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## Russian Military Logistical Problems: 1914-1920

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RUSSIAN MILITARY LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS: 1914-1920

By

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To my Great-Great-Grandfather Chuck Minkowitz. Born a citizen of the Russian Empire, but  
died an American

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout the course of the First World War and the Civil War that devastated the country after, Russia's military logistical network continually failed to provide the supplies necessary for its forces to win the colossal conflict which it found itself in from 1914 to 1920. Russia, even with its vastness and resource rich lands, struggled greatly to properly equip its armies. Yet it was not a lack of resources, or even finished war supplies which crippled the country's military logistics, but rather a constant mismanagement by Russia's bloated and inefficient bureaucracy.

During these years of conflict Russia was governed by three uniquely different governments: the Tsarist Empire in its final years of existence, a weak and semi-democratic Provisional Government, and a military junta under the White Resistance against the growing power of the Bolsheviks. Although all three governments were different in their aims for the Russia they ruled, each continued a legacy of mismanagement and inefficiency of the nation's military logistics.

This thesis paper examines each of these government's attempt to sustain the conflicts they waged with the necessary weapons and supplies. Throughout the time period covered, there is a continual theme of a misuse of Russia's vast resources, creating a situation where there were plenty of weapons and ammunition but where none was reaching the front lines. Instead, a combination of an inefficient bureaucracy and the monumental egos of that bureaucracy's leadership saw a mismanagement of resources and a complete breakdown of Russia's supply capabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

Russia has historically fought its wars through a strategy of quantity over quality, always trusting in the vastness of its lands to supply the resources necessary to sustain protracted conflict. The unforeseen intensity of the First World War and the Civil War that followed stressed Russia's logistical and production capabilities to supply their forces to limits yet unforeseen in its military history. On paper, it initially seemed that Russia would have enough weapons and ammunition stockpiled to supply its armies in the early months of the war. But as the conflict drew on, it quickly became clear that there were critical problems in the country's military logistic plan. The bloated bureaucracy of the Tsarist Empire had failed the nation to properly account for its supply stockpiles, instead exaggerating numbers in their reports to High Command as the forces at the front began to suffer from acute supply shortages.

As thousands of Russian soldiers died on the front lines without the weapons and supplies to defend themselves, the Tsarist government scrambled to alleviate the growing crisis. But their attempts proved to only further the ineptitude and mismanagement that was destroying the military logistical network from the inside. Lack of communication and coordination, commanded by inept generals and bureaucrats saw that the full potential of the nation's supply capabilities was never mustered. Instead, supplies would sit rotting at stockpiles in the rear as the soldiers at the front died from lack of ammunition.

The World War would be final conflict of its existence as a Tsarist Empire, as political unrest would force the abdication of the Tsar. In its final years as an Empire, the Russian administration ultimately failed to completely remedy its military logistical problems. Its fall would be followed by a brief period of democracy in 1917 in which the government would continue the losing fight against the Central Powers, until that administration too would fall to

revolution. The Civil War that would come after, with the majority of the fighting ending in 1920, would continue to test the military prowess of the remaining generals loyal to the anti-Bolshevik cause.

Throughout all three forms of Russian administration from 1914-1920, there is a continual theme of mismanagement and incompetence in the government's attempt and resulting failure to properly equip its Army to fight in the largest conflict the country had yet seen. Russia, a country so vast and resource rich that a lack of supplies would be unthinkable before the war, failed to adequately supply its forces throughout World War One and the continuing conflict against the Bolsheviks.

This failure exhibited throughout the six years and three administrations covered in this paper all stemmed from similar problems. Although each government faced challenges unique to the years they ruled Russia, or its remnants during the Civil War, all three responded to the challenge of military logistics in the same fashion: with extreme mismanagement and incompetence. There are the continual themes of a lack of coordination between the various ministries of the bureaucracy responsible for military supply, a disconnection between these ministries and the situation on the front lines, combined with the distrust and poor coordination with the civilian labor force responsible for much of Russia's logistical network. All of these themes were then coupled with the competing and colossal egos of the generals and politicians involved in the process. These themes, present throughout 1914-1920, contributed heavily to Russia's inability to adequately supply its forces during these years of conflict and aided in the total collapse of the Russian Army.

The first administration examined is the bloated bureaucracy of the Russian Empire in the final years of Tsarist rule until its end in 1917. This government began the World War with a

nation with the resource wealth of Russia at its disposal, or so it seemed. Instead, years of misappropriation and scandalous incompetence was discovered at the highest levels of the administration when Russian forces at the Front began running out of ammunition and weapons and were forced to retreat en-masse. General Sukhomlinov, the Minister of War until 1915, and his subordinates were found to have been wildly exaggerating Russia's military supply stockpiles before the war had even begun. Then during the war, their inaction and incompetence brought little resolution to the rapidly escalating supply crisis. The ministries would also be woefully disconnected from the actual situation on the ground, as testimony from battlefield commanders who requested supply aid has shown. This combination of a lack of communication and gross incompetence led the Russian Army into the Great Retreat of 1915, in which the country's soldiers were forced to retreat from the Galicia region of Western Ukraine for lack of ammunition and weapons to hold off advancing German forces.

Although the Tsarist Government attempted to react to their ministries' lack of ability to supply its armies, resulting in their near annihilation in 1915, their efforts proved ineffective. Where possible solutions to the country's logistical challenges may have been found in the creation of new and more focused committees, the government instead opted to trust in its monolithic and historic institutions. Likewise, possible solutions were presented in the form of militarizing the civilian labor forces that were critical in all stages of the military logistical effort, from resource extraction and manufacturing to bringing the finished supplies to the front. Yet like the proposed creation of new committees, the proposals to empower civilian labor was met with overwhelming resistance for fear of allowing the proletariat too much power.

This inaction by the Tsarist Government to successfully remedy the supply situation left their armies in a defensive holding pattern across the Eastern Front of World War One, unable to

regain the territory lost in the Great Retreat of 1915. Although in 1916 there was an effort to stockpile weapons and ammunition, its delivery to the front was cut short by revolution in the spring of 1917. The resulting abdication of Tsar Nicholas II left a fledgling democracy under the Provisional Government, the second administration examined, to attempt to resolve the logistical problems inherited from the preceding regime.

Where the Tsarist Government's bureaucracy was too rigidly monolithic and heavy handed when dealing with the civilian work force, the Provisional Government would prove to be too disorganized and appeasing of the proletariat to accomplish the necessary actions with which to solve Russia's supply problems. For fear of seeming counter to the popular revolution which put them in power, the Provisional Government afforded the civilian laborers too much freedom, which resulted in a plummeting of the producing of war supplies. This government would also fail to solve the communication problem between ministries, with its bureaucracy just as bloated and inefficient as its predecessor's.

A failed campaign in the summer of 1917 would destroy the Russian Army to such a degree that its rebuilding would require a momentous effort by the Provisional Government. This rebuilding would never come to fruition as the Bolshevik Revolution in the end of 1917 ended Russia's hope for democracy. The resulting Civil War would bring the third and final form of government examined in this paper, the administration of the White Movement. Created by the generals and soldiers in opposition to Bolshevik rule, the Whites carved out territory in the south of Russia in which they governed.

This third administration differs from the preceding two as the ministries responsible for the supply of their armies were governed by military men, unlike the bureaucracy of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments. Yet these White generals fail in ways very similar to their

predecessors in the supply of their armies. There is a constant lack of communication and coordination within the White leadership, rendering the resistance movement little more than warlords governing individual fiefdoms. Also like the prior governments, there is little coordination with the existing civilian administration in the regions the Whites ruled. The elitist egos of the White leadership in dealing with the civilians they ruled resulted in a complete lack of taking full advantage of the resources they now controlled to arm their forces. The White logistical strategy instead revolved around the capturing of Bolshevik weapons and supplies in battle. This method of trading blood for bullets proved wholly inefficient, especially when considering the Whites were at a numerical disadvantage throughout the Civil War.

Though faced with different degrees of challenges to the supply of their forces, the three Russian administrations from 1914-1920 handled the continual logistical problem with similar ineptitude and mismanagement. Lack of communication, disconnection from the reality on the ground, and a lack of coordination with civilian labor elements coupled with the egos of both generals and ministers alike resulted in the logistical collapse of the Russian Army. The resources to equip the nation's forces in all three periods examined existed, but the power and management to get those resources to the front were not.

This paper uses quite a number of memoirs as the bulk of its primary sources. These memoirs range from those of Alexander Kerensky, leader of the Provisional Government in 1917, to the White Generals Denikin and Wrangel. These memoirs have provided valuable insight to not only the events in this period, but specific logistical deficiencies that these leaders experienced in command. Beyond these details, the memoirs also portray the personalities and personal opinions on the situation by the men who took the burden of provisioning the Russian Army.

This personal portrayal in the memoirs do however belie a certain amount of bias as memoirs often do. This is specifically prevalent in the works of General Denikin in *The White Army* and *Russia in Turmoil*, as well as *The Memoirs of General Wrangel*. While these sources do give valuable insight, they do so at a level of bias as the events depicted are tinged with the author's personal opinions and viewpoints. The generals are not quick to point out their own deficiencies and the part they played in the logistical problems, instead placing the blame on others or the state of the country.

The weakness of these sources is counteracted by the observations of a third party observer, the British attaché to Russia General Alfred Knox. His war diary *With the Russian Army 1914-1917* provides not only valuable insight into events as they happened such as the other generals provided, but also a non-biased view of the logistical crisis engulfing the Army. Knox is quick to lay blame at its source and has no qualms in identifying the Russian generals and bureaucrats responsible for the supply deficiencies. His memoirs also capture the attitude of the British in helping their partner in the World War. The British and personal attitudes depicted by Knox prove to be an unbiased and reputable account of the incompetence wracking the Russian bureaucracy.

In a similar manner as Knox's memoirs, *Russia From the American Embassy* is the compilation of notes and memoirs from Ambassador Francis' time in service as the American ambassador to Russia from 1916-1918. Like Knox, Francis is a reliable third party view into the workings of the Russian bureaucracy. His recordings also depict a theme of incompetence and mismanagement in the highest echelons of government directly impacting the efforts to supply the Army at the front.

Supplementing the primary sources gathered for this thesis paper are a number of secondary sources depicting the conflict from 1914-1920, from which I have extrapolated the important details of Russia's logistical difficulties. Beyond providing these details, the works themselves provided a wealth of information regarding the background events of the conflict. As history does not exist in a vacuum, it was necessary to carefully study the broader military background of the period covered in order to better understand the specifics of Russia's logistics.

Allan Wildman's two volumes *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt* and *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace* served as the perfect guide to understanding the broader picture of the Russian Army during the period covered. Although Wildman's works center on a lack of moral and discipline as being the leading causes for the Army's collapse, there is substantial evidence within his research also pointing to poor logistics as another cause. Both this evidence as well as the background provided by Wildman has helped in creating a base for this paper.

In a similar fashion, Peter Kenez's works *Civil War in South Russia 1918: The First Year of the Volunteer Army* and *Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920: The Defeat of the Whites* provided much of the background for the portion of this paper focused on the White movement. Like in the case with Wildman's secondary sources, Kenez provides a wealth of background information about the White movement in the Southern Russia. This coupled with the primary sources previously stated allowed for a wealth of information with which to base this thesis on. Though Kenez points to a lack of cohesion among the White leadership being their ultimate undoing, his research nonetheless contributes to understanding the logistical problems the Whites faced during the Civil War.

This paper uses numerous other primary and secondary sources to support the claims made for the reasons behind Russia's military logistical problems. In both cases, the research done has been focused both on presenting the background knowledge necessary to understand the broader picture of the conflict as well as focusing on the specific logistical problems. The memoirs, news articles, government documents, and academic secondary sources used to support this thesis were chosen for both their relevance to the specific topic of logistics and their portrayal of the larger conflict enveloping Russia from 1914 to 1920.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE TSARIST EMPIRE: 1914-1916

The year 1915 would prove to be a bloody humiliation for the Imperial Russian Army and an unrepairable embarrassment for the Tsarist administration as its forces were forced to evacuate Galicia in Western Ukraine under the pressure of combined German and Austrian advance. This crushing defeat, especially in light of initial Russian gains in the region the year prior, laid bare one of the key weaknesses of the Russian Army: its logistical supply network. The disaster of 1915 was precipitated by a major shortage of arms and ammunition being delivered to the Galician front, highlighting a major problem in the Army's logistical management. Yet as Russian men were dying either weaponless or with empty rifles in Galicia and Poland, on paper it seemed that the Russian army would have had enough weaponry to equip their force. There were even reports of supplies laying in piles at the major Russian ports of Archangel and Vladivostok. As the Crisis became more apparent, councils were created to gather the supplies needed to attempt to hold back the advancing waves of Germans. And through all this time, many proclaimed that the Russian Empire must have enough resources to hold the line. Nonetheless, Russian soldiers were forced to retreat again and again in 1915 due to lack of supplies and munitions in order to hold the frontier. And even after the Great Retreat of 1915, the Russian Army still faced supply shortages which impeded its operating capacity.

This disaster in Russian military supply must be looked at from the many facets comprising the Russian logistical machine. Like Russia's counterparts in the Great War, its expectations in fighting what seemed to initially be a conflict with a swift resolution were quickly dashed as it became apparent that their preparations had been far too small. Also, the domestic manufacturing of weapons and supplies in Russia was severely hampered by both the

lack of a large industrial base and a lack of skilled workers. And while committees were created to rectify this problem, their efforts proved to be initially fainthearted, allowing the Germans time to press further into the Russian Empire. Even when these committees succeeded in the purchase of supplies from abroad, the problem of both getting them to Russia and then getting the goods from port to the front proved to be an enormous challenge on the country's transportation infrastructure. While all these concerns presented major complications for the Russian army during WWI, there is an overarching theme which is present throughout the duration of the Shell Crisis: a certain ineptitude inherent in the Russian bureaucracy. Linking all these facets together is a continual theme of mismanagement, aloofness, inefficiency, and incompetence on the part of Russian high command and the Russian government as a whole.

### **Initial Arming of the Military: 1914**

General Bogatko, assistant chief of the Russian Supply Department, sums up the Russian national consciousness in regards to its military supplies prior to 1914. "Before 1914 the belief that it was not necessary to prepare plans to feed the army and the civilian population in time of war, had taken firm root in Russia. The natural resources of the country were held to be so great that no difficulties were anticipated in getting the army everything that it could need."<sup>1</sup> The belief that the great expanse of Russia's natural wealth would effortlessly supply both the country and military with all necessary provisions is critical in understanding the lack of preparation undertaken by Russia. While admittedly, the magnitude of the war could never have been imagined by the Russian high command, this idea had permeated their minds in preparation for an upcoming conflict. "When the War began the country was prepared neither to develop her

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<sup>1</sup> N. O. Bogatko and A. N. Naumov, *Collection of Memoranda*, 1925, 74.

industries nor to adapt them to the needs of the army. As for those needs, no one had any clear idea of their immensity, their nature nor how long they would endure. A firm and active master was lacking, and therefore, from the beginning, there had been no systematic and economic use of resources. Until the end of the War no general scheme for the development of industry and the utilization of its resources was worked out.”<sup>2</sup> Not only had this belief in the ability of Russia’s natural resources hindered high command from adapting the army to the true capacity of the country’s resource base, but it also highlighted a need for someone to take charge. Bogatko’s frustration in a lack of leadership is found continuously in the memoirs of other Russian generals and staff members.

The lack of leadership Bogatko refers to is found in the office of the Minister of War under General Sukhomlinov. Described by British military attaché to the Russian army, Alfred Knox, as “of the evergreen type, a light-hearted man, characterized by his enemies as a buffoon, whose influence over the Emperor was ascribed to his fund of excellent stories,”<sup>3</sup> Sukhomlinov’s leadership is a perfect example of bureaucratic ineptitude found in the Russian General Staff. Although later tried for treason in his inability to properly prepare Russia for the War, the damage done by him and his staff both before and during the war could not be undone. In regards to the years leading up to the war, the Ministry had a choice to make in how it would handle the maintenance of the Army. The Ministry would ultimately make the wrong choices, choosing low maintenance costs over more expensive efforts to strengthen its stockpiles of arms and ammunition.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1921), 221.

Appointed to office of War Minister in 1909, thus having five years to prepare the Army, Sukhomlinov and his staff chose a course of action that would prove disastrous when tested by war. General Golovine, who served as both a Quartermaster General and Chief of Staff for the Russian army writes of this choice: “The Russian Ministry of War was constantly faced with a dilemma: either to reduce the strength of the army, or to maintain it at a lower cost. The Ministry chose the latter course.”<sup>4</sup> Instead of reducing the army within the natural limits imposed by the reality of the country’s situation, the Ministry instead chose to believe in the strength of numbers instead of the strength of equipment. This keeps in consistency to Bogatko’s illustration that the national Russian consciousness before 1914 was to trust in the infallibility of the country’s resources to win a coming war. This would prove to be a point found unfounded when met with the reality of a large scale modern conflict.

Russian industry was also not up to the task of supplying such a large army when the war initially began. Factories that were specialized in making arms were few and small, leaving domestic production of arms lacking. Artillery production in the early 1900s, which would become critical in fighting the coming modern war, was insignificant in Russia. In regards to the creation of an Artillery Department before the war, General Manikovsky remarks “It was only due to some misunderstanding that this technical establishment of the Artillery Department had been given this high sounding and absolutely erroneous name. In point of fact, it had been and, even since a recent expansion, still was, simply a workshop, capable of finishing the artillery work supplied by other iron foundries.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nicholas N. Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War* (Elliot's Books, 1931), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Alexii Manikovsky, *The Armament and Ammunition Supply of the Russian Army in 1914-1918*, vol. Pt II (Moscow, 1922), 93.

Not only was there a lack of industry to fashion armaments before the war began, but also a continual lagging behind other nation in terms of military technology. The small amount of industry Russia had before the war was producing outdated and inefficient artillery pieces in comparison to both its rivals and allies. “Equally bad was the prospect of being able to equip the existing works for the production of guns. Inasmuch as the artillery, even during the years of peace, had been growing obsolete, because of the rapid progress of modern technique, the establishment of large works, within a short time, had become a question of paramount importance. What the actual situation was in the respect may be judged from the fact that the Ministry of War had at its disposal only one gun factory, the Petrograd arsenal.”<sup>6</sup> This is a direct cause of not only the technological backwardness of Russia at the time, but also the decision made by General Sukhomlinov and his Ministry in maintaining the army at a lower cost. With the official doctrine of the War Ministry being quantity over quality, the army was not being supplied the heavy weapons it would need to fight against an industrialized and technologically advanced Germany. Even the limited number of artillery pieces produced prior to the start of the war were seen as to be obsolete in comparison to the enemies. Again, the ineptitude of the bureaucracy to not only realistically envision the coming conflict or to maintain the army at a level technologically equivalent to its rivals would serve to further weaken the Russian Army.

