacuation of a number of towns and places in the area of the Third Army, the shameful affair about the demolition of the bridge and destruction of the abandoned property, and, lastly, the matter of the guarding of the city and of its so-called artillery defence. Although talk of evacuation had already begun in August, nothing, or nearly nothing, was done for its practical organization. Nobody, not a single organization, attempted to call to order the Central Collegium, which got in the way of the institutions, engaged in endless debates on a plan of evacuation, but did nothing, absolutely nothing, to arrange for the evacuation (it did not even prepare a list of "its own freight").

Nobody, not a single institution, attempted to establish effective control over the Ural Railway Administration, which proved suspiciously incapable of combating the skilfully organized sabotage of railway personnel.

The appointment of chief transportation officer Stogov as chief of evacuation on December 12 did not advance the work of evacuation one iota, because, despite his solemn pledge to evacuate Perm without delay ("I pledge my head that everything will be evacuated"), Stogov had no plan of evacuation, no evacuation staff, and no military force with which to curb the disorderly and unauthorized attempts at "evacuation" on the part of individual institutions and disorganized military units (seizure of locomotives, wagons, etc.). The result was that all sorts of rubbish - broken chairs and similar lumber were evacuated, while trains already loaded with machinery and parts of the Motovilikha plant and the Kama flotilla, trains carrying wounded soldiers or precious American axles, and hundreds of sound locomotives and other valuables remained un-evacuated.

The Regional Party Committee, the Regional Soviet, and the Revolutionary Military Council and army headquarters could not but know all this, but evidently they "refrained from interfering," since the investigation reveals that these institutions did not exercise systematic control over the activities of the evacuation agencies.

Already in October army headquarters began to talk of arranging an artillery defence of Perm. But it went no farther than talk, because 26 guns (plus another 3 which were not in proper working order), with all their horses and harness were left to the enemy without a single shot having been fired. The investigation shows that if headquarters had taken the trouble to check what the brigade commander was doing in regard to placing the guns, it would have realized that, in view of the disorderly retreat of the military units and the general state of disorganization on the eve of the fall of Perm (December 23), and in view of the fact that the brigade commander, in disobedience of orders, had postponed the emplacement of the guns until the 24th (this brigade

commander deserted to the enemy on the 24th), the only thing to be done was to save the guns themselves by removing them, or at least to put them out of action, but that there certainly could be no question of an artillery defence. That neither of these things was done can only be attributed to the negligence and inefficiency of headquarters.

- 1) Whether (as some assert) Medvedyev really was killed by whiteguard agents just before the charge was to be fired, when the bridge guards fled "no one knows whereto";
- 2) Whether Medvedyev himself ran away because he did not want to blow up the bridge;
- 3) Or whether, perhaps, Medvedyev did all in his power to blow up the bridge, but it was not blown up because the wiring was defective, or the charges were damaged, perhaps by the fire of the enemy, who was shelling the bridge, or perhaps before the shelling, Medvedyev being killed maybe later when the enemy arrived on the scene.

Further, the Revolutionary Military Council and army headquarters had made no attempt to assign to any precise and definite agency or individual the task of destroying the un-evacuated property. More, these institutions were not found to have formal (written) orders making compulsory the destruction or demolition of the abandoned installations and property. This explains why property mostly of minor value (railway wagons, for instance) was destroyed (burned), on the initiative of individuals, while very valuable property (textiles, uniforms, etc.) was left untouched. Moreover, the burning or blowing up of un-evacuated property was forbidden by certain official persons, ostensibly in order to "prevent panic" (these persons have not been found).

To this picture of general disruption and disorganization of the army and the rear, and mismanagement and irresponsibility on the part of army, Party and Soviet institutions, must be added the incredible, almost wholesale desertion of responsible officials to the enemy. Banin, the engineer in charge of the defence works, and all his staff, railway engineer Adrianovsky and all the experts of the area railway administration, Sukhorsky, chief of army transportation, and his staff, Bukin, chief of mobilization of the Area Military Commissariat, and his staff, Ufimtsev, commander of the guard battalion, Valyuzhenich, commander of the artillery brigade, Eskin, chief of special formations, the commander of the engineer battalion and his second-in-command, the commandants of Perm I and Perm II Stations, the entire accountant's division of the army supply department, half the members of the Central Collegium - all these and many others remained in Perm and went over to the side of the enemy.

