

## The Military Situation

By William Bennett—From "Red Europe" Appendix, 2nd Edition.

The beginning of the summer of 1919 saw the complete organization of the revolutionary armies. The Red Guards, who had so nobly withstood all the vicious attacks of the counter-revolutionary groups till that time, lacked the cohesion and organization necessary for the successful consummation of any strategic efforts. They passed into history having written their name in letters that will never fade, and the groups of which they were composed formed the basis from which has been built up the all-conquering armies of the Soviet Republic, a fighting machine which has no counterpart in modern history.

May, 1919, opened with a ring of bayonets, a "cordon sanitaire," surrounding the Workers Republic from Archangel in the north to Perm in the east. Military forces of all the nations who had been engaged in a life and death struggle with Germany "that liberty might not perish from the earth," faced the new armies of the Bolsheviki on thirteen battlefronts. Kolchak in the Urals, and Denekin in the south, presented the greatest problems in the field for the strategists in command of the Red Armies.

The campaign was opened, like most other campaigns, by the press. The British Press agency sent broadcast over the world the cheering information that Kolchak was steadily advancing; that the ultimate defeat of the Soviets was well in sight; Moscow would soon be captured, and these vile and sacreligious ghouls subjected to the condign punishment they so richly merited.

But alas for human hopes! The news items were concocted. The writers guessed and—were bad guessers. After six weeks of "steady advance," Winston Churchill, that sinister shadow in English political life, was compelled to admit in the British House of Commons that "the condition of Kolchak's armies was a hopeless one, disastrous in fact." The truth about the matter could no longer be hidden, and the "glorious advance" proved to be an unprecedented retreat of over a thousand miles. From that day on till his final collapse, Kolchak steadily retreated, being followed by the Reds, in what has been described as the longest pursuit in military history, from the Volga to Lake Baikal.

The attempt on the part of Yudenich to capture Petrograd in the fall was one of the worst military ventures ever undertaken. Urged on by the British representatives and supplied by them with supplies of every description, the forces under this drunken Tsarist met with ignominious defeat, not a vestige being left for a possible reorganization. The whole affair was pulled off for political effect rather than military advantage, and the facts of the case do not admit of any result other than the expedition met with.

Denekin, who operated from a base that Lloyd George referred to as "a backyard somewhere near the Black Sea," was the last recipient of Allied support, and the end of all their hopes of a military decision over the forces of the Bolsheviki. Denekin took all the supplies the Allies sent him and immediately sold them to the Jewish traders who hung on the fringe of his army. He placed his dependence on great bodies of cavalry, and by this means was able to advance into the heart of the government of Tula, within two hundred miles of Moscow. The disruption of his communications by the Reds and by the populations of the occupied territories, secured for him the same fate that had befallen Yudenich and Kolchak, and as his armies, driven by the Bolsheviki as chaff is driven by the wind, withered and died so withered and died the hopes of the bondholders of Imperial Russian Loans.

Military history shows the working of the processes of evolution to much better advantage than many of the other activities of the human animal. The changes in the makeup of the soldier so that he may conform to the needs of his tools (weapons), the alteration in the strategy and tactics of war, make the realization of this a simple matter.

With every change in the variable factors of warfare, topography, equipment and will-power, new problems are presented and new strategy developed. With the invention of gunpowder and the consequent perfection of siege artillery the long sieges of the Middle Ages gave way to rapid and violent actions. Time, which is a major consideration, was gained at the expense of men and materials. With these changed conditions a readjustment of the strategy and tactics of the trade became necessary. The recognition of this fact made Napoleon Buonaparts one of the greatest soldiers of all time, and gave him the dominating position he held in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. Studying the changes that had taken place in the weapons of war and understanding them, he was able to inflict defeat on all occasions on the Austrians, who were his immediate competitors, and who were still swayed by the worn-out theories of Frederick the Great.