### **Beginning of the War and Initial Supply Problems: 1914-1915**

As the war began in 1914, the need for manpower at the front overrode the presumed need for keeping the military industrial complex of the empire operating at maximum capacity. It was only as the fighting began to turn in the favor of the Central Powers did the mistake become

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<sup>6</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 39–40.

realized by Russian command, yet by then it was too late to reverse before the Crisis of 1915. “However, the withdrawal of skilled factory workers and miners resulted in a decreased output, this dangerous condition little by little began to be realized by the central military administration and the country at large. Yet the military bureaucracy, hypnotized by the immediate needs of the front, did not realize, up to the end of the War, that in the interests of the front the withdrawal of productive elements from the interior should not have carried beyond a certain limit.”<sup>7</sup> A lack of forethought and mismanagement of human resources by the Ministry of War again is shown to help contribute to the coming Russian defeat in Galicia during 1915. Although this policy of sending as many able bodied men to the front, regardless of trade, may have helped the Russian Army gain ground in the early weeks of the war, it soon became clear that those skilled men would have been better serving their country making munitions rather than providing cannon fodder at the front. And already at the end of the campaigns of 1914 over 230,000 of these men, many of them skilled workers, lay dead or wounded on the fields of Poland and Galicia.<sup>8</sup>

However it seems that the portion of the military bureaucracy which felt the first hand effects of these shortages, the Artillery Department, attempted to petition the government to allow them to keep skilled workers in the factory where they could do the most to support the war effort. Golovine recounts another instance of the bureaucracy’s ineptitude in its response to a reasonable and founded request by the Artillery Department. “the Artillery Department, early in the War, submitted to the Council of Ministers a project according to which the factories would be placed on a special basis and would themselves be held to be mobilized ... It was a project, however, that was not approved by the Council of Ministers. In December, 1914, and in

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers’ Revolt* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

February, 1915, the project again was placed before the Council, but was again rejected. When the final decision was made known, it was explained that the council ‘fears to give cause for undesirable comment, and unrest.’”<sup>9</sup> The War Ministry’s obsession with winning victory at the front, which admittedly they had up until this point, came at the cost of weakening and alienating the facets of the government which supplied these victories with the equipment needed for such a campaign. Yet beyond the Ministry’s shortsightedness in this matter, the response to the petition is one that resounds as having its interests firmly rooted in those personal to the War Ministry itself and not rooted in the interests of its various supporting, and extremely necessary, branches.

When the error of the Ministry’s decision would help lead in the Shell Crisis of 1915 and a great national effort began to produce the goods needed to wage the war, the damage of the decision became evident. Golovine provides an account of the negative repercussions due to the loss of many skilled factory workers in the early years of the war: “At the beginning of the War skilled factory workers and miners had been called to the ranks, and most of them had been killed in the first campaigns. But when, in 1915, the development of national industry was under way, and an increased number of men were needed, that increase could be carried out only with unskilled workers. This meant decreased production, which, in its turn, called for a greater number of men.”<sup>10</sup> Even though the Ministry began to counteract their original way of thinking in the later part of 1915 and onward, they were forced to do so against factors which were not originally present. The drain of skilled labor to send troops to the front in 1914, while winning Russia its initial victory, would hamstring its production ability as the war progressed. Due to the realization that they had sent much of the country’s skilled labor to die at the front, unskilled

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 73.

labor was forced to suffice while producing at a lower rate. The greater need for labor subsequently drew away needed reinforcements to the front and drew men from other needed industries. The intransigence of the War Ministry in this regard, disregarding sound advice from the Artillery Department, again shows the ineptitude inherent in the bureaucracy.

At the front, it was in late 1914 when the first signs of a lack of weapons was beginning to be felt at the front. Reinforcements being sent to the front had to be kept at depots in the rear due to a shortage of rifles to equip them. General Danilov, Quartermaster General, recounts of the early months of the war: “Owing to the shortage of rifles for the army units, although they had been greatly reduced, were unable to fill up their gaps, and the reinforcements sent from the rear had to be kept behind in the depot battalions, swelling their number and hindering the training of new contingents. For instance, by the end of November 1914, there were 800,000 men, mostly trained, in the depot troops, whereas the army in the field suffered from an appalling shortage of men. There were cases when men, sent to the front, had to remain with the army supplies, inasmuch as the absence of rifles made it impossible to put them into the ranks.”<sup>11</sup> Russia had men to send to the front, but did not have the rifles necessary to arm them. Thus those who were fortunate enough to be armed were desperate for reinforcements who were actively waiting to the rear, yet had nowhere to go.

Even more striking than the absence of rifles to arm these new recruits was the lack of a sufficient supply of bullets. However, according to the mobilization plan, there should have been a necessary amount of bullets to supply the number of men raised to fight. “The supply of small-arms ammunition, in accordance with the mobilization plan, should have been 3,346,000,000

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<sup>11</sup> Yuri Danilov, *Russia in the World War* (Berlin, 1924), 283.

rounds for rifles and machine guns. But the Ministry of War had cut down that supply to 2,745,000,000 rounds. Thus, at the beginning of the War there was a shortage of nearly 600,000,000 rounds. Unfortunately, the shortage of small-arms ammunition was not disclosed by General Headquarters in the first months of the War.”<sup>12</sup> This shortage of 600,000,000 rounds of ammunition referred to by Golovine is a number that cannot be overlooked as a simple error made by the military bureaucracy. Instead, it must be looked at as yet another costly mistake inherent in the ineptitude of the Russian high command. To compound the fact that they were so many thousands of cartridges short was that they decided to keep their blunder a secret for so many weeks.

### **The Shell Crisis: Summer 1915**

The first indications of a shortage of arms and ammunition at the front began to be felt by the commanders on the ground, but yet completely dismissed by High Command. General Denikin, originally Quartermaster General of the 8<sup>th</sup> army and later commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade on the Galician front recounts the beginning of what would become the 1915 Crisis: “Meanwhile, the supplies of ammunition for the reinforcements to the front—at first only 1/10<sup>th</sup> equipped and later without any rifles at all—were exhausted as early as in early October 1914... At the same time [the end of September] Marshall Joffre inquired whether the Imperial Army was adequately supplied with shells for the uninterrupted conduct of war. The war minister, General Sukhomlinov, replied: The present condition of the Russian Army in respects to ammunition gives no ground for serious apprehension.”<sup>13</sup> Sukhomlinov not only failed to appreciate the reality of the situation at the front but to also spread this falsehood to the French

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<sup>12</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 131.

<sup>13</sup> Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil; Memoirs: Military, Social, and Political* (London, Hutchinson, 1922), 29, <http://archive.org/details/russianturmoilme00deniuoft>.

allies. High Command is shown to be completely disconnected with the reality of the shortfall in ammunition. To compound this disconnect is Sukhomlinov's attempt to save face with his allies by reporting to Marshal Joffre that all is well with the imperial army. Had Sukhomlinov's incompetency been realized sooner, the pressing concerns of the ammunition shortage may have been addressed before the situation spiraled out of control in summer of 1915. At the very least, a correct report to Marshal Joffre may have entreated Russia's allies to provide assistance before it was needed; instead the attempt to save face by Sukhomlinov left Russia's allies unaware about its growing weakness.

This however was not the only time in which Russian High Command kept their allies in the dark about developments on the eastern front. General Alfred Knox, British military attaché to the Russian army experienced extreme frustration in working with his counterparts in the east due to their lack of communication with the western allies. "The secretiveness of many responsible Russian officials and their suicidal desire to represent the situation in a falsely favorable light made it at all times exceedingly difficult for allied representatives in Russia to keep their Government posted with timely and accurate information."<sup>14</sup> This continual lack of communication with not only their field commanders at the front but also with the allied governments continued to show a pattern of ineptitude by Sukhomlinov and his staff. Their attempts to save face in the growing disaster only helped to perpetuate the eventual crisis. The proclamation that everything within the Russian army was fine by the governing military bureaucracy wasted the Russians valuable time in which they could have garnered material support from their allies. However, the fact that High Command waited until and during the

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<sup>14</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 1:219.

Crisis of 1915 to acknowledge there even was a crisis saw that measures to combat the supply shortage came too late to save gains in Galicia.

The destructiveness of High Commands inability to report an accurate situation of its campaign to the western allies and its assertion that the war was being handled appropriately wasted valuable time in which the Russians could have used in cornering the world's arms market. The decisions made by Sukhomlinov and the War Ministry impeded attempts by the subordinate ministries, like the Artillery Department, in their attempts to satisfy arms production by looking towards the allies for help. "The failure of the Ministry of War to foresee the threatening catastrophe had evil consequences in another way. Purchases of rifles abroad could not be made in time. As early as September, 1914, the Artillery Department, seeing the impossibility of satisfying the demand through its own government factories, began to look for rifles... in Allied and neutral countries. But negotiations, begun with that object, were discontinued by order of General Sukhomlinov, who gave as his reason the impossibility of using rifles of differing calibers. It was only after a telegram had been sent on December 15 by the Chief of Staff to say that rifles should be purchased abroad irrespective of the caliber, that such purchases were authorized. Thus three most precious months were lost, inasmuch as, by January, 1915, foreign markets had already been invaded by Russia's Allies and enemies."<sup>15</sup> Although the attempt by the Artillery Department to acquire more weapons, albeit of a differing caliber, seemed to be a possible solution to abating the coming crisis. Yet again the arbitrary nature of Sukhomlinov proved to impede arming the soldiers at the front, and the turnaround by

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<sup>15</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 129.

the Chief of Staff proved just as ineffective as the global arms market was already cornered by the other powers.

On 2 May 1915, the German Army under General Mackensen launched a major assault on the Russian front in the Galicia region of Western Ukraine to relieve the beleaguered Austro-Hungarian forces under siege there. His advantage in artillery would be massive, with 144 pieces of heavy artillery against Russia's force of 4. Half a million German artillery shells would be launched into the Russian front line within the first five hours, creating massive holes in their defensive line. The lack of logistical support to a front already beginning to be spread far too thin was immediately felt when Russian forces could respond with only a fraction of the German's ferocity.<sup>16</sup>

The initial Russian gains in Galicia and Poland were beginning to turn into an all-out Russian retreat out of the recently occupied regions. General Denikin describes his part in the bloody retreat from Galicia: "The spring of 1915 I shall remember all my life. The retreat from Galicia was on vast tragedy for the Russian army. No cartridges, no shells. Bloody fighting and difficult marches day after day... eleven days which, with increasing roar, the German heavy artillery swept away whole lines of trenches, and their defenders with them. We hardly replied—there was nothing with which we could reply".<sup>17</sup> The situation at the front had turned from a trickling problem of new recruits not being issued rifles to a torrent in which line companies began losing ground not from lack of numbers, but from complete lack of ammunition. "Only a part of the men at the front were armed, the remainder waited for the deaths of comrades, to take

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<sup>16</sup> William Fuller, *The Foe Within: Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 184–189.

<sup>17</sup> Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil; Memoirs*, 30.

their rifles.”<sup>18</sup> The lack of weapons and ammunition in the summer of 1915 was astounding. Russian High Command reported in May 1915 that 150,000 men in the Southwestern Front had no rifles.<sup>19</sup> Even with Russia’s manpower reserves and numerical strength at this point in the war, the acute shortage of rifles and ammunition, as well as being completely outmatched in terms of artillery, completely turned their initial gains in 1914 to a full-blown rout.

As their forces began streaming out of Western Ukraine, High Command began to scramble to find a solution to their problem as the tide began to turn at the front. Yet as proven in the time leading up to the crisis, Russian High Command once again found itself utterly detached from the reality of the situation. One such instance, as reported by General Golovine, had High Command entreating the possibility of arming line units with long handled axes. “High Command resorted to various devices, some of them simply absurd. For instance, in August, 1915, when the present author was Quartermaster General of the Ninth Army, a telegram was received from the headquarters... the infantry companies were to be armed with very long-handled axes... This project to revive halberdiers, which reads like fiction, had been mentioned here as an illustration of the atmosphere.”<sup>20</sup> Although the attempt to revert riflemen into medieval warriors did not surface, the intent was a clear representation of the mind of the High Command in 1915. A sizeable chasm of detachment between the military bureaucracy and field commanders was becoming apparent. Not only was this disconnect causing the deaths of many Russian soldiers but it continued to carve away at both morale and faith in those in command.

The Shell Crisis and the following retreat would leave a lasting devastation on the Russian Army’s capability to continue the war. The casualties sustained were the last vestiges of

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<sup>18</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 127.

<sup>19</sup> Fuller, *The Foe Within: Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia*, 188.

<sup>20</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 127–128.

the prewar army, as well as a good portion of the country's skilled labor. New recruits would have to be drawn through conscription of peasants and unskilled workers, not only draining Russia's production capability but requiring more men to fill the gaps left by their skilled predecessors. The loss of weapons and supplies on the battlefield would also prove to be another critical blow to Russia's ability to supply its army to hold the German advance. With the majority of the country's prewar surpluses of both manpower and supplies now expired in the failed campaign, its resources would not have to be concentrated primarily at holding the enemy advance rather than regaining the swaths of territory lost in the retreat.<sup>21</sup>

### **Attempts at Supply Reform: Mid-Late 1915**

By mid-1915 the full ramifications of the High Commands ineptitude in supply began to finally be realized by the general Russian populace. As their forces were being pushed further and further east, the Russian consciousness began to be pushed towards alleviating the material shortcomings at the front. The main driving force behind this attempt initially came not from High Command, but from unofficial organizations and the Russian Zemstvo. Where initially these organizations focused their efforts on the procurement of medical supplies and food for use at the front, their focus began to shift to supplying arms and ammunition. "In proportion as deficiencies in supplies began to appear, the unofficial organizations extended their activities and no longer limited themselves to relief work. Distrust of the Government considerably increased the tendency to form all kinds of autonomous organizations for the supply of the army."<sup>22</sup> These organizations, much of the effort being led by the Union of Zemstvos, sent representatives

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Kihntopf, *Handcuffed to a Corpse: German Intervention in the Balkans and on the Galician Front, 1914-1917* (White Mane Publishing Company, 2002), 49–54.

<sup>22</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 112.

abroad in order to gain access to supplies of raw materials and finished goods with which to supply the armies.

However once again the Russian bureaucracy impeded efforts to help supply the men at the front. Miliukov, the Russian foreign minister, recalls the efforts of the Union of Zemstvos being heavily impeded by elements of the government: “The political antagonism between society as represented by the zemstvo and the government not only did not diminish but continued to increase as the zemstvos scored new successes. The main role in this aggravation of affairs was played by Maklakov in his capacity of minister of internal affairs... with a request to permit a congress of public organizations, Maklakov answered literally: ‘I cannot give you permission for convening such a congress; it would be an undesirable and universal demonstration to the effect that there exist disorders in supplying the army. Besides, I do not wish to give permission, since under the guise of delivering boots, you will begin to make a revolution.’”<sup>23</sup> Not only does Maklakov illustrate again the despondency of the bureaucracy in denying there is a problem in supplying the army, he also goes to show how the government agencies were placing the security of their own power before the needs of the nation. Even though in this case the Zemstvos were only attempting to deliver boots, the government saw it as a gateway for the common people to gain power. In an attempt to retain as much power as possible in the autocracy, the government was letting slip valuable resources which could significantly help abate the problems of supply.

This fear of commoners gaining power is a continuing subset in the theme of the bureaucracy’s ineptitude in handling the supply crises. In speaking of a request made by the

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<sup>23</sup> P. N. Miliukov, *Political Memoirs, 1905-1917*, First Edition (University of Michigan Press, 1967), 315.

Artillery Department to increase the manpower in its factories, Golovine shows how the Council of Ministers chose to retain its power rather than take a chance to help abate the supply problems. “But the supreme authority in Russia, although it was struggling continually to attain a real autocracy, was in point of fact very weak; for it had little real support. As we have indicated above, the Council of Ministers three times rejected a project of the Artillery Department to militarize the factories doing war work. The Council of Ministers, no doubt, feared the workmen. Likewise it did not dare to fight, as it should have fought, the evil practices of the manufacturers.”<sup>24</sup> What would seem to be a logical request by a sister agency, the request to militarize the factories by the Artillery Department is seen by the Council of Ministers as a threat to their power. Much like the view of Maklakov, the Council saw the empowerment of commoners as not only an admonition that something was amiss in the supply department, but as a threat to the very autocracy.

While the government may have been failing to act towards the Artillery Department and the other of its bureaucratic organs, it did make some strides to attempt to remedy other portions responsible for the Great Retreat. The primary person for investigation, and who would take the majority of the blame for the Crisis, would be Sukhomlinov. Tsar Nicholas would be initially reluctant to replace the general, fearing the void of War Minister being filled with an opponent to his reign. But with the Army continuing to retreat and suffering massive losses, the Duma forced Nicholas’ hand. In June Sukhomlinov would be fired and replaced by General Polivanov as War Minister. During the following month, the Duma voted heavily in favor for prosecuting Sukhomlinov for criminal incompetence resulting in the Shell Crisis. In a speech to the Duma, deputy Polovtsov enveloped the government’s growing consensus on the disgraced general.

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<sup>24</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 157.

“Where is the criminal who deceived everyone with his lies about our readiness for the terrible struggle? Who wallowed in the filth of corruption and treason?... Indeed it is he, the minister [Sukhomilov].”<sup>25</sup>

Finally imprisoned a year later in March 1916, Sukhomlinov’s dismissal and subsequent trial would be one of the major, albeit few, victories in supply reform by the government during the war. The firing and arrest of such a colossal figure in the Tsarist administration would finally open up the possibility for military reforms. The following months would see a frantic attempt to reverse the already severely weakened Army, and while these changes would contain the damages done by Sukhomlinov, they would never regain the Russian army its 1914 victories.<sup>26</sup>

General Polivanov’s first attempt to fix the damage done by his predecessor was to form the Special Council for Supply. While the creation was a step in the right direction for reform, the Council was again wracked by the ineptitude and lack of coordination which had previously been found in the bureaucracy. The Russian Minister of Agriculture Aleksandr Naumov, speaking from the viewpoint of improving the supply of food, describes the inefficiency of the Council: “The very idea of creating the above Council [Special Council for Supply]... predetermined its membership, one exceptionally large, and of the greatest variety... almost daily all sat in conference until a late hour, deliberated, argued, voted, raised protests... To this it must be added that, as a matter of course, frequent changes occurred in the personnel of the Council... To sum up, the conditions were complex and delayed the work; at any rate, they did not contribute to any rapid elaboration of a plan of food supply, without which it was neither possible for the chairman of the Council and of his assistants in the capital and the provinces, to

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<sup>25</sup> M. V. Rodzianko, *Krushenie Imperii*, 157 as quoted in Fuller, *The Foe Within: Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia*, 193.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 190–193.

do their work, or for such work to be successful.”<sup>27</sup> Instead of having the intended outcome of streamlining the process of supplying the front, Polivanov’s Special Council became a mire of contradicting voices that continued to impede the attempt to remedy the supply situation. The ineptitude of Sukhomlinov’s reign over the administration did not end with his removal from power, but yet continued to follow the attempts to remedy the damage caused.

The attempt to remedy the new problems faced by the Council for Supply was faced with even more challenges as the government struck down attempts to improve the process. In order to attempt to streamline the process of supply even further, an attempt was made by members of the Duma to create an umbrella organization: the Ministry of Munitions. Modeled in part from a similar organization created at this time in Britain, this new Ministry would encompass the various councils and organizations that were operating to supply the army. However, the proposal to create the Ministry never made it past the Duma. “It goes without saying that the system of Special Councils, adopted for the purpose of coordinating war work, was extremely unwieldy. These meetings of many members were incapable of rapidly accomplishing creative work. There was only one way of solving the problem radically: It was necessary to form a Ministry of Munitions which would unify all efforts to provide supplies, both for the army and the country at large. But though this was suggested by some members of the Duma, it did not meet with approval on the part of the majority... the Duma, feared that a new Ministry of Munitions might soon become another bureaucratic institution, as much out of touch with actuality as was the Ministry of War.”<sup>28</sup> The fear of the Duma to create even more institutions may have been well founded in its experience with Sukhomlinov’s War Ministry, but yet without

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<sup>27</sup> Bogatko and Naumov, *Collection of Memoranda*, 94.