All this could not but increase the general panic that seized not only the retreating units but even the Revolutionary Committee which had been set up on the eve of the fall of Perm and which had failed to maintain revolutionary order in the city, and the Gubernia Military Commissariat, which lost contact with the various parts of the city, resulting in the non-withdrawal from Perm of two companies of the guard battalion, who were afterwards massacred by the Whites, and the loss of a ski battalion, who were also slaughtered by the Whites. The provocative firing skillfully organized by White agents in various parts of the city (December 23 and 24) added to and enhanced the general panic .

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## **THE THIRD ARMY AND THE RESERVES**

The weariness of the Third Army (six months of continuous fighting without relief) and the lack of any reliable reserves were the immediate causes of the defeat. Drawn out in a thin line 400 versts long, and liable to envelopment from the North, which compelled it to extend the line still further northward, the Third Army presented a most convenient target for enemy penetration at any point. All this, as well as the lack of reserves, was known to the Revolutionary Military Councils of the Eastern Front and the Republic already in September (see, in the "Appendix," the telegrams of responsible officers of the Third Army demanding "replacements" and "reserves," reporting the weariness of the Third Army's units, etc.), but Central Headquarters either sent no reserves at all, or sent small contingents of worthless troops. The demands for replacements and references to the weariness of the army became particularly frequent after the loss of Kushva in the early part of December. On

December 6 Lashevich (army commander) appealed to the Eastern Front for reserves, pleading the hopelessness of the situation, but Smilga (Eastern Front) replied: "Unfortunately, reinforcements cannot be sent." On December 11 Trifonov, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Third Army, informed Smilga (Eastern Front) over the direct wire: "It is very probable that we shall be forced to abandon Perm in the next few days. All we need is two or three firm regiments. Try to secure them from Vyatka or some nearby point." Reply of Smilga (Eastern Front): "Reinforcements cannot be sent. Commander-in-Chief declines to help." (See "Appendix."). In the period August-December 13,153 men in all, with 3,388 bayonets, 134 machine guns, 22 guns and 977 horses, arrived as reinforcements for the Third Army on orders from the centre. Of these, the 1st Kronstadt Regiment of Marines (1,248 men) surrendered to the enemy, the 11th Separate Marines Battalion (834 men) deserted, the 5th Field Battery of the Kronstadt Fortress were placed under arrest for brutally killing their commander, and the Finns and Estonians (1,214 men) were recalled to the West. As to the indents for 22 companies promised by the centre, the latter simply did nothing about them. And the 3rd Brigade of the 7th Division (three regiments) promised by the centre arrived in Glazov only in the early part of January, when Perm had already fallen. Moreover, the very first acquaintance with the brigade was enough to show that it had no place in the Red Army (a distinctly counter-revolutionary attitude, disaffection towards the Soviet power, existence within the brigade of a solid group of kulak elements, threats to "surrender Vyatka," etc.). Furthermore, the brigade was not ready for action (no firing skill, baggage train of the summer type), the commanders were unacquainted with their regiments, and political educational work was negligible. Only towards the end of January, after three or four weeks of purging and thorough sifting of the brigade and strongly reinforcing it with Communists as rank-and-file Red Army men, and after intensive political educational work, was it converted into a competent fighting unit (of its three regiments, one was sent to the front on January 20, the second can be sent not earlier than January 30, and the third not earlier than February 10). Further evidence of these same shortcomings in our system of formation is the case of the 10th Cavalry Regiment and the 10th Regiment of Engineers stationed at Ochersky Zavod (they were both formed by the Ural Area Military Commissariat), the first of which attacked our units in the rear, and the second tried to do so too, but unsuccessfully, because of the precautionary measures taken.