So with the Bolsheviki, a new strategy has been developed, not by the general staff, but from the bottom. The change has not been in weapons or equipment, as they are using the same paraphernalia as in the Great War for freedom (?) just concluded (?). The officers who organize and plan the movement of the Red armies have no improvements in accoutrement or technique over their fellow craftsmen in Britain, France or Germany. They fought the 1919 campaign on the strategy of so-called "interior lines" first outlined by the

Napoleonic staff-officer, Jomini, and developed with much success by the brains of the German war machine.

In these respects, without detracting in any way from the work of the Commander in Chief Kamenyef or Generals Brussilof, Evarts and the other brilliant officers associated with them, nothing new has been developed. The novel conditions of this war are to be found operating outside of and beyond the control of the general staff, but always working in its favor. This is in the people themselves, who of set purpose join the forces of the enemy to desert at moments of crisis. Capt. F. Moore, late of the Intelligence Dept. A. E. F. (Siberia), writes as follows in Hearst's:

"The Allies in Siberia have been surrounded by an army without uniforms or other visible military equipment, without any apparent machinery of organization. This army has the ability to vanish without being missed, to reassemble when and where it chooses, to set up a front if it so desires, or, if it sees fit, to dissolve again, concealing itself once more under the wings of the very host which is seeking to overcome it. Moreover it is to a very large extent an army of passive resistance. During the winter just past this vanishing army entered the cities occupied by the Allies, and in the guise of refugees or "loyal" Russians, received food, clothing and shelter. Under the protection of the Allied guns it spent the period of bitter cold weather in comfort, perfecting its plans for the on-coming spring, carrying on its propaganda of hostility against the interventionists and mingling with the troops which had come half way round the world to render it harmless. The Bolsheviki are operating with a strategy of organized disorder. . . . It is safer to go over to Kolchak than to be captured by him—safer to vanish in his army, to be concealed in the very ranks of the enemy and to be fed and clothed by him temporarily, than to stand up and fight."

A friend of the writer, who was in Siberia with the Canadian A. M. Corps questioned many Russians as to their presence in the Kolchak army. When they discovered that he, too, was a Bolsheviki, they unburdened themselves and explained that Kolchak had money, food, arms, all these things in fact that the Red army needed. When they had eaten their fill and felt good and lusty, and been trained in the work of soldiering, they would desert to their own army and take with them guns, rifles and ammunition. This was their work for the Social Revolution. The press despatches of the last six months prove that they carried out their plans.

Every critical moment of the campaigns of the so-called "Russian Government" forces was marked by mass desertions to the Bolsheviki. Kolchak suffered on many occasions, Denikin lost most of the equipment he had not already sold, some of his British tanks being used to drive Yudenich into hiding in Esthonia. If the press reports are to be credited, half of Yudenich's army deserted at the gates of Petrograd, going over to the Reds.

This line of action is only possible among Communists. It does not conform to the bourgeois conception of "honor," but grows out of the social organization prevalent in Russia, and is a further proof of the Materialist Conception of History formulated by Engels and Marx; that the forms of the social, political, the juridical institutions obtaining in a particular society are conditioned by the economic basis of the system; military forms are as much subject to this law as are all other arts.

This mass desertion on the part of the Russian workers and peasants is not to be confused in any way with the desertions of the mercenary troops of the armies of the European States that participated in the Thirty Years War. These were hired mercenaries of all nationalities, Scotch, Finns, and Germans mostly, each man fighting for his own hand, with no interest further than his wages, and moving from one side to the other as the emoluments appeared to be greater or less. The growth of standing armies made this condition impossible, but there is no military genius, no incumbent of the war colleges or the military academies who can devise a counter-move to the change in the factor of "will-power" interjected into the art of war by the "ignorant and illiterate" Russian workers. No move that is, short of utter annihilation. This is more than the capitalists, callous and brutal as they have proved themselves to be, are able to do. Annihilation may overtake the capitalist class with no loss to anyone but themselves, but to exterminate the working class would mean the end of the race. Society, which is greater than the capitalist class, will not allow this to take place, so that there is NO counter move to save the master-class from the implications of the new strategy of the proletariat.

Maxim Litvinoff could say with confidence at Copenhagen, when speaking of peace proposals: "We understand from Mr. Lloyd George that he wishes us to deal first with Kolchak and Denikin, and that is exactly what our Red Army is doing, and doing successfully." ("Manchester Guardian," December 20th, 1919.)