<sup>28</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 155.

giving the Ministry of Munitions a chance to prove itself capable robbed Russia of what could have proven a valuable organization.

Instead of streamlining the process of supply, for the rest of the war the organizations responsible for supplying the front acted in disarray without a concrete governing force from Petrograd. As quoted in the newspaper *Le Temps*, French Colonel Reboul remarks this of the Russian supply organization: “The principal error made in Russia in the case of war labor consisted in the failure to foresee an ensemble of organization, to work out a plan of production. There was never in Petrograd a centralizing authority entrusted with the working out of a general program that would satisfy all the needs of the army... Every branch of service always worked alone, without regard to its neighbors.”<sup>29</sup> This report by Reboul epitomizes the Russian attempts in assuaging their supply problems. The combined lack of authority from Petrograd and numerous committees each vying for control left the supply attempts in a mass, fighting and competing against each other even while working towards a common goal. At this point it was not even a lack of material supplies which endangered the Russian army the most, but rather the ineptitude of the government to make sense and order of the various organizations attempting, with good intentions, to help the army.

### **A Change in Policy, Too Little Too Late: Late 1915- 1916**

March of 1916 brought the third and final Minister of War with General Shuvaev replacing Polivanov. Although appointed a Quartermaster General in 1909, Shuvaev was unable to make much more improvement in the supply problem than his predecessor. Rodzianko, head of the Military Industrial Committee which worked under Shuvaev, described the new minister

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<sup>29</sup> Reboul, “La mobilization industrielle en Russie pendant la guerre (Industrial mobilization in Russia during the war),” *Le Temps*, March 4, 1924.

as: “An honest and a good man, but he had not enough training for such a post in time of war; and the meetings of the Special Council, when he presided, were confused and wearying.”<sup>30</sup> Again, the man ultimately responsible for rectifying the continual supply problem was less than competent at his job. Although Shuvaev had little time to prove his worth, with Russia leaving the war the following year, there was a renewed attempt in obtaining war materials from abroad, much of the effort being concentrated in United States. This however was met with not only with the basic logistical problems of shipping goods from one continent to another during wartime, but the attempt also suffered from the incompetence present in trying to supply the army domestically.

The immediate problem with procuring supplies from abroad lay in the consequence of the Duma’s unwillingness to condense the supply committees into one central authority. What had been created instead in late 1915 was the Russian Supply Committee; a federation of Russian purchasers operating out of New York City. While this organization, comprised mainly of businessmen, helped manage the majority of the supply efforts overseas there was still competing factors from the Russian government. Although intending to help the purchasers, the Government’s attempts were stymied with the ineptitude seen previously in the supply problem. A chief factor of this was the caliber of men sent to oversee production abroad. Alfred Knox speaks of one such government inspector: “The Artillery Department was in the habit of sending men abroad as inspectors, who were without any technical knowledge, and were therefore obliged to follow the specifications pedantically and without intelligence. On one occasion an officer told me his brother had gone to England to take over big guns. I asked if he knew

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<sup>30</sup> Mikhail Vladimirovich Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin: An Empire’s Collapse. Memoirs of M. V. Rodzianko*, trans. Catherine Zvegintzoff (Academic International Press, 1973), 123.

anything of gunnery. The reply was: No. He is a lawyer by education, an artist by inclination, and a cavalry officer by occupation.”<sup>31</sup>

The problems with gaining supplies from abroad did not end here however, as there was still the enormous undertaking of transferring these supplies across the Atlantic, to a Russian port, and then finally to the front where the goods were needed. “In autumn of 1915, after the German offensive in Serbia, the shortest route from France having been blocked, airplanes and motors shipped from France remained at Salonika. From there they were sent to Archangel. This port, however, became ice-bound earlier than usual. Consequently such equipment had to be unloaded at Alexandrovsk, on the Murmansk coast, and stored there for the whole winter.”<sup>32</sup> With the Dardanelles being blocked, the only recourse was to send supplies to either the ports of Archangel in the Arctic Circle or Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast; both presenting significant challenges. The port at Archangel froze during the winter and its reliability, as seen in autumn of 1915, had the possibility of being inaccessible during other times as well.

Russia’s other alternative as a gateway for supplies was the Siberian port of Vladivostok. While being a warm water port, unlike the one in Archangel, the sheer geographical remoteness of the city left the location similarly handicapped. “Vladivostok, though inadequately equipped for the unloading and storing of large consignments of heavy freight, was nevertheless a first-class port. But only freight shipped from Japan and America could be sent to Vladivostok. For a long time, shipments from America were limited, inasmuch as almost her whole tonnage was concentrated in the Atlantic.”<sup>33</sup> Although the Russian command, like Golovine seen here, were fully aware of the port’s limitations they were left with little recourse. Initial trade with the

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<sup>31</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 1:272.

<sup>32</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

United States also suffered as its trading fleet had not intended on having to sail to the isolated Siberian city.

Although Russia was hamstrung in this effort by its geography, mismanagement by the bureaucracy served to only compound the initial problems. Management of the port at Archangel suffered greatly from Sukhomlinov's reign of incompetence. Rodzianko recounts the reaction of the Defense Council upon hearing of this mismanagement: "Scandalous abuses were uncovered by the Special Council for National Defense in the port of Archangel... the port was crammed with stores. Supplies from America, England and France were piled mountain high and could not be moved to the interior. At the very outset of the War Litvinov-Falinsky had warned the Government of the appalling state the port was in... The subject was raised at one of the very first meetings of the Special Council, and the question of what was to be done was put to the government. The Government, in the persons of Ministers Sukhomlinov, Rukhlov and Shakhovskoy, either wrote non-committal answers, or made verbal promises which came to nothing. Towards the end, the accumulation of goods such that packing cases lying on the ground were literally sinking into the soil owing to the sheer weight of the stores piled on top of them."<sup>34</sup>

Again the lasting impact of Sukhomlinov's tendency to not only disregard advice from his knowledgeable subordinates who were relaying accurate information from the ground, but also again is seen to be blatantly mendacious as to the state of the situation. The purchasers abroad were able to overcome the inherent adversity in their charge but yet their actions were rendered ineffective as the fruits of their labor were seen sinking into mud of Archangel's harbor.

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<sup>34</sup> Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin*, 100.

Although Sukhomlinov had been replaced soon after these findings were made public, the damage done by his inability to act was hard put to be rectified by his successors.

Even if these supplies were able to make it out from the growing stacks in the port, the transportation of the goods to the front also presented a colossal challenge of logistics. Russia's rail network, coupled with the enormity of its geography, resulted in constant delays and bottlenecks in the rail lines. Where there was an abundance of the necessary supplies in port and at the various waystations across the country, they had a problem in reaching where they were needed most: the west. "The railroads became congested, and a greater number of cars had to be assigned to the transportation of supplies than were necessary. For this reason supplies of meat, grain, and other things that were abundant in Siberia, could not be shipped westward... In view of the dislocation of transport, fuel and raw materials could not be delivered on time, and stored supplies could not be shipped... All this caused a shortage of necessities and an increase of prices."<sup>35</sup> It was now becoming clear that not only the front was experiencing shortages but the towns as well. The shortages led to increased prices, which in turn led to a decrease of the population's morale and productivity, further hurting the war effort. And all the while the newspapers printed that there were caches of supplies sitting at railheads in Siberia.

Rodzianko blames not only the lack of infrastructure but more so the criminal incompetence of the government for the supply ills caused by the transportation problem. "The supply organization was becoming worse and worse. The towns were short of food... yet all felt that there was plenty of everything in Russia, and that the shortage was due to the chaos prevailing throughout the country. While Moscow and Petrograd had no meat, the papers wrote

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<sup>35</sup> Bogatko and Naumov, *Collection of Memoranda*, 88.

of great consignments of frozen meat which had accumulated at the railway stations in Siberia. Such supplies of food...were bound to be ruined as soon as the mild weather returned. All efforts on the part both of the zemstvo organizations and of private individuals were wrecked by the criminal indifference or incompetence of the authorities. Each minister or senior official laid the blame on someone else, and those actually guilty could never be discovered.”<sup>36</sup> The bureaucracy’s incompetence is shown to not be limited to only Sukhomlinov but many other ministers and officials as well. The inadequacy of these officials is compounded by their constant predisposition to lay the blame on others. Thus is created a mired web of incompetence that showed no hope of unraveling in order to find the source of the corruption. Although the majority of the blame could be placed upon Sukhomlinov, as a leader must take responsibility for their subordinates, the similar nature of lower ministers and administrators must also be taken into account as evidence of a larger conspiracy of incompetence.

The work done by Sukhomlinov and the countless other officials was too great for either Polivanov or Shuvaev to erase. The successors to the supply problem could only hope to soften the blow to the country. As seen by General Golovine, the attempts made by the two succeeding War Ministers came to no avail. “From his own experience in the eighteen months during which the author was Chief of Staff of the Seventh Army (October 1915 to April 1917) he can testify to the fact that 25 per cent of the total supplies coming to that army had not been delivered.”<sup>37</sup> The combined problems presented by the nation’s infrastructure and its incompetent bureaucracy proved too much for a full supplying of the army at the front. Instead the Russian forces, like

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<sup>36</sup> Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin*, 157.

<sup>37</sup> Golovine, *Russian Army in the World War*, 189.

Golovine's 7<sup>th</sup> Army, had to simply make do with what could be delivered and not what they had requested.

The final count of rifles given by General Golovine provides an overall picture of the state of supply as the war drew to a close for Russia. "To 4,652,000 initially available, Russian factories added, in 1914, 278,000; in 1915, 860,000; in 1916, 1,321,000; in 1917, 1,120,000. Another 2,434,000 were purchased abroad. About 700,000 were taken from the enemy, and the total was, then, 11,365,000. Thus we see that 35 percent of the requisite number were not supplied."<sup>38</sup> Even with the push for domestic industrialization and the enormity of the Supply Committee's purchasing abroad, the Russian army at the war's close still lacked over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the necessary weapons needed to supply its soldiers. For all the attempts made to rectify the massive mistakes made during the first half of the war, the legacy of Sukhomlinov and others like him left a residual stain on the Russian capacity to supply its soldiers. The resolve for domestic production and foreign purchase of weapons is shown through these numbers presented by Golovine, but yet the continual mismanagement and the legacy of mismanagement proved too much to fully surmount.

Though all aspects of Russia's supply problem, both leading to the Crisis of 1915 and after, must be considered as contributing factors the common denominator throughout is the inefficiency, mismanagement, and general ineptitude of the governing officials. Sukhomlinov's and his Ministry's disconnection from the front and their general incompetence lay a groundwork that that proved too much for the succeeding ministers to manage completely. However, as shown through testimony by the generals and officials present through the war, the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 127.

succeeding ministers were ill equipped to handle a mismanagement of such a magnitude. The continual inherent problems of wartime logistics and continual incompetence by minor officials, which Sukhomlinov's dismissal did not resolve, proved to continue the supply shortage well past the major Crisis of 1915, even as domestic production and foreign purchasing was on the rise. Mismanagement, above all other elements of the supply problem, continued to be both the most prevalent and the most detrimental. "The abundant resources of Russia were not exhausted during the War, but to its end, nobody knew how to use them."<sup>39</sup>

The Russian Army would continue to hold the front line against German advance throughout 1916. But behind the lines in Petrograd, revolution was stirring. The continual failure of the war combined with the economic stresses brought about by the country's attempts to rebuild its army after the Great Retreat would polarize the political groups in the capital. By early 1917, these tensions would erupt in revolution. Even while in Petrograd there was a coming change of administration the war would continue at the front, continuing the problems of supplying the army. Although the change of administration and the fall of the Tsar in 1917 would bring hope to rectifying Russia's logistical problems the subsequent administration, the Provisional Government, would fall into many of the same failings as the administration of the Tsar: a continuation of ineptness, bloated bureaucracy, weak officials, and an overall mismanagement of Russia's military supply.

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<sup>39</sup> Bogatko and Naumov, *Collection of Memoranda*, 88.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT: 1917

In March of 1917, the political agitation of leftist organizations spurred on by a population tired of the failing war broke into full revolution. On 8 March, an international Woman's Day demonstration in Petrograd turned into a riot as angry industrial workers and mutinous soldiers from the capitol's garrison protested for an end to the Tsarist autocracy. By the following day 200,000 protestors rioted in the streets of the Imperial capitol. Nicholas II, under the advisement of his cabinet and the mounting crisis on the streets of Petrograd, decided to abdicate the throne on 15 March. His wishes were for his brother, the Grand Duke Michael, to take imperial power. However, with little backing from the Duma or the Russian people, the intended heir instead declined the throne and opted instead for the fate of the empire to be decided democratically in the Russian Constituent Assembly.<sup>40</sup>

The Assembly would elect Georgy Lvov, a prominent Duma member and head of the Union of Zemstvos, as the head of the newly formed Provisional Government. This government would be extremely factional, with its membership fractured between various political coalitions. As it attempted to maintain order in the Russian homeland and to continue the war against the Central Powers, its political divisions and desire to not upset the balance of power proved to be disastrous. In terms of supplying its army, already weakened by three years of war and inept leadership, the Provisional Government made many similar mistakes as its Imperial predecessor. Where the Tsarist government would have incompetent leaders in critical supply and logistical

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<sup>40</sup> Joshua Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire*, 1 edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 193–197.

positions, the Provisional Government would be hamstrung by its political infighting and its desire to not do anything to upset the revolutionary fervor which was gripping the country.

The Provisional Government would share its power dually with the Petrograd Soviet, the union of commoners which represented the city's industrial workers as well as the local garrison's soldiers and sailors. Throughout Russia's brief experiment with democracy, the two political entities would consistently be in friction. The Petrograd Soviet, in an attempt to safeguard the revolution, would demand more rights for its labor and military constituents. The Provisional Government, not wanting to upset the balance of power, would give in to many of the Soviet's demands. This in turn would have a direct impact on the supply of the Army. Even though Russia had made great strides in equipping its forces in 1916, the concessions made to the Petrograd Soviet would see that industry plummet, thus weakening Russia's ability to continue the logistical operations of its warfighting capabilities.

Instead of making the hard and forceful policies necessary to provide for the upkeep of its Army, the Provisional Government was instead cowed by their fear of upsetting the masses and the Petrograd Soviet. This fear, combined with its political fracturing and the legacy of Imperial mismanagement, continued the weakening of the Army's supply. Even when, in the Summer of 1917, the government was able to amass the greatest amount of firepower yet seen by the Russian Army in the war to attempt to retake Galicia, its poor policies resulted in a retreat reminiscent of the embarrassment of 1915. Although the Kerensky Offensive, named after the second leader of the Provisional Government, failed primarily from the participating soldiers' lack of discipline, the continuing supply problem contributed to its failure. Moreover, the Provisional Government's inability to fully fix the supply problem left them unable to rebuild the army before it would revolt against them in November of 1917 on the side of the Bolsheviks.

## Status of the Army on the Eve of the Revolution

The supply of the Russian army in the months prior to the revolution and abdication of the Tsar in March of 1917 was actually at its greatest point during the entire war. Orders for weapons from abroad were finally being fulfilled and began trickling onto the front from the stockpiles at the port cities of Vladivostok and Murmansk. Even Russian factories were beginning to make enough weapons, ammunition, and equipment domestically to make a difference on the front lines. The British attaché to the Russian Army, General Knox, ever critical of the Russian army and its supply problems, admitted to the feasibility of a 1917 campaign with the amount of arms and equipment stockpiled. “On the eve of the Revolution the prospects for the 1917 campaign were brighter than they had been in March, 1916, for the campaign of that year. . . . The stocks of arms, ammunition and technical equipment were, almost under every heading, larger than they had been even on mobilisation—much larger than they were in the spring of 1915 or of 1916, and for the first time supplies from overseas were arriving in appreciable quantities. England and France were sending much-needed aeroplanes, and the French were sending some able artillery experts.”<sup>41</sup>

While the physical supplies may have been present on the eve of the revolution, the men controlling them still bore many of the same inadequacies as did the military bureaucracy of the Tsarist administration. Many steps had been taken to eliminate the incompetent officers and ministers that had played a large role in the army’s supply problems, such as the dismissal and imprisonment of General Sukhomlinov in March of 1916, yet the problem of nepotism still remained within the Army’s leadership. General Pyotr Wrangel, the Russian general noted for

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<sup>41</sup> Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, vol. 2 (London: Hutchinson, 1921), 551–552.

his battlefield prowess and strict disciplinary nature as well as his later command of the anti-Bolshevik forces during the Civil War, noted the continual decline of the Army's leadership. "The experience gained from two years of warfare had not been acquired in vain... A number of generals who had not kept pace with modern needs had had to give up their commands, and life had brought other more capable men to the fore. But nepotism, which permeated all spheres of Russian life, still brought unworthy men into important positions too often... After two years of warfare, the Army was not what it had been."<sup>42</sup>

Even with the continuing problem of nepotistic military leaders, Russia's experiment with democracy in early 1917 carried with it the hope that new administration would give the country the victory needed to turn back the Central Powers' advance. The stockpiled arms and their continual production from domestic factories should have ensured that the Russian Army would not repeat the same disaster as the campaign two years previous. The status of the Army's supply, even while it was still plagued by remnants of Tsarist bureaucracy, was promising enough that the Provisional Government began plans for a summer offensive. "Taking into account the monthly output of Russian factories, the supply of shell and of small arms ammunition promised to be sufficient for the campaign of 1917."<sup>43</sup>

### **Labor and Transportation Issues Prior to the July 1917 Offensive**

This optimism of a shining future for Russia under the new democracy would be short lived. Already as the Provisional Government set about attempting to undo the problems of its predecessors, Russia's industrial workers began enjoying the fruits of their newly acquired

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<sup>42</sup> Pyotr Wrangel, *The Memoirs of General Wrangel: The Last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian National Army*, trans. Sophie Goulston (London: Williams & Norgate LTD, 1929), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:549.

democracy. In the wake of the Tsar's abdication, anarchy reigned the streets of Petrograd before the government could regain control of the city. This revolutionary anarchy would have a profound impact on Russia's manufacturing of war materials, even after the streets were calmed from the first waves of violence.

David Francis, the Ambassador to Russia from the United States, gives a picture of the anarchy that reigned in the capital during the early days of March 1917. "Mutineers accompanied by many revolutionists had visited the munition factory adjoining the Austrian Embassy; had killed the officer in command there, and had ordered the men to quit work."<sup>44</sup> The violence that swept the city put the local armament factories out of work for much of the early days of the revolution. With murderous incidents such as this occurring daily in Petrograd's factories, which had so successfully supplied the Army during the year previous, the production of war materials began to plummet.