The shortcomings in the system of formation are due to the following circumstances: down to the end of May the Red Army was formed on the voluntary principle (under the direction of the All-Russian Formation Board), enlistment being confined to workers and peasants who did not exploit the labour of others (see "Certificate Card" and "Personal Card" drawn up by the All-Russian Formation Board). This, possibly, is one of the reasons for the staunchness of the formations of the volunteer period. When the All-Russian Formation Board was dissolved at the end of May and the work of formation turned over to the All-Russian General Staff, the picture changed for the worse. The All-Russian General Staff took over in its entirety the system of formation which prevailed in tsarist days, and enrolled for Red Army service all mobilized men regardless of their property status. The points concerning the property status of mobilized men contained in the "Personal Card" of the All-Russian Formation Board were not included in the "Personal and Record Card" drawn up by the All-Russian General Staff (see "Personal and Record Card" of the All-Russian General Staff). True, on June 12, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars issued the first decree on the mobilization of workers and peasants who do not exploit the labour of others, but it was evidently not reflected in the practical work of the All-Russian General Staff, nor in its orders, nor in the "Personal and Record Card." This chiefly explains why it was that the result of the work of our formation agencies was not so much a Red Army as a "popular army." Only in mid-January, when the Commission of the Council of Defence pressed the Ural Area Military Commissariat to the wall and demanded all documents and orders of the General Staff relative to methods of formation-only then did the All-Russian General Staff find time to give serious thought to the system of formation and it issued the telegraphic order to all Area Military Commissariats: "Fill in points 14, 15, and 16 of the personal and record cards, indicating party affiliation (of the recruit), whether he exploits the labour of others, and whether he has been through a general training course" (this telegraphic order of the General Staff was sent out on January 18,1919. See "Appendix"). And this after eleven divisions were considered formed already by December 1, and part of them, already dispatched to the front, had displayed all the signs of being whiteguard formations.

The defects in the system of formation were aggravated by the amazing negligence of the Area Military Commissariat in regard to the maintenance of the new formations (wretched food and clothing, no bathhouses, etc. See "Testimony of the Commission of Inquiry of the Vyatka Party Committee"), and by the absolutely

indiscriminate appointment of unverified officers as commanders, many of whom lured their units over to the enemy.

Lastly, the General Staff did not see to it that men mobilized in one locality should be transferred for formation to another locality (in a different military area), which would have substantially checked mass desertion. We say nothing about the absence of any satisfactory political educational work in the units (weakness and incompetence of the All-Russian Commissars Bureau).

It is quite understandable that such semi-whiteguard reserves, as far as the centre sent them at all (half of them usually deserted on the way), could not be of any material support to the Third Army. Yet the units of the Third Army were so fatigued and worn out that during the retreat soldiers would lie down in whole groups in the snow and beg their commissars to shoot them: "We can't stand on our feet, let alone march. We're worn out. Put us out of our misery, comrades." (See "Testimony of Divisional Commissar Mrachkovsky.")

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This practice of fighting without reserves must be stopped. A system of permanent reserves must be introduced, otherwise it will be impossible either to maintain present positions, or to exploit successes. Without this, disaster will be inevitable.

But reserves can be of value only if the old system of mobilization and formation practised by the General Staff is radically amended, and the composition of the General Staff itself is changed.

It is necessary, firstly, that mobilized men be divided strictly into propertied men (unreliable) and non-propertied men (who are alone suitable for Red Army service).

It is necessary, secondly, that men mobilized in one locality should be transferred for formation to another locality, and that the principle in dispatching men to the front should be: "the further from their home gubernia, the better" (abandonment of the territorial principle).

It is necessary, thirdly, to discard the practice of forming large, unwieldy units (divisions), which are unfitted for conditions of civil war, and to lay down that the maximum combat unit should be the brigade.

It is necessary, fourthly, to establish strict continuous control over those Area Military Commissariats (first replacing their personnel), which evoke indignation among the Red Army men (mass desertion at the best) by their criminal negligence in the matter of billeting, victualling and outfitting the units under formation.

It is necessary, lastly, to replace the personnel of the All-Russian Commissars Bureau, which supplies the military units with whipper-snapper "commissars" who are quite incapable of organizing political educational work on any satisfactory basis.

As a result of non-observance of these conditions, what our formation agencies are sending to the front is not so much a Red Army as a "popular army," and the word "commissar" has become a term of opprobrium.

In particular, if the fighting efficiency of the Third Army is to be preserved, it is absolutely essential to supply it at once with reserves to the extent of at least three reliable regiments.

## **CONTROL SYSTEM OF THE ARMY AND INSTRUCTIONS OF THE CENTRE**

The Revolutionary Military Council of the Third Army consists of two men, one of whom (Lashevich) commands, and as to the other (Trifonov), we have failed to discover either what his functions are, or what he is actually doing: he does not look after supply, he does not look after the political education services of the army, and generally he does not seem to be doing anything whatever. In point of fact, there is no Revolutionary Military Council at all.