The war is almost over. From the Pacific to the Gulf of Finland and the shores of the Black Sea the sway of the Russian Workers is undisputed. They have conquered. British stupidity and French impetuosity have proven useless weapons when opposed to proletarian genius, and imperial capitalism is now tasting the bitter fruits of defeat. Capitalism has the choice today of recognising the Soviet government or not. It matters not what the choice may be, the result will be the same, the downfall of the system. Speed the day!

Dear Comrades:—

I see by the "Clarion" that the Farmers' Platform is the subject of criticism by our comrades. Well, as a document purporting to lead to the abolition of farm slavery, the less said about it the better. But the duty of the Socialist is to understand these movements; and without compromise, consider them as opportunities to be made the best use of he possibly can.

The Grain Growers' locals count among their members many who hold no illusions regarding said platform. The decision of the Alberta farmers to regard themselves as a class movement is a hopeful sign. The point of the whole thing is this: In the farmers' locals it is possible for the Socialist to keep the scientific viewpoint to the fore in many of the discussions. Also there is a good deal of real democracy in the way the meetings are carried on, and in the fact that the delegates are usually charged to vote as the local decides. Many men get on their feet and express their opinions in these meetings that if left alone would not expend an ounce of thought in a year. The S. P. of C. has not been able to reach many of these men, yet for various reasons, but they are being reached by comrades who see the main chance.

If we as Socialists believe in Evolution, and we do, we must be willing to let the farm-slave evolve our way. Though he may seem slow to the impatient, he is advancing. We must consider the nature of the farmer's environment. He, perhaps more than any other class, has been the victim of bourgeois propaganda. Further, the way in which he is exploited has made him distrustful of even his nearest neighbors.

When the farmer wants anything he wants it right away, and if the farmers' platform does not lead him into the promised land, I believe you will find him going farther. The movement is emancipating him to a great extent from the twin flunkies of capitalism, Grit and Tory.

On an average, I suppose it takes at least three years to make a good useful Socialist. I know it took longer than that for me. Can we expect the farmers, most of whom have only heard that Socialism is some kind of "dividing-up scheme," to fall over themselves to join us immediately? I think not.

Let every Socialist who can, throw himself into the farmers' movement, and by helpful criticism and hard work turn said movement into an excellent recruiting ground for Reds. It would surprise many of the dogmatic comrades if they could know the way the ground is really being prepared in the despised farmers' movement.

Thanking you for the space, I am, yours in the scrap,

"ANOTHER SOIL SLAVE."

### HERE AND NOW.

Geo. Paton, \$3; Jack Hutton, \$2; S. J. J. K., \$2; Mrs. Griffiths, \$6.50; Bob Sinclair, \$30.50; C. M. O'Brien, \$5; W. Bennett, \$40; Sid. Earp, \$2; A. Emery, \$3; A. Mathieson, \$14; L. B. La Marche, \$5; Gus Johnson, \$5; J. A. McDonald, \$2; J. F. Maguire, \$24; J. Bone, Emmett, Idaho, \$1; Wiley Orr, \$5; J. Stevenson \$2; R. Taylor, \$4; J. Blair, \$1; P. Wallgren, \$2. Above list from 12th to 25th February, inclusive.

### ON THE STUDY OF ECONOMICS

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in producing the necessities of life they will lose no time in abolishing the system that holds them in slavery. Not quite! They are concerned with finding out the best means for capitalists, both as individuals and as a collectivity in the form of states or nations, to secure interest on their capital and accumulate wealth. As Marx has well said: "in place of disinterested enquirers, there were hired prize-fighters."

It was this extension of science beyond the interests of parasitic coupon clippers, who cannot lay claim to performing any useful function in modern society, and into the composition of commodities; how their values are determined in use and exchange; how an accumulation of them comprises the wealth of human society; and how those who produce them live in a state of perpetual poverty while their owners can revel in luxury, that caused the revolution in Political Economy associated with the names of Marx and Engels.

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