The Provisional Government quickly began a vocal campaign to attempt to get the laborers back to work, with President Lvov directly addressing factory workers and appealing to their sense of patriotism. "Workers of the metallurgical factories of the Urals, the Provisional Government calls upon you with fervent appeal... Do not lose a single day, a single hour. Remember that the army needs a continual supply of new guns, shells cartridges, rifles, and other fighting equipment."<sup>45</sup> These appeals, such as this one to the Ural Metallurgical Workers on 23 March 1917, seemed to have little affect however as the workers continued to strike and demand better treatment from the new government. "The managers of large factories report that the

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<sup>44</sup> David Francis, *Russia From the American Embassy: April 1916-November 1918* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 60.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, ed. Robert Browder, vol. II (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), 713.

workmen are doing what they please and that they are managers in name only. The food supply of the city [Petrograd] is rapidly diminishing.”<sup>46</sup>

The inability of the Provisional Government to wrest control of the laboring masses away from the Petrograd Soviet saw the production levels of 1916 drop exponentially. General Knox gives a scathing report on the product of the government’s inability to force the laborers back to work: “In Petrograd the output of the month March 13th to April 13th showed signs of falling by from one-third to two-thirds of the output of February. If factories in some other places were doing better, it was only because the revolutionary wave had not yet reached them...The output of the factories declined chiefly because the men arrested or expelled the engineers and themselves spent most of their time in attending meetings.”<sup>47</sup>

Labor relations between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government would only get worse as the workers began to consolidate their power within labor committees. In April 1917, the factory workers went further with their demands and began striking for an eight-hour workday. The Provisional Government, fearing to seem as enemies to the revolution, gave into the worker’s demands. Immediately the effects on production were felt. “The output of coal fell 20.2 per cent, in the month of April, as compared with the corresponding month last year. The production of pig-iron fell 17.6 per cent, in the first quarter of 1917 as compared with that of the first quarter of 1916. The factories generally produce 40 per cent, less, owing to the introduction of the eight-hours' day, combined with the refusal of the men to work overtime and the lack of

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<sup>46</sup> Francis, *Russia From the American Embassy: April 1916-November 1918*, 114.

<sup>47</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:590.

sufficient skilled labour to arrange additional shifts. On an average, 40 per cent, of the engineers have been expelled by the men, in one case 80 per cent.”<sup>48</sup>

The extreme loss of production not only stemmed from shortened work periods but from an inability to replace the skilled laborers which had been killed or driven out by the revolting workers. Without adequate policing efforts by the Provisional Government, again in an attempt to not upset the revolutionary fervor, the managers and engineers which had helped to bring Russia’s production capacity up to necessary levels before the Revolution were either killed, driven out, or lacked the power to command the masses of unskilled labor. With an offensive to retake Galicia from Austro-Hungarian forces beginning to be planned for July, the necessity for extra war materials and raw resources began to become ever more prevalent. While the supplies Russia was able to produce domestically and import from the Allies were considerable enough to allow for a summer offensive, the replenishment of that stockpile was now being put into jeopardy.

If the Provisional Government’s inaction boded poorly for its labor relations and production capability, it was catastrophic for Russia’s capacity to transport arms and equipment to the front line armies. The revolutionary fervor which had turned the factory workers away from the production capabilities of 1916 also gripped the railway workers. The existing state of Russia’s railroads, which was already generally poor and clogged with traffic, was only made worse by railway workers following the actions of their brethren workers. The mounting transportation problem was already being felt at the front soon after the Revolution began. In a memorandum dated 18 March 1917 from General Lukomskii, head of the General Staff, to the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2:624.

newly formed government, the General illustrates the growing problem at the front caused by the interruption to labor and transportation: “Owing to the lack of coal and metals, the disruption of transport, and the events we are living through, the output of shells, cartridges, rifles, and artillery pieces will be considerably delayed...Railway transport is seriously disrupted, and even if supplies were available we would be unable to bring to the front simultaneously both the supplies intended for daily consumption and those intended for the building of reserves... the condition of the railroads do not permit the simultaneous conveyance of large units for operational purposes and the delivery to the front of the necessary supplies.”<sup>49</sup>

General Lukomskii was not the only Russian commander seeing the coming logistical problems caused by the revolution and the Provisional Government’s inability to curtail it. In a letter from Supreme Commander Alekseev to Minister of War Guchkov, also dated in March 1917 as the effects of the Revolution began to be felt, the warning of General Lukomskii is reiterated to the Provisional Government: “Without the necessary means for their transportation; now, apparently rifles also will not reach us in the quantities fixed, and, as a consequence, part of the men, especially on the Rumanian front, will remain unarmed; moreover, we shall have no rifles at all in reserve for the advent of inevitable losses in combat, and it is possible that we will return to the painful and desperate situation of 1915.”<sup>50</sup> The planned offensive for the summer was now being put into jeopardy. Even though all of Russia’s stockpiles were being driven forward towards the Galician front, other theatres of battle such as the Romanian Front began to suffer from lack of supplies. This began to create an untenable supply strategy for the Russian Army. Although supplies were being massed in Western Ukraine, the neighboring fronts of

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<sup>49</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:924.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, II:922.

Romania to the south and Poland to the north began to feel the effects of being secondary on the precedent for supply. The inability of Russia to evenly distribute supplies across the entirety of the front would prove to be part of its undoing as the last major Russian offensive was beginning to take form.

The Provisional Government would initially attempt to remedy the transportation problem as it tried with the issue of labor relations in the war materials factories. Their tactics to attempt to reign in revolting railway workers and disobedient soldiers who were clogging rail cars without authorization from their officers were similar to the failed tactics used in an attempt to get factory workers back to producing war materials. President Lvov sent such an address to soldiers and railway workers on 4 April 1917: “Soldiers! You must clearly understand that every extra train which is carrying people and is moving in the direction of the front is forcing out another such train carrying food supplies and munitions to the front... Soldiers! Convince your less socially-aware comrades that their own interests demand a strict and unquestioning compliance with railway rules and orders of railway employees which are based on these rules.”<sup>51</sup> These addresses by President Lvov, much like his addresses to the factory workers, were paid little heed by the soldiers and rail workers already radicalized by the Revolution.

As the planned offensive for the beginning of July came ever closer, the logistical situation behind the front was becoming even more dire. Lvov’s addresses, while well meant, had little clout and no backing to effect any immediate change on the relations between workers, soldier, and the Government. A report from the front on 27 May, only little more than a month away from the planned offensive highlighted the extreme hindrances to the Army created by the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., II:700–701.

Provisional Government's reluctance to use force as a method to solve the mounting labor and transportation problems. "Colonel Yakubovich spoke for three hours at the Conference of Peasant Deputies on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> [of May], and was gloomy. He said that the army has enough shell for six months' maximum expenditure, but there is a shortage of food, and horses in places only get one pound of oats a day. There are mass epidemics of scurvy. The open deserters number several millions, secret deserters, a million officers and men, who are skulking in rear under various pretences. Anarchy on the railways. Companies at the front reduced to forty to seventy bayonets. Of drafts 1,000 strong despatched from depots in rear, only 150 to 250 men reach the front. Men despatched to the Western Front decide en route that they prefer to go to the South-Western Front, and go there they do!"<sup>52</sup> Even when there was enough men and equipment to send to the front, the transportation crisis, which showed no sign of abating, caused only a fraction to arrive at the front. Even men that reached the front lines did not necessarily end up at their intended units, as seen in this officer's report.

To compound the problems of labor relations and transportation issues for the Provisional Government, they also inherited all of the Tsarist administration's sizeable debt. An initial findings report by the Provisional Government when they took power found that the treasury would not last past the end of 1917. "So far the treasury does not have the means to cover the over expenditures anticipated by the end of this year. There is even danger that the anticipated sum of the deficit may increase in view of the excessive demands that continue to be made on the treasury. For example, some democratic organizations raised the question of increasing the soldiers' allowances. In this event the total sum of payments would increase from the present 3

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<sup>52</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:624.

billion to 11 billion rubles.”<sup>53</sup> The little credit and funds the Tsarist administration had was spent on industrializing Russia and rebuilding the Army during 1916. Now with the nation’s labor force in revolt, the Provisional Government had few options for the replenishment for the treasury.

One of Russia’s main sources of reliable credit was through the United States. Ambassador Francis notes the Provisional Government’s requesting even more money and supplies in May 1917. “Terestcehnko, Kerensky, and Lvoff [sic], the latter two of whom I saw frequently, told me that they did not need men but supplies and credit, in order to equip and feed and clothe the Russian army.”<sup>54</sup> Kerensky was able to secure credit to the amount of \$100,000,000 from the United States on 3 May 1917,<sup>55</sup> but the financial crisis was a continual impediment on the Provisional Government’s warfighting capability throughout its existence.

The issues caused by the Provisional Government’s inability to curtail the revolution in the factories and on the rail lines would only be compounded as Russia began to launch their last major offensive of the war in July 1917. Although the Tsarist government successfully managed to industrialize their war materials industry in 1916 and create a surplus of arms and ammunition, the Provisional Government was unable to continue this trend. Instead of using force to coerce the laborers back into the factories and soldiers to their proper posts rather than causing chaos on the rail lines, the Provisional Government was weak in the face of this proletariat opposition. Instead of standing strong and demanding that the workers continue production at 1916 levels, they instead allowed themselves to be cowed by the Petrograd Soviet and its constituents, as to not seem as enemies of the Revolution. The mounting issues of supply and logistics that were

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<sup>53</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:516.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II:123–124.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, II:502.

magnified in the wake of the Revolution would only be magnified as the Provisional Government led a final and futile campaign against the Central Powers.

### **The Kerensky Offensive and Retreat: July 1917**

As summer of 1917 approached, the French leadership requested that the new Russian government take a more active role in relieving the mounting pressure faced by the Allies on the Western Front. Additionally the Kingdom of Romania, which had entered the war the summer prior, was facing a losing campaign against an invasion of the Central Powers. Kerensky, seeing this as an opportunity to not only draw pressure off his allies but to also secure a victory for the fledgling Provisional Government, set plans in motion to mount a campaign to recapture Western Ukraine.<sup>56</sup>

The initial plan was to begin the offensive in early April, but the reduced morale and defiance of command by revolutionized soldiers was beginning to become a problem. The Petrograd Soviet issued General Order No. 1 in March quickly after seizing power. Petrograd soldiers, though the order resonated throughout the Army, were instructed to only obey orders which were approved by the Petrograd Soviet. It also mandated rules against saluting and other basics of military discipline, utterly corrupting the majority of Russia's common soldiers in defiance of their officers.<sup>5758</sup>

Transportation issues already stated began to take a toll on the speed of mobilization to reinforce the standing troops on Russia's frontlines. The delivery of supplies and manpower was severely delayed, even though Russia had a surplus of both men and arms up to this point. The

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<sup>56</sup> Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, vol. II (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 3–15.

<sup>57</sup> Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse*, 193–198.

<sup>58</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:848–849.

delays in supply delivery to the front coupled with unruly and disobedient soldiers forced Russian command to continue pushing back the planned offensive until July, when the new President of the government Alexander Kerensky had taken power.<sup>59</sup>

President Kerensky chose General Aleskei Brusilov, who had proved himself to be a competent commander during his victorious campaign in 1916, to lead the intended offensive. Brusilov, claiming his soldiers had been re-energized by the Revolution, payed little heed to the limitations of possible reinforcement of men and supplies to the front lines. Instead the General wanted to begin the offensive as quickly as possible to deny the Central Powers any initiative. General Lukomskii, quartermaster for this campaign, had written in the margins of Brusilov's assessment "Wouldn't it be a joy if these fancies corresponded to reality."<sup>60</sup>

However even with all the surmounting problems facing Brusilov and his set date of 1 July to begin the campaign, the Russian army was able to amass more munitions for this campaign than any other Russian campaign in the war. Brusilov's forces possessed a considerable advantage in terms of equipment, which had been unheard of in the years previous. "The Russian superiority in bayonets was, as usual, considerable, and the Command had succeeded for the first time in the war in concentrating a superiority in guns and aeroplanes... Classified according to the Russian system, the Russians had 693 light field guns opposed to 284 enemy guns, 84 light howitzers opposed to 178 enemy, and 337 so-called heavy guns and howitzers opposed to 66 enemy."<sup>61</sup> This overwhelming firepower, even without all of Russia's reserves being deployed due to its transportation problems, was still enough for Kerensky to

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<sup>59</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:17–21.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, II:6.

<sup>61</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:641.

believe in a much needed victory for a Provisional Government that was beset on all sides by problems.

The offensive opened with a massive two day artillery barrage on 1 July 1917, but even with the immense firepower and hoarded reserves of ammunition the effects of the ill-disciplined soldiers was beginning to take its toll on the supply situation at the front. “Progress was, however, much interfered with by the indiscipline and stupidity of the men... Divisional Commander was informed by the regimental committee that the men refused to move because only two passages had been prepared for them through the wire, while eight passages had been prepared for the neighbouring regiment. To destroy the wire that worried these men much shell had to be wasted that would have been otherwise used against the enemy’s trenches. The extra passages were not required, and the enemy’s trenches being insufficiently destroyed the regiment that had raised the objection suffered more heavily than it need have done in the attack.”<sup>62</sup> The soldiers not only contributed to the lack of initial combat effectiveness with their ill-discipline but also forced the unneeded waste of the ammunition reserves. Such delays caused by undisciplined soldiers across the front line were becoming common place as soon as the order to advance was given, and would only get worse as the offensive continued.

Brusilov was able to continue his advance for little more than a week before the tide turned against him. In that week the Russian army had been able to gain more than 100 kilometers into Galicia and rolled back the occupying Austro-Hungarian forces. But by 9 July, the offensive began to stall. Soldier’s committees, miniature versions of the Petrograd Soviet, were inciting their soldier constituents to disobey orders and call meetings to deliberate on small

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2:643.

matters of strategy. These deliberations and acts of undisciplined Russian soldiers caused the front to enter a holding pattern on the newly established front. Even though the Brusilov had expended a great deal of his reserve of artillery shells gaining that ground, the Russian officer's inability to control their men saw that the artillery display that initiated the advance may have been ill spent as the front refused to move further.<sup>63</sup>

Within a week into the campaign German reinforcements together with the beleaguered Austro-Hungarian Army began to turn back the Russian's advances. By 9 July the Russians had given up 40 kilometers of territory to the counterattack, almost half of the territory they had captured just the week prior. Brusilov's army would fall back to the extremely strategic town of Tarnopol, which the general gave strict orders not to abandon. The order was borne out of the town's importance to the possibility of continuing the offensive, as it was a major rail hub connected to the other Russian fronts as well as the location of a depot housing much of Brusilov's reserve munitions.<sup>64</sup>

By 11 July enemy forces had begun to breach the outskirts of the town. The Russian Army, instead of holding the defense of Tarnopol as their general demanded, broke and retreated en masse. As the soldiers panicked and fled they began to pillage the town and set it to the torch. General Wrangel, who was present during the retreat and attempted, to no avail, to hold the retreating hordes of soldiers depicts the chaos: "Pillaging was going on everywhere: windows were being broken, doors smashed in, furniture destroyed, boxes forced open; materials and household articles covered the roadways and obstructed the ammunition wagons, lorries, and ambulances."<sup>65</sup> Even worse was the fate of Brusilov's munitions depot. Without warning nearby

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<sup>63</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:89–100.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II:116–119.

<sup>65</sup> Wrangel, *The Memoirs of General Wrangel: The Last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian National Army*, 29.

troops who were skirmishing with the vanguard of the advancing Germans, Russian engineers rigged the depot to explode. The shockwave was felt kilometers away and killed many of the surrounding Russian soldiers and officers. “There was an explosion which shook the ground... we discovered that the engineering officer, seeing the enemy approaching, had set fire to the depots without first warning the troops.”<sup>66</sup>

Brusilov’s offensive was turning into a categorical rout as his forces began to retreat from Tarnopol and back to the original front line before the failed advance. Everywhere on the road there was chaos, stressing the already insufficient networks of rail and road. “Thursday, June 14th, 1917. Kremenets. On the road from Tarnopol there were everywhere signs of disorganisation. The artillery of the Guard was seen halted in one village. The guns and horses were distributed without system, just where they happened to be unbuckled. There was no sentry over the guns. I can imagine how the unfortunate officers’ sense of order must suffer. In several places we passed transport wagons, the horses unhitched and tied up without food, while the men slept under a tree.”<sup>67</sup> The attitudes of the soldiers, which had been shown to be both ineffective and ill-disciplined since the beginning of the campaign, were once again taking a toll on the Army’s logistics. Akin to wasting ammunition in the initial advance, their lack of discipline during the retreat was causing a large amount of disorganization in the rear.

General Knox continues to point out the damages caused by the routed Russian soldiers. “There were patent signs of indiscipline everywhere... The roads which, when taken over from the Austrians the year before, had been good, were now in a disgraceful condition, and no attempt was made to repair them. Everywhere Government transport was used for work for

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 29–30.

<sup>67</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:632.

which it was never intended; one of its chief duties seemed to be to carry delegates to and from their meetings.”<sup>68</sup> The army had begun to completely deteriorate, much like as it had in 1915. Even with the ammunition reserves the Russian Army had been able to obtain prior to the offensive, their usage had been in vain. Now, with production in the Russian heartland being stalled by leftist protesters and transportation to the front operating far below acceptable levels, a rebuilding of the Army as it had been rebuilt in 1916 was losing promise.

### **General Kornilov and the Expanding Logistical Crisis: July-August 1917**

Kerensky, seeing that his grand offensive to cement the power of the Provisional Government was having quite the opposite effect, attempted to control the damage done by Brusilov’s failure. In mid-July the Provisional Government appointed General Lavr Kornilov as the new commander of the Southwestern Front. With the front coming close to complete collapse near the 18 July appointment of Kornilov, the government could not have picked a greater man. Of Central Asiatic origins, Kornilov was noted as one of the most competent tacticians and strictest disciplinarians of the Russian Army. His lowly origins from what is now Kazakhstan and his knowledge of the many cultures and languages of Russia’s interior made him a hero among his men. Even Knox, who had seldom words of praise for his Russian counterparts, spoke highly of the general. “Kornilov was a man of wide education, and spoke several of the languages of Europe and Asia. He had fought his way to high command even under the old regime, without interest, by sheer hard work and ability. He was the first leading general the Russian army had found since the Revolution with the courage to risk everything in defending its vital interests from political interference.”<sup>69</sup> It was perhaps Kornilov’s disinterest for politics

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 2:636.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2:679.

above all else which made him one of the most competent Russian commanders of the war as his only motivations were patriotic, instead of attempting to appease the politicians behind the lines in Petrograd.

What was most needed from Kornilov was his reputation for strict discipline. In his own words “I declared that only harsh measures, unwaveringly enforced, could save the country from collapse.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Kornilov’s discipline began to be quickly felt across the Southwestern Front in late July. In direct violation of the Soviet’s General Order No. 1, Kornilov began to reintroduce the death penalty at the front for desertion and failure to obey orders. He issued orders for the artillery and machine guns to open fire on any retreating soldiers and took full responsibility of the casualties on himself. While these measures had mitigated the offensive’s retreat and prevented a complete collapse of the army like in 1915, the Army still continued to suffer greatly from the leftist propaganda being propagated by Bolsheviks and radicalized soldiers at the front.<sup>71</sup>

While Kornilov attempted to hold together the remnants of Brusilov’s army in the Southwestern Front, the logistical issues behind the lines was beginning to reach a breaking point. The effects borne from the Provisional Government’s lack of controlling its workers were beginning to be felt within the Russian homeland. Even more so, the ability to rebuild the Army after its near destruction was beginning to look ever more out of the government’s reach. From the Front, the Russian generals demanded that the government take action to help rebuild the logistical support to their armies. In a letter to Kerensky from General Alekseev dated 20 July, the commander highlights the lasting effects of the government’s inaction. “Recently collected

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<sup>70</sup> Kornilov’s Deposition to the Kerensky Government as cited in George Katkov, *The Kornilov Affair: Kerensky and the Break-up of the Russian Army* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980), 51.