Army headquarters has no contact with its combat area; it has no special representatives in the divisions and brigades to keep it informed and to see to it that the orders of the army commander are strictly obeyed by the commanders of divisions and brigades; army headquarters contents itself with the official reports (often inaccurate) of the division and brigade commanders; it is completely in their hands (they behave like feudal princes). This accounts for army headquarters' lack of liaison with its combat area (it knows nothing about the real state of affairs there) and the lack of centralized control within the army (constant wailing of army headquarters regarding the weakness of the junctions between the army's combat units). Centralized control is lacking not only within the army, but also between the various armies of the front (Eastern). It is a fact that from the 10th. to the end of November, when the Third Army was shedding its blood in unequal combat, its neighbour, the Second Army, remained immobile for two whole weeks. Yet it is clear that if the Second Army, which had completed the Izhevsk-Votkinsk operation on November 10, had advanced (which it could have done quite easily, because at that time there were no enemy forces opposing it, or practically none), the enemy could not even have started any serious operation against Perm (since his rear would have been threatened by the Second Army), and the Third Army would have been saved.

The investigation has revealed that the lack of coordination between the Second and Third Armies was due to the isolation of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic from the front and the ill-considered instructions of the Commander-in-chief Front Commander Kamenev, when interrogated by us, had the following to say in this connection:

"Before the capture of Izhevsk and Votkinsk, in the early part of November, not later than the 10th, we had received instructions that after the capture of these points the Second Army was to be transferred to another front, the exact location not being specified. Having received such an instruction, the army could not be adequately used; it could not be brought into contact with the enemy, otherwise it would have been impossible to disengage it in time. The situation meanwhile was very serious, yet the army confined itself to clearing the area of whiteguard bands. It was not before Shternberg and Sokolnikov interceded and went to Serpukhov that the instruction was rescinded. But this took ten days. Ten days were thus wasted, during which the army was forced to remain immobile. Then the sudden summons of Shorin, commander of the Second Army, to Serpukhov paralysed the Second Army, which was linked with his personality, and forced it to remain immobile for another five days. In Serpukhov, Shorin was received by Kostyaev, who asked him whether he was a General Staff officer, and on learning that he was not, dismissed him, saying that it had been intended to appoint him assistant commander of the Southern Front but they 'had thought better of it'" (see "Statement of the Commander of the Eastern Front").

It is necessary in general to draw attention to the unpardonable thoughtlessness with which the Commander-in-Chief issues instructions. Gusev, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eastern Front, states (December 26): "Recently the Eastern Front received three telegraphic instructions in the space of five days: 1) Main direction-Orenburg. 2) Main direction- Yekaterinburg. 3) Go to the support of the Third Army" (see Gusev's letter to the C.C., R.C.P.). Bearing in mind that every new instruction requires a certain amount of time to execute, it will be easily seen how light-minded was the attitude of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and the Commander-in-Chief towards their own instructions.

It should be stated that the third member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eastern Front, Smilga, fully associates himself with the statements of the other two members, Kamenev and Gusev. (See "Smilga's Testimony," January 5.)

## CONCLUSIONS

The army cannot do without a strong Revolutionary Military Council. Its Revolutionary Military Council should consist of at least three members, one of whom supervises the army's supply services, the second its political education services, and the third commands. Only in this way can the army function properly.

Army headquarters must not content itself with the official reports (not infrequently inaccurate) of the commanders of divisions and brigades; it must have its representatives-agents who keep it regularly informed

and are keenly alert to see that the orders of the army commander are strictly observed. Only in this way can contact between headquarters and army be assured, the virtual autonomy of divisions and brigades abolished, and effective centralized control of the army established.

An army cannot operate as a self-contained and absolutely autonomous unit. In its operations it is entirely dependent on the armies adjacent to it, and above all on the instructions of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. Other things being equal, the most efficient army may suffer disaster if the instructions of the centre are faulty and if effective contact with the adjacent armies is lacking. It is necessary to establish on the fronts, and on the Eastern Front in the first place, a system of strictly centralized control of operations of the various armies for the execution of a definite and thoroughly thought-out strategic directive. Arbitrary or ill-considered defining of instructions, and failure to pay serious heed to all the factors involved, with the consequent rapid change of instructions and the vagueness of the instructions themselves, as is the case with the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, makes it impossible to direct the armies, results in loss of effort and time, and disorganizes the front. The Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic must be reformed into a narrow group, closely connected with the fronts and consisting, say, of five persons (two of them being experts, a third exercising supervision over the Central Supply Department, a fourth over the General Staff, and the fifth over the All-Russian Commissars Bureau), sufficiently experienced not to act arbitrarily and light-mindedly in the control of the armies.

## **INSECURITY OF THE REAR AND WORK OF THE PARTY AND SOVIET INSTITUTIONS**

The investigation reveals that the rear of the Third Army was completely disrupted. The army was forced to fight on two fronts: against the enemy, whom it at any rate knew and could see, and against elusive inhabitants in the rear who, under the direction of whiteguard agents, blew up railway tracks and created all sorts of difficulties, so much so that the railway in the rear of the army had to be guarded by a special armoured train. All the Party and Soviet institutions are unanimous in affirming that the population of the Perm and Vyatka gubernias are "solidly counter-revolutionary." The Regional Party Committee and Regional Soviet, as well as the Perm Gubernia Executive Committee and Gubernia Party Committee assert that the villages in this area are "solidly kulak." When we remarked that there were no such things as solidly kulak villages, that the existence of kulaks without exploited is inconceivable, since kulaks must have somebody to exploit, the above mentioned institutions shrugged their shoulders and declined to give any other explanation. Further and more thorough investigation has revealed that the Soviets contain unreliable elements, that the Committees of Poor Peasants are controlled by kulaks, that the Party organizations are weak, unreliable and isolated from the centre, that Party work is neglected, and that the local functionaries endeavour to compensate for the general weakness of the Party and Soviet institutions by intensifying the activities of the Extraordinary Commissions, which, in view of the general breakdown of Party and Soviet work, have become the sole representatives of Soviet power in the provinces. Only the wretchedness of the work of the Soviet and Party organizations, which lacked even a minimum of guidance from the Central Executive Committee (or the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs) and the Central Committee of the Party, can explain the amazing fact that the revolutionary decree on the extraordinary tax,<sup>(1)</sup> which was designed to drive a wedge in the countryside and rouse the poor peasants in support of Soviet power, was turned into a most dangerous weapon of the kulaks, used by them to unite the countryside against the Soviet power (as a rule, on the initiative of the kulaks ensconced in the Committees of Poor Peasants, taxes were levied on a per capita instead of a property basis, which infuriated the poor peasants and facilitated the agitation of the kulaks against taxes and the Soviet power). Yet all the functionaries without exception confirm that the "misunderstandings" arising in connection with the extraordinary tax were one of the principal factors, if not the only important one, which made the countryside counter-revolutionary. No guidance of the current work of the Soviet organizations on the part of the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs or the Central Executive Committee is to be observed (it is characteristic that by January 26 the re-election of the Committees of Poor Peasants, in the Perm and Vyatka gubernias had not yet begun). Nor is any guidance of the current work of the Party organizations to be observed on the part of the Central Committee. All the time we have been at the front we have succeeded in unearthing only one document from the Central Committee of the Party. It orders the

transfer of Comrade Korobovkin from Perm to Penza, and is signed by a "secretary" by the name of Novgorodtseva. (This order was not carried out because of its manifest inexpediency.)

The result of all these circumstances was that the Party and Soviet institutions were deprived of backing in the villages, lost contact with the poor peasants and began to place all their reliance in the Extraordinary Commissions and in repressive measures, under which the countryside is groaning. The Extraordinary Commissions themselves, inasmuch as their work was not supplemented by and conducted parallel with positive agitational and constructive work by the Party and Soviet institutions, fell into a state of complete and utter isolation, to the detriment of the prestige of the Soviet power. An ably conducted Party and Soviet press might have promptly brought the disease spots of our institutions to light; but the Perm and Vyatka Party and Soviet press is not distinguished either by ability in organizing its work or by its understanding of the current tasks of Soviet power (nothing but empty talk about a "world social" revolution is to be found in it; the concrete tasks of Soviet power in the countryside, the re-election of the volost Soviets, the extraordinary tax, the aims of the war against Kolchak and the other whiteguards - all these are "low" themes which the press proudly shuns). Consider the significance, for example, of the fact that of the 4,766 officials and employees of the Soviet institutions in Vyatka, 4,467 occupied the same posts in the gubernia rural administration in tsarist times; or, to put it plainly, the old tsarist Zemstvo institutions have been simply re-named Soviet institutions (do not forget that these "Soviet officials" control the entire leather-producing area of the Vyatka Gubernia). This striking fact was revealed by our questionnaire in mid - January. Did the Regional Party Committee and Regional Soviet, the local press and the local Party officials know about it? Of course, not. Did the Central Committee of the party, the Central Executive Committee and the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs know about it? Of course not. But how can the centre direct if it has no idea of the chief disease spots not only in the provinces generally, but even in our provincial Soviet institutions?