<sup>71</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:124–127.

data point to the fact that our transport is deteriorating daily. If this continues, by October or November of this year the railroads will be unable to fulfill even one-half of the demands made upon them...I cannot be silent about the terrifying conditions which will result in the active army when the railroads prove helpless to bring provisions to the troops...urgent and planned work is needed as well as the urgent implementation of a number of practical government measures.”<sup>72</sup>

General Alekseev’s request for the government’s intervention into the mounting logistical crisis could not have come at a worse time. From 16-20 July there was violent protests carried out on the streets of Petrograd by armed workers and mutinous soldiers. Fighting had taken place in the capitol itself between government loyalists and these leftist elements, with the situation becoming so bad that Kerensky was forced to arrest many Bolshevik leaders. Not wanting to continue or escalate these new tensions between workers and the government, Kerensky did little to remedy the situation.<sup>73</sup>

Rather than risk upsetting the already riotous workers by forcing any changes, the Provisional Government instead turned to its ally the United States to facilitate a solution. The US, which had by this point been a full belligerent in the war for some weeks, was not in any real position to solve Russia’s transportation problem directly. They had already been sending equipment to the port of Vladivostok, where for lack of transportation the supplies had been accumulating. Instead the US was in the position to only promise to send a team of skilled railroad engineers to assess and attempt to fix Russia’s rail lines. The attempt proved to be too late to be any help however, as the Bolshevik revolution in November ended any plans for American assistance. “With the request of the Railroad Commission, endorsed by myself

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<sup>72</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:1012.

<sup>73</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:112–114.

[Ambassador Francis], a party of over 200, consisting of railroad operating men, engineers and interpreters, under the command of George Emerson, which planned to leave Seattle November 19, 1917...The Bolshevik Revolution prevented the consummation of the well-laid plans of these railroad experts.”<sup>74</sup>

By the beginning of August, the lack of any real response from the government forced Kornilov himself to petition the Kerensky to find a solution to the transportation problem. At the front, the supply of food was beginning to run out and reinforcements of both men and equipment was being severely delayed. In a meeting with the Provisional Government on 11 August, Kornilov proposed that the military take possession of both the railways and the arms factories. “General Kornilov’s report also had to do with food at the front and the necessity of taking steps to regulate transportation. Owing to the lawless acts of the soldier masses, the railways have completely broken down. He thought that the railways and factories working for the army should be militarized. If this were not done, he feared that the army and navy would be left without food and artillery supplies... Kornilov’s proposals, especially with those relating to decisive measures in the rear, are meeting with bitter opposition from the left wing of the Provisional Government.”<sup>75</sup> The Provisional Government, cowed by the possibility of retaliation from the workers and leftist elements in the Duma, refused to turn the railroads or the factories over to the military. Instead, the lack of any concrete action allowed for the continual collapse of the country’s logistical base.

General Knox also attempted to persuade the government to take any form of action to remedy the situation. “Sunday, August 5th, 1917. I had a long talk with Prince Tumanov, the

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<sup>74</sup> Francis, *Russia From the American Embassy: April 1916-November 1918*, 131–133.

<sup>75</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:1024.

Assistant Minister of War...I gave him some figures indicative of the economic and transport crises. He said: You base your pessimism on naked figures, but you do not take into account the wonderful Russian spirit!”<sup>76</sup> The absolute detachment of the ministers crucial to the supply of the war in the Provisional Government continued to mirror their Tsarist predecessors. Even though attempts were made to combat the inefficiency and nepotism of the previous bureaucracy, the Provisional Government continued in many of the same patterns.

The supply problem at this point was also being greatly aggravated by the lack of communication between the compartmentalized ministries in charge of the logistical aspects of the war. This lack of cohesion was felt in the lack of quality possessed by Kerensky’s key ministers. “Neither Kerenski nor Savinkov had any strong assistants in the Ministry of War. General Manikovski, who was in charge of the supply departments, said on August 9th that he had not been able to see his Minister for two months. He said: ‘Sometimes I want to put a bullet into my own head, and sometimes into somebody else’s.’ His subordinate, the Chief of the Military Technical Department, said that there was no real work being done in his office. Officers in the Artillery Department, when asked how they came to have so much time to spare, explained that productive work had fallen generally 50 per cent, in Russia since the Revolution, and they were doing their best to follow the times.”<sup>77</sup> The Provisional Government’s hesitation and complete lack of any real action to remedy their growing logistical crisis by the beginning of August 1917 was only magnified by the coming realization that there was little to no communication between the various elements that could, if given the proper order, attempt to remedy the crisis. Even if Kerensky had the strength and willpower to order the necessary

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<sup>76</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:669.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:671.

sweeping changes to the country's infrastructure, such as Kornilov's proposal to militarize transportation and industry, the feasibility of such changes are thrown into serious doubt based on the composition of his ministry. And while Kerensky managed to keep these less than competent ministers on his staff, he was about to lose one of the only men that was holding the Army together.

### **The Kornilov Affair and the Government's Impending Fall: August-October 1917**

By early August, the lack of food delivered to the Front and Russia's major cities from the agrarian interior began to reach critical levels. "While the army was going to pieces in front, in rear there was Petrograd in July and August an economic and food crisis. The demands of the workmen exceeded all bounds, the technical officials were expelled or murdered and the Government proved powerless to restore order. The peasants held back their grain, the paper currency having lost value and there being no manufactures which might induce them to part with their produce."<sup>78</sup> Without any forceful backing from the Provisional Government, as Kornilov had requested, the low class laborers had continued to drive out skilled technicians as they did in the early days of the Revolution. Also, without force, the peasant's horded grain could not be levied for use by the Army. With winter approaching and the rail network grinding to a halt, the prospects of supplying the army with enough food to last until spring were fading.

General Kornilov, fully aware by now of the failings of the Provisional Government and the impending collapse of the Russian Front if immediate action was not taken to remedy the situation, began to set in motion a planned coup to overthrow the Kerensky administration. In late August, together with an army comprised mostly of his loyal Cossack cavalrymen, Kornilov

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 2:668.

began to march on Petrograd. In an address on 27 August, the general appealed to all of Russia to see the inadequacies of both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet and urged an uprising. “People of Russia! Our great country is dying. The hour of its end is near. Being compelled to come forward in the open, I, General Kornilov, declare that, under the pressure of the Bolshevik majority of the Soviets, the Provisional Government is acting in complete accord with the plans of the German General Staff, at the time when enemy troops are landing on the Riga coast; it is killing the army and shaking the foundations of the country... I, General Kornilov, the son of a Cossack peasant, declare to all and sundry that I want nothing for my own person, except the preservation of a Great Russia.”<sup>79</sup> There is little indication that Kornilov himself wanted to take power as a dictator, but rather his aims seemed to be to emplace a new form of democracy without the current Provisional Government or Petrograd Soviet involved.

Kerensky however saw this as an attempt as a full military coup and began to set plans in motion to defend the capitol from a possible siege by Kornilov. In a risky gamble, Kerensky decided to allow the Petrograd Soviet to arm over 25,000 workers to protect the city. This militia, comprised of many of the men responsible for the riots in July, set to work emplacing defenses around the city. Kerensky also called upon the railway workers to delay the trains on which the bulk of Kornilov’s forces were using to reach Petrograd. In doing so, Kerensky had given an unprecedented amount of power into the hands of the Petrograd Soviet and its constituency.<sup>80</sup>

The freedom of movement that Kerensky had given to the Soviet allowed for Bolshevik agents to infiltrate Kornilov’s forces and begin spreading leftist propaganda. This propaganda

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<sup>79</sup> Aleksandr Fyodorovich Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism: The Kornilov Rising* (Dodd, Mead and company, 1919), 180–181.

<sup>80</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:217–223.

war, in concurrence with the Soviet's defense of the city and the logistical impediments carried out by the railway workers began to take a toll on Kornilov's planned coup. Before even reaching Petrograd, Bolshevized members of the general's retinue betrayed their leader and handed him over to the Provisional Government. With Kornilov now in custody and his army being swept by Bolshevik propaganda, the attempted coup quickly collapsed.

What was a short term victory for Kerensky quickly became his undoing, and contributed greatly to the growing logistical crisis. By allowing the arming of workers for the defense of Petrograd, the Provisional Government had legitimized both the Petrograd Soviet and the very men who had been rioting in the streets of the capital only a few weeks previous. The defense of the city, largely coordinated by the Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, also allowed for Bolshevik power to reign within the Petrograd Soviet. The Soviet's meteoric rise in power after the Kornilov Affair not only proved that the Provisional Government was incapable of defending Russia from internal threats, but served to emboldening the working class in their continual lack of cooperation to help fix the logistical problem.

There was a growing occurrence within the Army of soldiers actively attempting to sabotage equipment and supplies in order to keep from being sent into battle. The intentional breakage of tools and weapons was becoming common place, as well as the plundering of supply depots for winter clothing and other equipment. Even worse were reports of rampaging soldiers attacking local estates, intent on pilfering wine and liquor cellars, but in the process also killing livestock and burning local grain stockpiles with which the Army had become dependent.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., II:229.

The soldier's desperate efforts to sabotage the Army's logistical power in attempt to bring an early end to the war instead began to cause the starvation of the men. By September, the effects of the soldier's uncontrolled rampage along the Southwestern Front began to be felt. In a report dated 7 September by a commissary attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Army, Southwestern Front, the supply situation was quickly becoming endangered by the uncontrolled actions of the soldiers. "Questions of supply and warm uniforms have created a very anxious mood in the units, and military organizations [soldier's committees] are urgently demanding an immediate resolution by efforts at the front and in the rear. The army has recently lived exclusively from local sources, which have now been utterly exhausted, and any interruption in transport would be deadly. Particularly acute in connection with the approach of winter is the question of warm boots and uniforms, which are in extremely short supply and are not coming in from the rear."<sup>82</sup> Without Kornilov's style of discipline, the inability of local Army commanders to reign in their marauding soldiers was destroying any chance for the army to rebuild its supply base in preparation for winter.

The lack of control by Russian officers to stop their soldiers from impeding the war effort was beginning to become even more blatant. In October, General Knox reported of passing hundreds of soldiers selling their equipment to civilians. "On my way to and from the Ministry of Ways, where I went to collect information about the state of the railways, I passed through a seething crowd of 2,000 to 3,000 soldiers busily engaged in selling boots and clothing to civilians. This is called the Equipment Market! What is the good of sending stuff to such people?"<sup>83</sup> The very equipment which Russia had been able to stockpile from both domestic

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<sup>82</sup> Central State Military-Historical Archive, f. 2003/c, op. 1, d. 36, 11. 52-55 as cited in *Ibid.*, II:226.

<sup>83</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:700-701.

production and from its allies was ill spent on these undisciplined soldiers. Without a Kornilov-like figure to impose harsh justice for such indiscipline, and the Provisional Government now even more powerless to stop the shortage of discipline in the ranks, the Army had taken to continually and actively undermining supply efforts.

The looting of grain shipments from the interior by uncontrolled soldiers at supply depots was also beginning to contribute greatly to the already magnified food crisis. Not only was Russia's transportation network stymied by a lack of cooperation from its workers, but the shipments that were able to reach their intended destinations were being pilfered by the very soldiers they were meant to supply. The situation was becoming so bad in October 1917 that the Minister of Interior advocated Kerensky to begin sending trusted guards to keep the grain shipments from being plundered. "For the purpose of carrying out the scheduled transportation of supplies for the army and the population, I advise you to take every measure, including the use of armed force, for organizing the guard of grain supplies."<sup>84</sup> However, like most petitions to Kerensky and the Provisional Government, the minister's appeal went unanswered for fear of seeming counter revolutionary and heavy handed.

The ministries' of the Provisional Government tendency to not communicate with each other was also compounding the food crisis of October 1917. In a telegram to Kerensky dated 19 October from the commander of the Western Front, General Dukhonin, the lack of coordination between the ministries and the Army was becoming evident. "The Commander in Chief of the Western Front reports to you that, following threats by the starving population of the city and the uezd [district] to pillage and burn down the commissary storehouses... seven carloads of flour to

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<sup>84</sup> Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, II:653.

be released from the commissary to the population... This portends a complete breakdown in supply... The Ministry of Food, however, apparently does not realize the gravity of the situation at the front. It renders no concrete help.”<sup>85</sup> The Provisional Government’s lack of coordination between ministers and the troops at the front, as well as their inability to reach any concrete solutions to the food and transportation problems saw the Russian Army begin to starve as winter began to fall at the end of 1917. Even with continual requests from both his ministers and generals, Kerensky failed to provide the leadership necessary to remedy the crisis.

An October editorial in the newspaper *Russkiiia Vedomosti* highlights the key factor behind the transportation and subsequent food crises. “What is to be done? Specialists give a simple and clear answer. It is not a matter of reforming, or improving the network, of working out some innovations. Elementary measures must be undertaken to make our railroads, somehow, in some way, move... Who should undertake the measures? The Ministry, under the present circumstances, can do nothing. Scores of telegrams with information about the complete breakdown in various places, which the department receives daily, horrify the leaders to be sure, but they are powerless. The same problem of authority operates here. And it is even more difficult because it is nonexistent, but in its negative form it is passed into hands of countless committees, unions, etc. There can be no thought of saving the network until the authority of these organs is clearly defined.”<sup>86</sup> The Provisional Government shared the same problem of a disjointed and bloated bureaucracy as did the Tsarist regime. Even if Kerensky was able to make the hard decisions necessary to remedy the situation, regardless of the Petrograd Soviet’s reaction, the organs to carry out such orders were in so much of a disarray that the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., II:657.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., II:706.

implementation would either take longer than planned or not at all. Without a streamlined chain of command within the Provisional Government, the necessary decisions, even if ordered by Kerensky, would not have been able to rectify Russia's logistical crisis.

### **Red Dawn and the fall of the Provisional Government: October-November 1917**

By late October 1917, the Provisional Government was set to collapse. With a lack of resolution to its relationships with labor and the army, the failed summer offensive, and now the Kornilov Affair showing the weakness of Kerensky's regime, power was flowing directly into the hands of the Soviet. With power now firmly in their hands, the Bolshevik controlled Petrograd Soviet began conspiring for a full overthrow of the Provisional Government. The Army, now bloodied by the failed campaign by Kerensky and empowered by Bolshevik propaganda after the Kornilov affair had little prospects to continue the war against the Central Powers into the coming winter and was being drawn daily into the Bolshevik sphere of influence.

The common citizens of Russia, like the Army, were also nearing their breaking point. The continual food crisis, with no signs of abating or being rectified by the Provisional Government, was nearing critical levels as the major industrial cities began to starve. However the irony of the situation was that there was plenty of food in Russia stockpiled for the winter. The food crisis mirrored the military supply crisis, not that there was any real lack of either food or ammunition at the end of 1917, but the continual ineptitude and mismanagement of the logistical network by the Provisional Government saw, like the Tsarist administration, that neither the food nor the military equipment reached the right people at the right time or in the necessary quantities. Ambassador Francis, who had been in Petrograd throughout this food crisis,

reported this irony in the last days of October 1917. “There is no scarcity of food in Russia but very imperfect, inadequate and insufficient transportation facilities.”<sup>87</sup>

If the Russia’s food stores were not reaching the necessary people during the rule of the Provisional Government, its ammunition stockpiles certainly were not. Like Francis, General Knox also recorded his damning and ironic findings in the last days of Kerensky’s government. “November 1<sup>st</sup> 1917. An enormous quantity of artillery ammunition of every calibre has been accumulated. For instance, each 3" gun has 2,200 rounds actually at the front and there are 10,000,000 rounds in rear ready charged. Then there are large accumulations at Arkhangel and Vladivostok. It is all too late. If we could only get back to life again the men who died in 1915 through lack of shell!”<sup>88</sup> Just as with the delivery and proper distribution of food, the mismanagement and lack of coordination between both the various government ministries and the labor force resulted in the Provisional Government having plenty of weapons and ammunition at the end of 1917 but lacking the competency to actually arm their soldiers. With both food and ammunition the actions of the government would prove to be too little, too late.

On 7 November 1917, the strains between the Soviet and the Provisional Government would finally tear asunder. Early that morning, under the command of the Bolsheviks, the Petrograd Army and Naval garrisons began to march on the city. Kerensky’s orders to the military to stand down went unheeded as the Bolshevized soldiers and sailors continued to occupy the capital city. The soldiers then assaulted to the Winter Palace on the outskirts of the

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<sup>87</sup> Francis, *Russia From the American Embassy: April 1916-November 1918*, 165.

<sup>88</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:702–703.

city and engaged with 3,000 remaining loyalists. Outnumbered with no hope of reinforcement, the remaining Provisional Government loyalists in the city surrendered.<sup>89</sup>

Kerensky would escape the city's fall and gather a small retinue of loyalist Cossack cavalymen south of Petrograd. On 13 November, near the hills overlooking the now Bolshevik controlled city, the Soviet's forces would crush Kerensky's remaining loyalists at the battle of Pulkovo Heights. The fallen leader narrowly avoided capture and fled to France, followed by the United States where he would live his life in exile, never again to see his homeland.<sup>90</sup>

The logistical failures of the Provisional Government would mirror those of the Tsarist regime, with lack of coordination, incompetent leaders, and disconnection between those in power and the situation on the ground being the continual key themes in Russia's failure to supply its soldiers with the necessary arms and equipment to win against the Central Powers. The shining hope of democracy and egalitarian rule that rested in the Provisional Government would be little more than a continuation of failed policy, continuing the country's supply problems. This situation was only compounded by the Provisional Government's lack of any hard action to combat the inadequate labor of its revolting workforce. General Knox, in the days before he returned to his native Britain after the Kerensky's fall, would point out the heart of the Provisional Government's inadequacy. "The autocracy in the war had brought Russia very near to disaster, but the flabbiness of the Government which succeeded it did more harm to the country in four months than the autocracy accomplished in two and a half years."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, II:298–306.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917 Being Chiefly Extracts from the Diary of a Military Attaché*, 2:668–669.

The hopes of staving off the rising Bolshevik power and a restoration of a non-Soviet government would rest in the hands of former Tsarist generals. Taking root in the southern regions of Russia near the Black Sea, these anti-Bolshevik “White” forces would fight a desperate campaign for the next three years against the new Soviet regime. With the power of supplying the loyalist soldiers squarely in the control of military officers, there seemed to be a possibility that the logistical mistakes of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments would not be repeated. Although beset by new challenges, these White Generals would fall into the same patterns of mismanagement as their predecessors in supplying their soldiers. As the logistical struggle contributed to the fall of the Tsarist and Provisional Government militaries, logistical mismanagement would also contribute to the eventual defeat of the White movement.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WHITE ARMY: 1918-1920

With the Provisional Russian Government finally falling to the Bolsheviks on 8 November 1917, the last vestiges of resistance to the Communists lay with what would be known as the White movement. This movement, comprised of former Tsarist Generals and disenfranchised minority elements from the defunct Provisional Government, would lead a military struggle against the Bolsheviks until 1919. The Whites would face much of the same problems in supplying their armies as did their Imperial and Provisional Government predecessors, such as a lack of production capability and geographical constraints hampering supply lines from their Western Allies. However, like their predecessors, the military bureaucracy would continue a theme of mismanagement in terms of supply.

The Whites would have seemingly have an advantage to their predecessors with their experience in the last few years of fighting the Great War. Yet even with a first hand knowledge of the dangers faced by a lack of proper supply management, the ex-Tsarist officers who made up the bulk of the White movement still continued to perpetrate many of the facets of mismanagement seen in their predecessors. Personal and political rivalries, combined with a disconnection with the actual situation on the ground proved to add much to the undoing of the White movement.

Additionally, the White leadership also had to contend with governing the lands they would liberate from Bolshevik control. This military governance would also show signs of mismanagement, especially in how supplies were acquired for the armies. The White leadership's interactions with the political structures of the lands they occupied showed a

continuation of Tsarist ineptness. Instead of working together with the existing civilian administrations, these White officers would act as petty warlords, lording over their captured cities without a real idea how to both properly govern or extricate supplies with which to continue the fight against the Bolsheviks.

The White also suffered much political infighting which was borne from the very nature of their organization. Comprised of different elements from the previous Russian government, the Whites quickly became factionalized and split as to how to dislodge the Bolsheviks from power. This factionalism would reverberate with how the generals managed their supplies, with pettiness and personal vendettas fueling their mismanagement.

While a rule by the military would have seemed a viable option to streamlining the problems inherent in a bureaucracy, the White commanders would continue to have the same problems as their predecessors in how they mismanaged supplying their armies. Incompetence borne of rivalries and factionalism, combined with political ineptness as to how to govern captured territory would prove to be the White movements undoing.

The main point of White resistance would be in Russia's south in the Don and Kuban areas, between Ukraine and Caucasia. The Southern front, which would rest primarily in the hands of General Denikin and his peers, was arguably the most successful White campaign in terms of lands secured from Bolshevik rule. However, with the common logistical problems of waging a losing war aside, Denikin showed himself to be little better than his government predecessors in supplying his army. Originally Quartermaster General under the Tsarist administration and later a field commander in the Galician Front, Denikin saw firsthand the supply failures of 1915.

During the campaign against the Bolsheviks in Southern Russia, Denikin and his fellow White generals would become more than simple soldiers, transcending the boundaries between military leadership and governance of captured territory. Rivalries, pettiness, and a lack of tact for governing would continue to constrain the supply efforts of the White movement until its eventual demise. Like the failures of their predecessors, the supply failures of the White Armies would not stem from lack of materials but rather mismanagement.

### **Creation of the Volunteer Army**

The seeds of the anti-Bolshevik movement and the creation of the White Volunteer Army would be sown by the abortive coup against the Provisional Government in August of 1917. Led by Commanding General Lavr Kornilov with the backing of prominent field commanders, the “Kornilov Affair” failed to gain any major traction and resulted in the imprisonment of the 30 officers involved. As the Provisional Government fell to the Bolsheviks only a few short months later, Kornilov and his compatriots were able to escape their imprisonment at Bykhov Fortress in present day Belarus and head south. The southern Don and Kuban regions of Russia appeared to be the most promising bases of resistance for the infant White movement. The Cossacks who controlled and populated the region not only had been loyal to the Tsarist government, but possessed a spirit of independence that conflicted with many of the tenants of Bolshevism. The region was also rich in resources, primarily agricultural, with which Kornilov and his supporters saw as a means to support an anti-Bolshevik army. The grain and other foodstuffs grown in the region would provide a valuable asset to helping to enlarge a possible army, if those resources could be properly managed.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Dimitry Lehovich, *White Against Red* (New York: Norton & Company Inc., 1974), 171–175.

With the hope of allying with the newly formed and independent Cossack governments, Kornilov and others quickly escaped to the Don cities of Rostov, Tananrog, and Novocherkassk. In these cities the Whites began to form centers for recruitment of other sympathizers to the White cause. The initial and most pressing issue was a concerted lack of funds, a problem which would continue to plague the Volunteer Army throughout its existence. This would be the primary reason for the small recruitment of soldiers in late 1917 and early 1918, as lack of pay made enlistment undesirable for the common foot soldier.<sup>93</sup> In fact the majority of the early Volunteer Army was just that, unpaid or poorly paid volunteers with most of the men coming from the officer class. Denikin provides an overview of the Volunteer Army's strength at the beginning of 1918. "At the beginning of February [1918] the army consisted of two infantry regiments, three officers battalions, one cadet battalion, the Rostov Volunteer regiment composed of raw schoolboys, two cavalry detachments, two batteries, and various small units. As a matter of fact all these regiments, battalions, and divisions were but skeleton cadres, and the total army did not exceed four thousand fighters."<sup>94</sup>

Even with a small fighting force in the making in the Don, the actions of its officer class would foreshadow the coming problems the Volunteer Army would have in its management. Like in the Imperial Russian army, the Volunteer Army showed the same class stratification, now compounded with the overwhelming majority of the soldiers being officers. "The relations of the first volunteers with the officers in Rostov, Novocherkassk, and Taganrog—who, in their opinion, shirked their duty—were uniformly hostile. The volunteers resented the officers, who

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918: The First Year of the Volunteer Army* (University of California Press, 1971), 73.

<sup>94</sup> Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *The White Army* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Pr, 1973), 31.

spent their days in the cafes of the Don cities, and the officers in turn were contemptuous of the volunteers, calling them toy soldiers.”<sup>95</sup>

This anecdote shows the characteristics of the Volunteer Army’s management even before they came in contact with the true problems in supplying their army against the Reds. Instead of spending their time preparing the army for its eventual campaigns, whether that preparation be material or otherwise, the White officers instead preferred to continue living as they had before the fall of the empire. The rift between enlisted and officer also created little climate for growth of the army, hampering the fledgling army’s growth. This not only reflected poorly of their management but reflects as a continuation of the personality of their predecessors.

The early governance of the Volunteer Army also suffered from a divided leadership, which severely hampered the army’s preparation before they ever faced a major military campaign. The army was initially led by a triumvirate with the power is being shared between Generals Alekseev, Kornilov, and Kaledin. As each of these men had brought the most troops and resources to the cause, the power was supposed to be shared between them. However, interpersonal problems and ego began to overshadow leadership. Kornilov consistently usurped the powers of the other two triumvirs and was slow to compromise. Additionally, he continually placed power and authority in the hands of his own selected officers, alienating not only other factions within the Volunteer Army but the local government on which the Whites relied upon for its upkeep. He exhibited an extreme distrust and dislike for civilians and politicians in the army’s billet of Novocherkassk and was antagonistic in his dealings with them, even to the point

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<sup>95</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 72.

of moving his command post away from the city to Rostov in order avoid contact with the politicians swarming Novocherkassk.<sup>96</sup>

Denikin gives an apt description of his colleague: “He, the stern and straightforward soldier, deeply patriotic, untried in politics, knowing little of men, hypnotized both by truth and flattery, and by a general longing expectation of someone’s coming, moved by a fervent desire for deeds of sacrifice—he truly believed in the predestined nature of his appointment.”<sup>97</sup>

Characterized as a simple soldier with his only desire being the restoration of the old regime, Kornilov acting as de facto head of the only powerful White movement at the start of 1918 was severely hindered by his inability to create connections with the existing power structure of the lands he operated in. In terms of supplying his fledgling army, this would have disastrous consequences.

One of the reasons behind choosing the Don as a base of operations was its possession of supplies and war materials to equip a growing White movement. The industry of the region, supplied by Donets coal coupled with leftover resources left from the front of the Great War, should have provided Kornilov with enough weaponry to supply his men. However the White leaderships’ disagreement with the Don Government and refusal to work with civilian entities created antagonism which resulted in a lack of material support from the region. “Enormous supplies were stored in the Don military depots, but these were unable to procure otherwise than by theft or bribery of the Cossack committees. So that our troops were short of absolutely everything: arms and munitions, baggage, field kitchens, warm clothing, boots.”<sup>98</sup> The supplies

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>97</sup> Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil; Memoirs: Military, Social, and Political* (London, Hutchinson, 1922), 304, <http://archive.org/details/russianturmoilme00deniuoft>.

<sup>98</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 31–32.

existed without question in the Don, but their procurement was disallowed due to the impudence and antagonism shown by the White leadership to their host government. This antagonism and a lack of working with existing civilian entities would continue to hamper the Volunteer Army until its eventual destruction.

The White's repeated attempts to place all administrative power into their own hands rather than those of the existing civil entities continued to alienate the local power structure. This alienation, which would be consistent to future occupations made by the Volunteer Army, greatly contributed to the Army's supply problem. The Whites under Kornilov who had taken refuge in the Don had done nothing to alleviate the strained relationship of the previous imperial government and the local administration. This became increasingly evident as the common form of supply acquisition for the Volunteer Army became bribery and theft.<sup>99</sup> Denikin provides an example of the steps that had to be taken in order to field an artillery section for the army: "Still more picturesque was the history of the formation of the Volunteer artillery. One battery (two guns) we stole from the demoralized Thirty-ninth Division... A band of officers and cadets made a night raid on one of the villages where the battery was billeted and wrested the guns from the soldiers. We obtained two more guns from the Don artillery depot by permission of the Revolutionary Committee, ostensibly for the purpose of firing a salute at the funeral of a slain Volunteer officer, and then said we had lost them! One battery we bought for five thousand roubles from some demoralized Cossack artillerymen."<sup>100</sup>

Instead of being able to recruit the locals to their cause, the Volunteers were forced to resort to lesser means for supply acquisition. The fact that they had to resort to theft and bribery

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<sup>99</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 183–185.

<sup>100</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 29.

of supplies from the locals shows just how out of touch the Whites were with the common people. Again, this shows that there was an amount of supplies in the Don, but the incompetence of Kornilov to work with the existing civil power structure left the Volunteer Army without a reliable means of supply acquisition. This theme, beyond simple mismanagement, of not being able to work with the local administration to ensure an effective use of resources would be continued even with Kornilov's successors and is key to understanding one of the many roots of the Volunteer Armies supply problems.

With the Kuban becoming increasingly more hostile the Volunteer Army in the lack of their contributions to the White cause and Bolsheviks making large gains in the region, the decision was made by Kornilov and his leadership to vacate the Kuban cities to campaign elsewhere. The two main courses of action presented were to either retreat into the wilds of the Don to wait for a Cossack uprising against the Bolsheviks, which seemed unlikely considering the lack of support they had shown for the Whites, or to move more south into the Kuban. "We were faced with two alternatives. Either to plunge into the Don Cossack steppes, there to await the re-awakening of the Cossacks... The steppe region... possessed neither habitation, fuel, nor supplies sufficient for an army... The next alternative was to move to the Kuban. There we not only expected to find a rich and prosperous country, but kindred spirits."<sup>101</sup> The Kuban possessed both industry and a large agricultural base with which the Whites hoped to supply their forces. There had also been reports, which would eventually prove to be wildly inflated, that the region would rise up to support the Volunteer Army. Thus in early 1918 the decision was made to vacate Rostov and cross the Don River south into the Kuban.<sup>102103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>102</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 87–95.

<sup>103</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 188–190.

## **The First Kuban Campaign- March 1918**

Instead of consolidating power and ground in the Don, Kornilov's decision to cross south into the Kuban during the beginning of 1918 would almost completely destroy the Volunteer Army. Like with so many of their Imperial and Provisional Government predecessors, the Volunteer Army's command continued the tradition of mismanagement and lack of planning for the supplying of the campaign. The Volunteers were ill equipped for any manner of a protracted campaign, yet Kornilov still gave the order to march south in the freezing winter months of early 1918. The army lacked a dedicated corps of heavy weaponry, with even the paltry amount of cannon they were able to steal and barter for possessing a limited number of shells. The infantry, upon which the army was mostly comprised, lacked much of the clothing or provisions necessary for a winter campaign, not to mention a significant shortage of rifle ammunition. "We had barely six hundred or seven hundred shells, and only about two hundred rounds of ammunition per rifle... We asked for shelter, asked for victuals at a high price; we were unable to obtain either boots or clothing at any price for the barefooted and half clad Volunteers, though they were still plentiful."<sup>104</sup>

While the army had time to prepare for its departure from the Don, it seems that the acquisition element of the Volunteer Army under General Elsner in Rostov did little to prepare for the journey. The evident lacking of Elsner's ability to gather supplies was hampered by the continued mistrust of the locals, who had at this point been marginalized so greatly by Kornilov's policies that they refused to sell any of their abundance of provisions to the Whites.

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<sup>104</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 49.

These combined factors, especially considering the outcome of Kornilov's alienation of the locals, left the Volunteer Army defeated even before they crossed into the Kuban.<sup>105</sup>

The first few days after the army's crossing into the Kuban on 9 March 1918 saw a continual fight against Red skirmishers in Cossack villages that were on the way to the army's main objective, the regional capital of Ekaterinadar. These continual skirmishes were able to bleed both the Volunteer Army's manpower and its ammunition reserves so much that only by the 17<sup>th</sup> of March the army began facing significant shortages. It is at the Battle of Stanichnaia Station on 17 March that the Volunteer Army first realizes that they are woefully unprepared for the campaign that lay ahead. "Reports came from our baggage: 'We're out of ammunition and shells; shall we deal out the last?' 'Yes; we'll find plenty at the station' replies Kornilov."<sup>106</sup> While the order to issue the remaining ammunition was able to save the army for the time being, it showed the precarious position the Volunteers were in regarding their supplies.

Even while they were able to resupply at the town of Korenevskaiia after clearing a path to the town as a result of the actions of 17 March, the price proved to be high for the army. "At Korenevskaiia the army replenished its supplies, particularly the ammunition. But, alas, at too high a price: in those last few days of fighting our little army lost four hundred men in killed and wounded."<sup>107</sup> The Volunteer Army had only been campaigning for little more than a week and had already lost a sizeable portion of its men and the ammunition it had initially taken. The army had not yet even faced a major engagement, with most fights being against Red skirmishers or at fortified stations. With the extremely rapid loss of its ammunition reserves, the doctrine of the Volunteer Army began to change. Instead of a straight shot to the main target of Ekaterinadar,

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<sup>105</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 99.

<sup>106</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 57.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

Kornilov instead began to take a longer route swinging around the city from the south and outflanking its defenses. This route would also allow the army to resupply at various Bolshevik supply depots, assuming the army could wrest the supplies from the Red soldiers.<sup>108</sup>

This practice of feeding off the land and the spoils of captured Bolshevik supplies became the de facto supply doctrine of the army's First Kuban Campaign after their supplies were initially exhausted on 17 March. "In Philipovskoe itself stores were being looted, packing cases smashed open. That was the reverse side of the medal. The hard conditions of civil war were in direct opposition to social morality. Our commissariat was unable to organize a regular local service of supplies from the villages occupied in fighting overnight and abandoned next morning... The troops depended on the inmates of every house. Towards the middle of the campaign we had scarcely any money left and organized barter was handicapped by the insurmountable mistrust of the population. The non-Cossack populace often concealed their supplies and drove cattle away to distant fields... How great was our need may be gauged by the fact that even officers, with their almost bare feet lacerated and bleeding, did not scruple to pull the boots off dead Bolsheviks!"<sup>109</sup> However, this doctrine of attaining supplies from the local populace continued to further alienate the local population, just as the army's policies in the Don had as well. As in the Don, the treatment of civilians in the Kuban drove many to hoard or hide the readily available resources of the region that the Volunteer Army had counted on being available for their campaign. Again, the mismanagement of the acquisition of provisions continued to harm the Volunteer Army and would have a lasting effect on the region's attitude towards their White "liberators."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 200–201.

<sup>109</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 69.

<sup>110</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 202.

Even after being able to resupply the army after the looting of Philipovskoe, the army continued to be faced by surmounting supply problems only a few days later. On 23 March the army encountered a station fortified by Bolsheviks. And while the Volunteers were able to win the day due to their overwhelming numbers, their supply problem during the battle cannot be overlooked. “Already the Czecho-Slovaks were beginning to retreat, having spent all their cartridges... Our guns replied but seldom, by solitary shots- shells and cartridges has almost completely run short.”<sup>111</sup> Although victorious, the battle at Riazanskaia Stanitsa showed that the Volunteer Army’s supply doctrine was not effective. Instead of heading straight to assault Ekaterinadar with even the meager supplies the army had gathered when they initially crossed the Don River, Kornilov’s plan to flank the city was bleeding his army dry of men and equipment. With each cache of supplies they captured, that ammunition was spent in the next battle, creating a cycle of capture and use of supplies.

The new de facto supply acquisition doctrine of acting as a ravenous beast across the face of the Kuban, looting civilian and Bolshevik stores and replacing the spent ammunition with that looted from the next battle, was becoming to be unfounded. Up to this point, the Volunteers had been surviving from the fact that most of the Bolshevik forces had taken position around Ekaterinadar and they had not yet faced a protracted battle. However, emboldened by these victories against these Bolshevik supply depot guards, Kornilov decided to press onwards to his main objective, even while his supplies were depleted at the same rate they could be captured from dead Bolsheviks and coerced civilians.

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<sup>111</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 71.

On 9 April 1918, the Volunteer Army would finally reach its main objective and begin to lay siege to Ekaterinadar. Even without the toll taken on the army from the bloody march to the city, the Volunteers would still have been heavily outmatched. The Bolsheviks of the proclaimed Kuban Soviet Republic had the time and resources to become well emplaced in the city. They also possessed an advantage over the assaulting Whites in the sheer amount of ammunition they had stockpiled compared to their attackers. “The enemy was many times our superior and, more over, possessed unlimited quantities of munitions and supplies... There were no shells and no cartridges [in the Volunteer arsenal].”<sup>112</sup> This disparity in the amount of supplies each side possessed was felt when Kornilov began his assault upon the city. “Next to the farm stood our battery. Each instalment on a new position spelt tragedy: ten rounds of ammunition against a range needing hundreds; compulsory silence when the infantry was unable to rise under a hailstorm of enemy bullets.”<sup>113</sup>

By 13 April the situation for the Volunteer Army had becoming increasingly untenable. The product of the White officer’s inability to fully equip their forces for the expedition was finally being realized as their soldiers soon became unable to take ground due to lack of munitions. General Kornilov realized this and was prepared to give the order for a full out assault upon the town with the meager amount of ammunition the army had left. He is reported saying: ““A retreat now would also be equal to disaster: without ammunition it would merely mean a long drawn out agony.””<sup>114</sup> The order to assault the city was never given, however, as a chance

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–93.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–88.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–95.

Bolshevik artillery shell struck the farmhouse Kornilov had been using as his command post and killed the general.<sup>115</sup>

The death of the Volunteer Army's commanding general crushed any hope that the Whites had for taking Ekaterinadar in early 1918. Without its commander or ammunition reserves, the remaining generals decided to withdraw from the siege and return to the relative safety of the Don. General Denikin, who had not only been a close friend of Kornilov but continued to prove himself as a competent field commander, was selected to take command of the beleaguered Volunteer Army. The retreat North into friendly territory would take the Whites, even more bloodied and lacking supplies than their initial march southwards, through a frozen steppe controlled by the Bolsheviks.