## CONCLUSIONS

A severe handicap to our armies is the instability of the rear, which is mainly to be explained by neglect of Party work, inability of the Soviets to carry out the directives of the centre, and the abnormal (almost isolated) position of the local Extraordinary Commissions.

In order to strengthen the rear it is necessary:

1. To institute a strict system of regular reports from the local Party organizations to the Central Committee; to send regular circular letters of the Central Committee to the local Party organizations; to set up a press department of the Central Organ to direct the provincial Party press; to organize a school for training Party officials (mainly from workers) and arrange for the proper distribution of officials. All these measures should be entrusted to a Secretariat of the Party Central Committee to be organized within the Central Committee.
2. Strictly to delimit the sphere of jurisdiction of the Central Executive Committee and the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs in the direction of the current work of the Soviets; to merge the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission with the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs; (2) to make it the duty of the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs to see that the decrees and orders of the central authority are correctly and promptly carried out by the Soviets; to make it the duty of the gubernia Soviets to present regular reports to the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs; to make it the duty of the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs to issue the necessary regular instructions to the Soviets; to institute a press department of the Izvestia to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (3) to direct the provincial Soviet press.
3. To set up a Control and Inspection Commission under the Council of Defence to investigate "defects in the machinery" of the People's Commissariats and their corresponding local departments both in the rear. and at the front.

## SUPPLY AND EVACUATION AGENCIES



The chief malady in the sphere of supply is the incredible overlapping of supply agencies and the lack of co-ordination between them.

The army and the population of Perm received their food supplies from Ural Supply, Gubernia Supply, City Supply, the Uyezd Supply Boards and the Supply Department of the Third Army. For all that, the work of supply proceeded very badly, for the army (29th Division) starved and the population of Perm and the Motovilik workers went hungry, the bread ration having been systematically reduced until it dropped to starvation level (1/4 lb.).

The confusion in supplying the army, due to lack of co-ordination among the above-mentioned supply agencies, is aggravated by the fact that the People's Commissariat of Food takes no account of the loss of the Perm Gubernia and still issues its indents for supplies to the Third Army on the Perm and other remote gubernias instead of transferring them to Vyatka. It should also be mentioned that the People's Commissariat of Food has not yet proceeded to haul grain to the river wharves, nor the Waterways Board to repair its steamers, and this undoubtedly may create serious complications in the matter of supply in the future.

The supply of the army with munitions is suffering even more severely from the overlapping of agencies and from bureaucratic red tape. The Central Supply Department, the Control Ordnance Department, the Extraordinary Supply Commission and the Ordnance Division of the Third Army are continually getting into each other's way, hampering and preventing the active work of supply. In illustration, we consider it appropriate to quote some excerpts from a telegram sent by the Commander of the Third Army to the Commander of the Front (with a copy to Trotsky) on December 17, 1918, just before the fall of Perm:

"Chief of Supply, Eastern Front, stated in his telegram No. 3249 that an indent for six thousand Japanese rifles had been issued on the Yaroslavl Area. This indent, as may be seen from telegram No. 493 of Chief of Staff of the Military Council of the Republic Kostyaev, was endorsed by the Commander-in-Chief. A month ago Third Army headquarters sent an agent to receive the rifles. On his arrival at the Yaroslavl Area Ordnance Department he wired that nothing was known there about the matter, since no order had been received from the Central Ordnance Department (C.O.D.). The agent proceeded to the C.O.D. in Moscow, and wired from there that the rifles could not be issued without the consent of the Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday we received a wire from the agent stating that C.O.D. categorically refused to issue the rifles and that he had returned. In his telegram No. 208 Chief of Supply of the Revolutionary Military Council stated that the Second Army had been ordered to deliver six thousand rifles to the Third Army, and Commander Second Army in his telegram No. 1560 requested that an agent be urgently sent to Izhevsk to receive the rifles. The agent was sent to Izhevsk, but he was not issued the rifles on the plea that no order had been received. Commander Second Army in his telegram No. 6542 and Chief of Supply Eastern Front in his telegram No. 6541 requested that the Izhevsk factory be ordered to release the rifles. Down to the 16th of this month no order had been sent to the factory, and according to information received from the agent all available rifles in Izhevsk are to be dispatched to the centre on Monday. Ten thousand rifles have thus been lost to the army on these two indents. The state of the army is well known. Replenishments cannot be sent to the front without rifles, and because of lack of replenishments the front is melting away, leading to the results with which you are familiar. The indent for rifles was issued to the Yaroslavl Area Ordnance Department with the consent of the Commander-in-Chief, and Commander Third Army therefore officially accuses the C.O.D. of sabotage and insists upon an inquiry."

The substance of this telegram is fully corroborated by Front Commander Kamenev. (See "Statements of the Commander of the Front.")

Similar confusion and overlapping of agencies reigned in the sphere of evacuation. The Area Chief of Railways proved totally incapable of checking the skilfully organized sabotage of railway personnel. Frequent train accidents, traffic jams and mysterious disappearances of freight needed by the army took the area administration by surprise at the most trying moments of the evacuation, yet it did nothing, or was incapable of doing anything, to put an effective stop to the evil. The Central Collegium "worked," that is, debated, but took absolutely no measures for the orderly evacuation of freight. The chief transportation officer of the Third Army, who was also chief of evacuation, did absolutely nothing to get out the most valuable freight (machinery and parts of the

Motovilikha plant, etc.). All sorts of rubbish was evacuated, and all organizations without exception had a finger in the work of evacuation, and the result was confusion and chaos.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In order to improve the supply of the army, it is necessary:

1. To put an end to the overlapping of central army supply agencies (Central Supply Department, Extraordinary Supply Commission, Central Ordnance Department - each of which acts as it sees fit) and to reduce them to one, which should be held strictly accountable for the prompt fulfilment of indents.
2. To instruct the army supply division to maintain a fortnight's supply of rations in reserve with each division.
3. To instruct the People's Commissariat of Food to issue indents for the armies on gubernias in their immediate vicinity-in particular, to transfer (promptly) its indents for the Third Army to the Vyatka Gubernia.
4. To instruct the People's Commissariat of Food to proceed immediately to haul grain to the river wharves, and the Waterways Board to proceed to repair its steamers.

In order to ensure efficient evacuation, it is necessary:

1. To abolish the local Central Collegiums.
2. To set up under the Supreme Council of National Economy a single evacuation agency, with the right to allocate evacuated property.
3. To instruct this agency, in case of need, to send special agents to direct the work of evacuation on the spot, always, as an indispensable condition, enlisting the co-operation of representatives of the military authorities and railway administration of the given area.
4. To appoint to the various area railway administrations, especially of the Ural Area (in view of the unsatisfactory nature of its personnel) responsible agents of the People's Commissariat of Railways who will be capable of commanding the obedience of the railway experts and breaking the sabotage of railway personnel.
5. To instruct the People's Commissariat of Railways to proceed immediately to transfer locomotives and wagons from areas where they are in abundance to the grain-growing areas, as well as to repair damaged locomotives.

## **TOTAL LOSSES OF MATERIEL AND MEN**

It is impossible to establish an exhaustive picture of the losses in view of the "disappearance" of a number of documents and the desertion to the enemy of a whole number of Soviet officials and experts concerned. According to available data, our losses are: 419,000 cubic sazhen of wood fuel and 2,383,000 poods of coal, anthracite and peat; 66,800,000 poods of ore and other raw materials; 5,000,000 poods of basic materials and products (cast iron, aluminium, tin, zinc, etc.); 6,000,000 poods of open-hearth and Bessemer ingots, bars and slabs; 8,000,000 poods of iron and steel (structural steel, sheet iron, wire, rails, etc.); 4,000,000 poods of salt; 255,000 poods of caustic and calcined soda; 900,000 poods of oil and paraffin; 5,000,000 rubles worth of medical supplies; the storehouses of the Motovilikha plant and the Perm railway shops; the railway axle stores, including large stocks of American axles; the warehouses of the District Water Transport Board, containing cotton wool, textiles, mineral oil, nails, carts, etc.; 65 wagonloads of leather; 150 wagon-loads of food belonging to the army supply division; 297 locomotives (86 out of order); over 3,000 railway wagons; some 20,000 killed, captured and missing soldiers and 10 cars of wounded; 37 guns, 250 machine guns, over 20,000 rifles, over 10,000,000 cartridges, over 10,000 shells.