One of the first major decisions that Denikin was faced with was how to turn his retreating army from the slow beast of injured soldiers, camp followers, and baggage trains into a light force with which to outrun the Bolsheviks which would hunt them throughout their journey north into the Don. The Volunteer's Army situation was also complicated by the Bolsheviks continued use of the rail lines that crisscrossed the Kuban region. With the geography and composition of his army working against him, Denikin was forced to make the decision between his army's speed and its need for supplies.<sup>116</sup> "I decided on extreme measures... I ordered the baggage to be reduced to a minimum, all the surplus army wagons to be broken up; all surplus guns abandoned after putting them out of action by carrying of the locks and destroying the carriages, for four guns were amply sufficient for the remaining thirty shells."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 204.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 205–207.

<sup>117</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 101.

The extremes taken in all but destroying the army's remaining supply reserves highlights the desperation of the Whites as they began their retreat after their first failed campaign in the Kuban. The artillery section which the Volunteers had painstakingly created through theft and bribery was left in the steppe, with no shells to arm them. The Volunteer Army had finally reached the critical supply levels reminiscent of the 1915 shell crisis. It is important to again note that Denikin was present during the disastrous campaign of 1915 and was experiencing many of the same difficulties three years later. Even if there were reinforcements he could call upon to help his army extricate itself from the Kuban, the White leadership failed to pack a radio transmitter during their initial march south.<sup>118</sup> Lacking any way to contact the outside world, as well as abandoning their heavy weapons and what little supplies they had left, the Volunteer Army began its 200 mile trek north through frozen and hostile terrain.

As the Whites began their retreat northwards, they were continually hounded by Bolshevik forces throughout the countryside using the rail lines to attempt to encircle the fleeing Volunteers. However, the Bolshevik use of the rail lines also meant that the rail stations that dotted the countryside provided excellent targets for resupplying the army, if those supplies could be captured from the entrenched Red soldiers. Much like on the army's march into the Kuban, its supply doctrine on its retreat out became centered on the opportunistic capture of Bolshevik supplies, with little regard to the cost in White casualties lost in the capture.

One such example of this doctrine occurred soon after the withdrawal from Ekaterinadar on 16 April at Medvedovskaia station. White scouts encounter the fortified station as well as an armored train car controlled by the Bolsheviks. In an act of both courage and desperation, the

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<sup>118</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 99.

White infantry assaulted the armored train with only small arms and hand grenades. In a before unheard of attack of only light infantry against an armored train, the Whites managed to overpower the Bolsheviks and cease the station. The soldier's courage and sacrifice to secure the station soon after the pullout from Ekaterinadar resupplied the Volunteers with much needed ammunition.<sup>119</sup> "What luck! That day we seized over four hundred artillery and about one hundred thousand rifle cartridges. On our scale of reckoning, this meant several battles were provided for."<sup>120</sup> It is interesting to additionally note the large number of artillery shells looted from the action at Medvedovskaia in light of the abandonment of the White artillery only days before.

Even with the fortunate opportunity to resupply ammunition after the skirmish at Medvedovskaia, the Volunteers were still in critical need of other types of supplies as they continued their journey north. The most critical of these was medicine to treat the wounded that were slowing the army down. "The death rate, with the almost complete shortage of medicines and dressings, was appalling. But there was no choice: either forced and rapid marches, or risk having the whole army – wounded and all – surrounded and annihilated by the Bolsheviks."<sup>121</sup> The amount of wounded was only surmounted by the casualties taken in supply raids against the Bolsheviks. Although left with little other option at this point in the campaign for securing supplies, the doctrine of raiding fortified Bolshevik positions for provisions meant that the White casualty rate would continue to increase and thus further slow the retreating army. The return on

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<sup>119</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 207–208.

<sup>120</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 105.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

investing soldiers on these raids may have netted much needed small arms ammunition for the march north, but these acts of desperation continued to add more casualties to slow the army.<sup>122</sup>

The Volunteer Army was able to break through the encircling lines of Bolshevik forces and cross over the Don River and into relatively friendly territory in early May of 1918. The First Kuban Campaign had lasted 80 days with the army traversing over 1,000 kilometers. The material and human cost to the Volunteer Army had been horrendous and had pushed the White movement in Southern Russia to the brink of collapse. “At the commencement [of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kuban Campaign] we possessed six hundred to seven hundred shells and about one hundred and fifty to two hundred cartridges per rifle. The rest were obtained at the price of blood. In the Kuban steppes were left the graves of the leader and four hundred officers and men. More than fifteen hundred wounded.”<sup>123</sup>

Kornilov’s failure in securing any territory south of the Don River, never mind the failure to seize Ekaterinadar can be attributed to a number of factors. Notwithstanding, a winter campaign to dislodge an entrenched enemy created an obvious challenge for the newly created Volunteer Army. But this challenge was only compounded by the inability of the White leadership to properly prepare their men for the campaign. The extreme lack of ammunition, borne from an unwillingness of Kornilov and his fellow generals to work with the government of the Don, to moments of incompetence such as neglecting to supply radio communications for the campaign cost the Volunteer Army dearly. This ineptitude, worthy of the Tsarist administration during the 1915 shell crisis, nearly destroyed any chance the Whites had in securing territory in Southern Russia.

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<sup>122</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 209–210.

<sup>123</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 123–124.

## **The Second Kuban Campaign- June 1918**

The Volunteer Army was able to secure spring quarters in the Don territory and recuperate much of its strength lost in the campaign. Denikin and his fellow White officers were determined to launch a second campaign into the Kuban and accomplish that which they had failed to do in the months previous. The most pressing concern was to recuperate not only the men they had lost to the first campaign but the equipment as well. By the Summer of 1918 the Volunteer Army's heavy weapons only consisted of 21 artillery pieces and 2 armored cars, compared to hundreds of artillery and more importantly the stockpile of ammunition the Bolsheviks had gathered in the Kuban.<sup>124</sup>

Denikin's primary hope for the redemption of his army lay in trusting in the Allies to provide support. Indeed, his hopes seemed well founded when a British emissary came to the Volunteer Army promising Allied aid for their cause. "Sir Charles Elliot, who arrived on the Ekaterinburg front before the other Allied representatives had solemnly declared 'Already the Allied troops are on their way to Siberia and will soon fight on the front. Help is also coming from another quarter, from Kotlas. Everything is being done to speed it up.' That help never came."<sup>125</sup> Although Denikin continued to hope that the Allies would bring the material help the White cause needed in Southern Russia, they continued to be of no avail to the Volunteer Army. This cycle of Allied promises without any substantial backing of the Volunteer's would only continue.

The hope for monetary support from the Allies was also diminished. General Mikhail Alexeyev, a prominent Tsarist official before the Bolshevik Revolution, was entrusted with

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<sup>124</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 228.

<sup>125</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 148.

attempting to obtain money from the Allies. His attempts would be met with little success, with only six weeks' worth of financing being secured from the Allies. "Material equipment, however, was still disastrously lacking... General Alexeyev strained every nerve to obtain money from the wealthy bourgeoisie and the Allies. The Allies vacillated. They and particularly the French Ambassador in Moscow, M. Noulens, did not realize the significance of Northern Caucasia... Finally, after lengthy days, we received from Moscow, through the National Centre, a secret anti-Bolshevist organization, ten million roubles, i.e. a sum equal to the upkeep of the army for six weeks. This was the first and the only financial aid ever received by the Volunteer Army from the Allies."<sup>126</sup>

However, the Volunteer Army's greatest savior in the spring of 1918 would be former Tsarist soldiers retreating from the Romanian front. Under the command of Colonel Mikhail Drozdovsky, the contingent would add over 1,000 seasoned troops, mostly officers, to replenish the Volunteer Army's manpower as well as a substantial number of nurses and doctors. More importantly, Col. Drozdovsky brought with him a wealth of supplies including artillery, machine guns, armored cars, and radios.<sup>127</sup> Even though Drozdovsky's men had battled their way for over two months across a thousand kilometers to reach the Don, they stood ready to reinforce the greatly needing Volunteers.

By June of 1918 the Volunteer Army had reinforced itself to the strength deemed necessary by the White commanders to start a second campaign against the Bolsheviks in the Kuban. While better supplied than they had been in the months previous, the Volunteers still lacked a large amount of ammunition reserves. "We started on our new campaign with two

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>127</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 212.

million rifle cartridges and several thousand rounds of artillery ammunition. This was a ridiculous, or rather an alarmingly small amount; but being accustomed to low standards, we considered the state of our ammunition park almost excellent.”<sup>128</sup> While Denikin had supplied the army increasingly better than his predecessor Kornilov, the amount of faith placed in Allied support may have been too great. Nevertheless, under Denikin’s leadership, the Volunteer Army seemed to stand a much better chance for a second campaign into the Kuban. The former Quartermaster General is seemingly perhaps the one exception to the incompetence of Tsarist and ex-Tsarist officers in supplying their soldiers. Denikin’s rebuilding of the Volunteer Army after its near destruction under Kornilov is astounding considering the lack of material support available both domestically and from the Allies abroad.

The rebuilt White Army would face its first battle of the new campaign at Tikhoretskaia on 14 July, a major railway junction controlling the flow of men and equipment in the northern portion of the Kuban region. Although heavily defended, a victory at Tikhoretskaia would provide two extremely important strategic advantages the Volunteers had lacked in the first Kuban campaign: the wealth of military supplies housed in the junction’s depot and freedom of movement from capturing the rail line. Not only would Tikhoretskaia’s capture cripple Bolshevik mobilization in the Kuban, but it would continue Denikin’s supply doctrine of equipping his army with supplies captured from defeated Reds.<sup>129</sup>

Although losing a quarter of his forces at the battle for Tikhoretskaia, the White army was able to route the 30,000 strong Bolshevik army and secure the junction. The victory allowed for freedom of movement on three main rail lines in the northern Kuban, a critical advantage

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<sup>128</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 158.

<sup>129</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 229–231.

which was not possessed during Kornilov's earlier campaign. Just as important, the capture of the supply depot at Tikhorestskaia continued to validate the White's doctrine of sacrificing troops for supplies. "In the way of material advantages the army, according to our standards, acquired huge and priceless trophies; a mass of rolling stock, three armoured trains, an aeroplane, armoured cars, about fifty guns, a large quantity of rifles, ammunition and supplies."<sup>130</sup>

Denikin's army continued south, now with logistical support from the railways and the captured supplies brought with the army. By the end of August the Volunteer Army had reached the outskirts of Ekaterninador, where their first campaign had begun to unravel. However, with the heavy weapons looted from Tikhorestskaia, the Whites began a full assault upon the city. By 16 August 1918, the Whites had finally secured a major city in the Kuban from Bolshevik control.<sup>131</sup>

Although costing a quarter of their men even before the final objective of Ekaterninador, the White's decision to resupply their army by means of force contributed greatly to their military success in the Second Kuban Campaign. The tradeoff between losing men to capture needed supplies which had now become an integral part of the Whites' supply doctrine tipped the balance of military power in the Kuban into the hands of the Volunteer Army. Although this doctrine depleted the Whites of their manpower reserves, the capture of heavy weapons and ammunition through these raids more than made up for the loss. Without the capture of these supplies from actions leading up to the final confrontation at Ekaterninador, such as the battle of Tikhorestskaia, the Second Kuban Campaign may have ended much like the first. This campaign

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<sup>130</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 175.

<sup>131</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 231–233.

showed a glimmer of hope for the White's supply strategy. Although unorthodox and extremely costly, their trading of heavy casualties for supplies seemed to be the necessary strategy to equip the Volunteer Army for victory in the Kuban.

### **White Occupation of the Kuban**

With the Kuban region finally under White control, their supply strategy could finally be turned from subsisting off of captured Bolshevik weapons to actual production of the war materials needed to continue the fight against the Reds. Again, one of the greatest reasons for choosing the Kuban for a base of operations for White resistance was the vast quantities of resources it possessed. Its farms and factories could supply the troops, while the ports on the Black sea could serve as nodes for incoming supplies from the allies. However, where the White commanders had proven themselves on the battlefield, they were ill equipped to achieve the full potential of the region's supply capacity. Very much reminiscent of Kornilov's ill management of the Don's administration, Denikin was unsuited to govern his newly captured territory. Where his battlefield supply doctrine may have saved the Volunteer Army from defeat and carried its victory in the Second Kuban Campaign, the supply doctrine during the civil administration of the captured region continued the Tsarist legacy of mismanagement.

The White leadership would form a Special Council for the administration of the captured Kuban region, although giving a limited amount of autonomy to the Kuban. With General Alexseyev's eventual death in late September of 1918, soon after the victory at Ekanterinador, Denikin stood unopposed within the White forces in the Kuban to proclaim himself dictator of the council. However, where Denikin showed prowess on the battlefield, the

leader's choice of advisors and council men would be extremely lacking.<sup>132</sup> The general readily admitted his lack of skill in choice in retrospect: "Because of the circumstances of my life and military service mostly on the peripheries I had very little contact before with the political world and with public figures, and therefore experienced great difficulties in selecting people for the highest posts in administration."<sup>133</sup>

Denikin, following suit of his Tsarist predecessors and peers, chose the members for the ruling council not from the existing domestic experts but rather from his fellow military cadre. This bias, borne from a common distrust of politicians, would disallow civilian leadership in the White's governance. This mistrust of civilians, who may have greatly benefited the White's rulership, severely hamstrung the Volunteer Army's administration of the Kuban.<sup>134</sup>

This cronyism and favoritism would only serve to continue the legacy of mismanagement of a region which could have afforded the Volunteer Army much more material wealth if managed correctly. Instead, the special council would mire the Whites in disagreement and chaos rather than a successful administration of the recently liberated territory. Nikolai Astrov, who was although offered a position as minister of the interior had refused, sat on the council and described the chaos of its meetings in his memoirs: "The leaders of the departments hurriedly reported on their business, many times matters without significance... Other department heads did not interfere and kept silent, as if the matters under discussion were no concern of theirs. It seemed that decisions were taken not by the special council but by its president. Only very rarely did one of the members ask a question or express an opinion. A. A. Neratov, head of the department of diplomacy, did not participate in discussions at all. Geiman, head of the

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<sup>132</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 198–201.

<sup>133</sup> D. Kin, *Denikinshchina* (Leningrad, n.d.) 51 as quoted in *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

department of finance, and an ex-official of the ministry of finance, made a comic impression. The presence of General Makarenko as head of the department of justice, simply did not make sense. But the one who deserved most disapproval, and created most confusion, was a certain V. A. Lebedev [minister of trade and industry]. I remember this gentlemen from the first Duma... No one knew where he was from, who appointed him, and what task he had in the chancellery of the Duma."<sup>135</sup>

Astrov's depiction of the Special Council reveals the extreme shortcomings of the White's civil administration, and would foreshadow its consequences for the Volunteer Army's supply doctrine. The three ministers listed in Astrov's memoir each held an important position that could help solve the army's supply problem. However the administration of the Kuban's industry lay not within the hands of its natives which knew the region's capabilities, but rather a bureaucrat ill-appointed by Denikin.<sup>136</sup>

The lack of coordination with existing civil institutions, which had been a hallmark of Kornilov's administration of the Volunteer Army, would be continued by Denikin. By the end of 1918, the Kuban Black Sea port cities of Stavropol and Novorossisk would be liberated by White forces. Instead of allowing the local civilian administration power in these strategic port cities, Denikin would instead send two of his own generals as military governors. In Stavropol, the appointed governor General Glazenap would establish a harsh military regime which would annul the laws of the Provisional Government, returning peasant lands to their previous landlords and demolishing existing courts in favor for swift military justice. This would only serve to

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<sup>135</sup> Astrov, *Vospominaniia* 509-510 as quoted in *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

polarize the locals in Stavropol against their liberators, hampering any hope for successful civil administration by the Whites.<sup>137</sup>

With local populace beginning to turn against them and the region's industry being managed by an ineffective council, a significant portion of the Volunteer Army's source of income to pay and equip their soldiers would come from the sale of war booty captured in its campaigns. In concordance with the taxation of the people living in the White occupied areas, as well as the use of the Rostov and Kuban banks, the sale of war booty was an integral part of the White's financing campaign. However, the management of the sale of the captured goods proved to further drive a wedge between the Whites and the local government.

The Volunteer army had captured much more than just arms and ammunition throughout its campaigns, and the sale of this other material caused a certain amount divide between the local government and the Whites. The Kuban government, while conceding the weaponry to the Whites, demanded that all other goods captured within their territory be handed over. The White leadership refused this demand, but returned with a counteroffer: that the Kuban government fully supply the Volunteer Army in exchange for a return of the goods. The local administration could not feasibly accept the offer and the dispute was never settled, but it still stands as an example of the hostility between the Whites and local governance.<sup>138</sup>

This hostility would only be compounded when the Whites began demanding exorbitant tribute from the defeated communities in the Kuban. One such community, Belaia Glina, was forced to pay 2.5 million rubles in punishment, an outrageous amount even without considering the economic state of the region. The Volunteer Army would commonly receive little to no

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 204–205.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

money from these already destitute communities, but would still reap the hostility from the local population incurred by these tribute attempts.<sup>139</sup>

Even without the hostility from tax generating locals and to deal with, the White movement in the Kuban also faced a problem with the currency itself. A large amount of different currencies began to be circulated in the Kuban, from Tsarist rubles and local bills to money printed by the Volunteer Army itself. Beyond just weakening the Volunteer Army's financial dominion of the captured territory, the severe inflation and lack of currency unity in the region reflected an even greater issue. While the White Special Council attempted to preserve an image of a united Russia under White leadership, the sheer amount of different currencies were proof of their failing.<sup>140</sup>

The inability to find a lasting solution to the financial problem caused issues in maintaining the army. Without enough money taken in from governing the captured lands in the Kuban, coupled with the inflation caused by the currency issue, the cost for the maintenance of the army was far larger than what could be provided by the White-administered Kuban. General Pyotr Wrangel, one of the key White leaders who had joined Denikin with his own army, recognized the colossal problem posed to the Army's upkeep by the numerous financial difficulties: "The economic situation alone showed no signs of improvement. The maintenance of the Army, which was very large in proportion to the size of the territory it occupied, under conditions of economic disorder which were inevitable during a Civil War, was a heavy burden on our country. Our ordinary expenses were more than covered by direct and indirect taxation;

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

but our military expenses, since it was impossible to obtain a loan at home or abroad, swallowed up the last remnants of our fund of foreign securities.”<sup>141</sup>

While the capture of the Kuban put the Volunteer Army in a much better position in terms of material and financial supplies, their inefficient governance and hostility towards the local administration did not allow for a full tapping of the area’s resources. The greatest advancement in supplying the Volunteer Army was the capturing of the Kuban’s rich agricultural base, which was crucial to feed the army throughout the winter of 1918 in preparation of a 1919 campaign. But the harsh treatment of both the local population and a mistrust of the local administration combined with an ineffective governing council disallowed for a full extraction of the regions capacity for producing war materials. In governance, the White movement in Southern Russia proved no better than their predecessors in appointing unqualified people to important positions of logistics and supply as well as continuing the tradition of being woefully out of touch with the situation on the ground for the common people which they governed.