We say nothing of the loss of the entire railway network, valuable installations, etc.

## MEASURES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE FRONT

By January 15, 1,200 bayonets and sabres who could be relied on had been sent to the front; two squadrons of cavalry were dispatched two days later, and the 62nd Regiment of the 3rd Brigade (after thorough sifting) on the 20th. These units made it possible to halt the enemy's advance, wrought a complete change in the morale of the Third Army, and opened our advance on Perm, which so far is proceeding successfully. The 63rd Regiment of the same brigade (after having undergone a month's purge) will be sent to the front on January 30. The 61st Regiment cannot be sent before February 10 (it needs very thorough sifting). In view of the weakness of the extreme left flank, open to the danger of being turned by the enemy, the ski battalion in Vyatka was reinforced with volunteers (1,000 in all), supplied with quick-firing guns and sent from Vyatka on January 28 in the direction of Cherdyn to link up with the extreme left flank of the Third Army. Another three reliable regiments must be sent from Russia to support the Third Army if its position is to be really strengthened and if it is to be able to exploit its successes.

In the rear of the army a thorough purging of Soviet and Party institutions is under way. Revolutionary Committees have been formed in Vyatka and the uyezd towns. A start has been made in forming strong revolutionary organizations in the countryside, and this work is continuing. All Party and Soviet work is being re-organized on new lines. The military control agencies have been purged and re-organized. The Gubernia Extraordinary Commission has been purged and reinforced with new Party workers. The congestion on the Vyatka railway line is being relieved. Experienced Party workers need to be sent and prolonged socialist work will be required before the rear of the Third Army is thoroughly strengthened.

Concluding their report, the Commission considers it necessary to stress once again the absolute necessity for the establishment of a Control and Inspection Commission under the Council of Defence for the investigation of so-called "defects in the machinery" of the People's Commissariats and their local departments in the rear and at the front.

In correcting shortcomings in the work of the centre and the localities the Soviet power usually resorts to the method of disciplining and punishing offending officials. While recognizing that this method is absolutely necessary and fully expedient, the commission, however, considers it insufficient. Shortcomings in work are due not only to the laxity, negligence and irresponsibility of some of the officials, but also to the inexperience of others. The Commission has found in the localities quite a number of absolutely honest, tireless and devoted officials who, nevertheless, committed a number of blunders in their work owing to insufficient experience. If the Soviet power had a special apparatus to accumulate the experience gained in the work of building the socialist state and to pass it on to the already existing young officials who are ardently desirous of helping the proletariat, the building of a socialist Russia would proceed much faster and less painfully. This body should be the above-mentioned Control and Inspection Commission under the Council of Defence. The activities of this Commission might supplement the work of the centre in tightening discipline among officials.

The Commission:

J. Stalin

F. Dzerzhinsky

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(1) The decree of the All-Russian Executive Committee on the extraordinary tax to be imposed once for all on the wealthier sections of town and country was published on November 2, 1918. It ordered the full weight of the tax to be imposed on the kulaks, the middle peasants to be taxed moderately, and the poor peasants to be exempted altogether.

(2) On the question of merging the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission with the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs Comrade Dzerzhinsky expresses a dissenting opinion]

(3) *Izvestia* of the A.R.C.E.C. (Gazette of the All-Russian Central Executive) - a daily newspaper first published on February 28, 1917, as the *Izvestia* of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. On August 1, 1917, after the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, it became the organ of the Central Executive Committee of

the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies and began to appear under the title of the Izvestia of the Central Executive Committee and the Petrograd Soivet of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. On October 27, 1917, after the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, it became the official organ of the Soviet Government. On March 12, 1918 its place of publication was transferred to Moscow and its title was changed to Izvestia of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Peasants' Workers' Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies. On June 22 1918, it became the organ of the ARCEC and the Moscow Soviet, and alter the organ of the CEC of the USSR and the CEC of the RSFSR.

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