### **Allied Assistance and the 1919 Ukrainian Campaign**

At the close of 1918 with the White movement finally occupying a stable portion of territory and the World War beginning to end, Denikin and the White leadership in Southern Russia fully expected Allied support, especially material support, against the Bolsheviks. Denikin fully believed that France and Britain, like during the Tsarist administration, would come to the White movement’s aid.

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<sup>141</sup> Pyotr Wrangel, *The Memoirs of General Wrangel: The Last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian National Army*, trans. Sophie Goulston (London: Williams & Norgate LTD, 1929), 256.

Indeed, this hope of the Volunteer Army seemed well founded, as stockpiles of weapons lay on the now closed Romanian Front. The Army's representative, General Shcherbachev, to the Allied commander in Romania French General Berthelot reported that the arms and ammunition left over from that campaign would soon find its way into the hands of the White cause. On 15 November 1918, Shcherbachev sent this report to the White leadership: "Enormous quantities of all kinds of weapons, military supplies, tanks, railroad and road equipment, and airplanes will arrive at Odessa, the main base of the allies. The military supplies of the ex-Romanian front and of the Ukraine and Don from now on can be regarded as completely ours. Only some slight diplomatic efforts will have to be made, and success is assured, since we have the support of the overwhelming power of the Allies."<sup>142</sup>

Yet a month would pass without any word from the French and hope of supplies would begin to diminish for the White command in Ekaterinador. By 7 December, Denikin himself would telegraph the French liaison but was not met with any reply of material support. Finally the Volunteer Army's leadership was met with the news that French Prime Minister Clemenceau himself vetoed the plan to aid the Whites with the surplus Romanian Front weaponry. Instead, much to the dismay of the Whites, the weapons would instead be given to the Ukrainian Nationalists fighting the Bolsheviks for an independent Ukraine. The Whites, who saw the Ukrainian insurrectionists as an enemy and incongruous to their plan of a united Russia, felt wholly betrayed by the French decision. To compound the insult French forces in Odessa, where Shcherbachev had promised the supplies would be turned over to the Whites, replaced the

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<sup>142</sup> A. S. Lukomskii, *Vospominaniia* 259-261 as quoted in Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 258.

Volunteer Army representatives who had begun to take over the civil administration of the important port city.<sup>143</sup>

The hope for a remediation of the Volunteer Army's supply problem now lay with the British. And it was from here that support was finally gained towards the end of 1918. "With the arrival of General Briggs—the new head of the British Military Mission—the first eleven transports carrying war supplies entered Novorossisk. This timely aid was of tremendous importance to us, as it extricated us from a very difficult position. For by the end of 1918 periods occurred when there remained only some twenty thousand rifle cartridges for the whole army, and the supply of shells did not exceed twelve thousand; there was not a single first aid packet, no medicines or medical appliances, no linen, and in the hospitals wounds had to be dressed by stripping off dirty linen of the wounded."<sup>144</sup> This assessment of the state of the Volunteer Army by Denikin also reveals the result of the ineffective governance of the Kuban, an area which was supposed to have made the White movement at least partially self-sustaining.

While the British supply convoys helped to prop up the Volunteer Army in regards to basic supplies, what the Whites were truly hoping for was the return of the Black Sea Fleet which was no in the care of the British on the Ukrainian coast. Such a fleet would have improved the military capacity of the White movement immensely, allowing it to carry its campaign against the Bolsheviks from both land and sea. However, the British decided against turning the warships over to the Volunteer Army, instead impounding them under the pretext that they were fearful the ships would fall into Bolshevik hands. Similarly vast amounts of arms within Ukraine, which the Whites had also been expecting to bolster their arsenal, were similarly taken by the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 259–260.

<sup>144</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 231.

British. “In Sevastopol the Allies refused to hand over to us the ships of the Russian Fleet on the pretext that they might do great harm to the Allies should they be seized by the Bolsheviks. Ships fit for navigation were ordered to be taken to Izmet and interned. Under a similar pretext, Allied crews, by order of Admiral Leger, were sinking and blowing up munition stores at Sevastopol, destroying the engines of the submarines, dismantling the guns, and carrying away the gun locks. All this resembled a winding up rather than the beginning of the anti-Bolshevist campaign.”<sup>145</sup>

The British had two reasons for this seemingly irrational action of only supplying the Volunteer Army with a portion of supplies rather than the full arsenal of ships and heavy weapons which was stockpiled in Ukraine. The first reason was very much similar to the French’s reason for diverting supplies to the Ukrainian Nationalists, as Britain wanted to have a stake in the other players in the region. While still somewhat supplying the Whites in the Don and Kuban, Britain began taking a keen interest in emerging republics in the Caucuses as a potential alternative to the Volunteer Army in containing the spread of Bolshevism. The British interest in these third party state actors began to conflict with their support of the Whites in Southern Russia.<sup>146</sup> One such notable example of this conflict occurred as the Volunteer Army began campaigning to the south of Ekaterinador in the beginning of 1919. “Its effect was a demand addressed to me from the British War Office that I should evacuate the district of Sotchi, threatening to withdraw supplies in the event of non-compliance. This demand, derogatory to Russian prestige, was not complied with, and on the suggestion of the British Mission at Ekaterinador, London withdrew it.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>146</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 267–269.

<sup>147</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 306–307.

Even with Britain withdrawing its request that the Volunteer Army withdraw from Sochi, the Whites began realizing the duplicitousness of their British Allies. This realization could not have come at a worse time for the Whites, as in early 1919 they began to campaign north into Ukraine. They were initially successful, and within the spring and summer of 1919 the Whites occupied the majority of Eastern Ukraine. Expecting continuous Allied aid however, they extended the front line of their advance too far. And while 1919 brought initial victories against the Bolsheviks, a large front line meant that supplies needed to be continually fed into the onslaught. Without the full cooperation of the British, the White line of advance in Ukraine began to falter in the latter half of 1919. The White leadership realized too late that Allied help would begin to waver. “Russian society clearly saw two Britains—two hands—of which, according to the statement of the British Ambassador in Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, the one rendered every support to the White movement, while the other wrested the western border states and Transcaucasian republics, thereby alienating from Britain all patriotic Russians.”<sup>148</sup>

This British duality in their less than adequate support of the Volunteer Army may have been borne out of their desire to hedge their bets with the emerging republics, but there was a second reason for a lack of full commitment to the White cause. This second lack of commitment was grounded in the same reason that the Whites had so much difficulty supplying their army themselves, a huge lack of management and coordination within their command structure. The British had seen firsthand at the mismanagement and dissension that was prevalent in the White’s command, and would not be wholly party to such a system as they had been like in years prior in their dealings with Imperial Russia.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 308.

The British military emissaries embedded with the anti-Bolshevik forces had realized the lack of cohesion in the White power structure even before the Volunteer Army began its push into Ukraine. In a December 1918 letter to Ataman Krasnov, the native leader of the Don who only begrudgingly pledged his allegiance to the White movement, the British ambassador General Poole expresses his doubts in the White leadership. “If I have to return and report to my government that mutual hatred and distrust exist among the Russian generals, this would create the most negative impression and unquestionably diminish the chances that the Allies would give any kind of help.”<sup>149</sup>

This fracturing of the White command structure soon became very apparent as the Volunteer Army began fighting northwards into Ukraine. As the front line began to grow ever larger, the need for fresh equipment became even more pressing. As the front became pockets of White resistance cut off from their friendly cohorts in the late Spring of 1919, the relation between the White generals began to strain to the breaking point. Denikin, although the nominal head of the Volunteer Army, could do little to quell the internal friction that was not only weakening his army but driving away British material investment.<sup>150</sup> “Military operations developed in an atmosphere of serious internal friction. Our small numerical strength and the acute lack of technical appliances and supplies in general created a situation of continual shortage on all fronts and in all armies. Each commander considered his own front as the most important. Every strategical transfer of troops called forth a collision of conflicting interest, offence, opposition, and procrastination.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Kakliugin *Donskoi Ataman* 281 as quoted in Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 266.

<sup>150</sup> Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (University of California Press, 1977), 214–223.

<sup>151</sup> Denikin, *The White Army*, 277–278.

## **Collapse of the Volunteer Army**

Without the full committal of allied support the White advance into Ukraine began to grind to a halt in late 1919. Even with their victory over the industrialized and coal producing regions in Western Ukraine, the years of war had stripped the area of resources. “Works and factories represented huge burial grounds- no credit, no raw materials, enormous liabilities. The monthly output of coal in the Donets basin, which amounted roughly to two million five hundred thousand tons in 1916, now fell to two hundred and sixty thousand tons. The traffic on the southern and Donets railways during the five months of Bolshevik rule fell by ninety-one per cent, with a hundred and eight per cent increase in the quantity of coal used, and a total deficit of a hundred and ten million rubles as compared to corresponding figures in 1916. Destitution and ruin stalked the land.”<sup>152</sup> Without the industry and resources present to even attempt to utilize this newly captured territory, any production of arms by the Whites in Western Ukraine was minimal. This combined with the continual lack of full British backing, the Volunteer Army’s supply problems began to again reach critical levels.

The White’s war industries in the Don were in a similar state of disrepair. Red partisans had reported only one cartridge producing factory and a single plant producing artillery shells in the Volunteer Army’s main artillery base. “Information received by the Donburo at Oryol from partisan organizations on the Don. 30 September 1919. Taganrog: Main artillery base. The Baltic Factory: the Whites’ only shell and cartridge factory on Gimnazicheskaya Street No 7 ... 2 Voisin aircraft without engines. The Baltic Factory produces 15000 cartridges a day. Rostov on Don: Factory producing 3 inch shells.”<sup>153</sup> While it is evident that the Whites had a small

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>153</sup> A Murphy, *The Russian Civil War: Primary Sources* (St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 81.

ammunition producing capability towards the end of 1919 in the friendly Don region, its production was limited. And without the necessary raw materials like coal, which the Whites had hoped to find in Western Ukraine, a continuation of production would be negligible.

By December of 1919 the Red Army had retaken Kiev and the White forces began to retreat back into the Kuban. Overextended and unsupplied, portions of the Volunteer Army quickly became enveloped by Bolshevik forces. By the early months of 1920, Denikin's army had crossed back over the Don and into Novorossisk. The remnants of the Volunteer Army quickly made use of the city's port to begin an evacuation to the last remaining White stronghold in Crimea. Only 2/3's of the White army was able to make it out of the city by boat, while 20,000 White soldiers as well as the Army's remaining heavy weaponry fell into the hands of the advancing Bolsheviks.<sup>154</sup> In a letter to his wife three days after the evacuation, Denikin laments the destruction of his army and the critical loss of its supplies: "I am desperately sick at heart: huge stockpiles, all the artillery, all the horses were abandoned, the army has been bled white."<sup>155</sup>

Denikin would be forced to step down as the White commander in southern Russia to be replaced by General Wrangel, whose army had taken occupation of Crimea. The remaining White soldiers under Wrangel's command were at their lowest point since the Ice March in 1918. "It was no longer an Army, but a disorderly crowd which had grown slack in its discipline and was morally and physically exhausted... Munitions, artillery stores, and cavalry had been abandoned in Novorossiisk for want of sufficient ships to carry them... The Army found itself pinned on to the sea, on a scrap of ground, lacking the chance to revictual and fill up its losses in men."<sup>156</sup> Cut off from resupply on the peninsula and lacking the material reinforcement that

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<sup>154</sup> Lehovich, *White Against Red*, 383–388.

<sup>155</sup> Unpublished letter dated March 17, 1920, property of Mrs. Xenia Denikin as quoted in *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>156</sup> Wrangel, *The Memoirs of General Wrangel: The Last Commander-in-Chief of the Russian National Army*, 334.

Denikin's Volunteers had left to be captured in Novorossisk, the remaining White forces under Wrangle began to fight a losing defense of Crimea. Holding out on the peninsula for over a year, Wrangle's army was forced to evacuate to Constantinople by winter of 1920. With the Volunteer Army crushed and the last White stronghold in Crimea captured, the Bolsheviks had destroyed any hope of a White movement in Southern Russia.<sup>157</sup>

Like the Tsarist Army before them, the Volunteer Army's supply problem stemmed from mismanagement in the upper echelons of their command. While admittedly, they possessed only a fraction of Imperial Russia's manufacturing capability, the White movement in Southern Russia still suffered from the same incompetence but on a smaller level. Their greatest blunder was to alienate the very people they were attempting to liberate from the Bolshevik movement. By disenfranchising the local populace in the lands the White army hoped to serve as a base for supply production, the Volunteer Army lost any hope in domestically producing enough arms and supplies to continue a successful campaign. Beyond just the alienation of fellow Russians the White's infighting and pettiness in their ranks caused Britain, the one true hope of gaining enough supplies to continue the White movement, to distance themselves from the Volunteers. In a similar vein as their Imperial and Provisional Government predecessors, the logistical and supply battle was not lost due to lack of materials on the ground but a lack of management. The generals in command could not rise from their own interests and biases to work with not only the local governments, but with each other. "The White cause, entrusted to mediocre leaders who were incapable of rising above the prejudices of their military way of life, never had a fair chance."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920: The Defeat of the Whites*, 259–266, 307–308.

<sup>158</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, 284.

## CONCLUSION

In all three phases of Russian governance from 1914-1920 there was a constant mismanagement of logistics and incompetence which contributed heavily to the collapse of the Russian Army under all three of the different administrations. While each of these separate governments faced their own individual and challenges unique to themselves, they all responded in the similar fashion. Throughout all three of these governments there was a continual bureaucracy that was not only disconnected from the people on the front lines which it served but disconnected from its sister organizations within the government. This compartmentalization of the bureaucracy combined with a wholly unrealistic understanding of the situation and hardships faced by the soldiers on the front lines directly affected Russia's logistical crises throughout all three periods covered.

In ranking the three governments in terms of supply preparation and general state of the country before waging its campaigns, the Tsarist government was second behind the Provisional Government but ahead of the Whites semblance of an administration. While it is arguable that none of the participants of the World War could have ever imagined the scope of the conflict or the supplies necessary to sustain their involvement, the Tsarist government had hamstrung itself logistically even before the first Russian shot was fired. The appointment of the many incompetent ministers and generals, such as Sukhomlinov, by Tsar Nicholas II had sabotaged the logistics of the war even before 1914. Their continual habit sending over exaggerated reports to Russian High Command as to the quantity of the supplies within their commanded units and ministries in order to further their own careers provided the command with an unrealistic view of the capabilities of the Army.

The Tsarist Government's fear of commoners also invalidated some of Russia's most valuable assets in helping with the administrations growing logistical problems. As seen with many of the government's supply organizations, the Union of Zemstvos and the requests by the Artillery Department to militarize the workers of their factories were met with opposition lest these peasant organizations gain too much power. In not allowing full participation of the majority of their population and militarizing their peasant labor force, the Tsarist Government severely hamstrung itself in not availing itself of all its labor potential for fear of losing its power.

In a similar vein, this fear propagated by the Tsarist administration also disallowed for the creation of new and more streamlined government entities to help alleviate the country's supply problems, instead relying on their historic and bloated departments of administration. The Duma's attempt to create the Ministry of Munitions as showed in Chapter I is a perfect example of this. Instead of creating new institutions that were specifically designed to confront the specific logistical challenges faced by Russia, the government instead chose to trust in their current institutions. These historic institutions of Tsarist power were instead bloated with ineffectual leadership who not only were unable to gain a realistic picture of the situation at the Front, but were unable to properly communicate within their organizations or the other ministries to determine a solution to the logistical nightmare the Tsarist bureaucracy found itself in at the end of its reign.

The Provisional Government had the opposite fear of their predecessors, instead allowing the common people far too much reign over their military logistics. Too afraid of upsetting the Petrograd Soviet and its constituents by seeming "anti-revolutionary," the Provisional Government quickly gave in to many demands made by laborers critical to Russia's logistical

infrastructure, namely those employed in the extraction of natural resources, manufacturing of weapons and ammunitions, and those employed on the rail lines tying the supply chain together. Because of the Provisional Government's inability to control its labor force, production capabilities plummeted. The loss of production coupled with the disaster of Kerensky's Offensive in the summer of 1917 made the attempt at rebuilding Russia's land forces a fantasy.

Even if Russia under the Provisional Government was able to rally its laborers and extract enough resources to continue the production of war supplies, its inability to solve the country's transportation problem would have rendered the effort useless. Like with the factory workers, the Provisional Government gave in too readily to the demands of its rail workers, resulting in a plummeting of productivity. Even when possible solutions were rendered, such as General Kornilov's suggestion that the factories and rail lines be fully militarized, the Government protested in fear of upsetting the masses.

Much like the bureaucracy of Tsarist Russia, the Provisional Government's bureaucracy had little communication between the various ministries and were just as disconnected from the situation from the front as they were from each other. This led to the same logistical problems in the Provisional Administration as were in the Tsarist, with the rear not fully understand the challenges faced at the front and a lack of relaying such information through the proper channels.

The Provisional Government even had the advantage of having the remains of Imperial Russia's stockpiles gathered after the Great Retreat of 1915. But these supplies were either wasted in Kerensky's failed campaign or distributed to the wrong location to transpire in backing up at a depot far from the action of the Front. Like in Tsarist Russia, the Russia controlled by the Provisional Government was never lacking in resources, but instead was lacking a government with the will to correctly use them.

The White movement faced challenges quite different than those of their two preceding forms of administration. With a mix of the traits of both the Tsarist and Provisional Governments, the White Generals in the south of Russia waged a campaign against the Bolsheviks with a fraction of the military industrial capacity of their predecessors. However in both the management of the supplies the White Army initially had and its management of the lands it eventually liberated, the White Generals continue the mistakes of that destroyed the Russia's logistical capacities from 1914 onward.

The White Movement under both Kornilov and subsequently Denikin did little to work together with the existing civilian administrations of the regions in which their armies operated. The White leadership's continual aloofness and refusal to compromise with the existing organs of government disallowed for them to take the full advantage of the resources in the areas they had liberated from the Bolsheviks. Both initially in the Don before setting out on their campaigns south and in the captured Kuban region, the White leadership failed to take full control of the area's resources by working and compromising with the local governments. Instead, much of their supply effort came from capturing war materials from dead Bolsheviks, creating a supply campaign of attrition where blood was traded for rifles. Already at a numerical disadvantage, this supply strategy was unsustainable from the beginning of the White's resistance.

The White leadership's lack of centralization is also highly reminiscent of the ministries of both the Tsarist and Provisional Governments. Like these preceding ministries, the various White generals and their armies lacked coherent coordination, disconnected from each other in even while attempting to further the same aims. This lack of communication, as well as a disconnection from the realities faced by their fellow comrades, mirrors how the previous administrations operated. The White generals fared little better than government bureaucrats

when attempting to supply their armies and instead turned into little more than petty warlords fighting over the desiccated carcass of the Russian Empire.

Although possessing different ideologies and forms of governance the Monarchy, Democracy, and Military Junta that ruled Russia and then its loyalist remnants attempted and failed in much of the same fashion in attempting the momentous task of supplying their respective armies. The continual themes of mismanagement and incompetence, stemming from a lack of coordination between the various parts of the bureaucracy, a continual disconnection from the reality of the supply situation at the Front, and the lack of will to compromise are evident in all three forms of Russia's government from 1914-1920. In each of the three governments shown, their administrations did little to work in concurrence with its ministries or the armies on the ground. Beyond this lack of coordination there was a continual lack of compromise between government authority and the common laborers on which the country's logistical network, from factory to front, relied upon.

And finally there are the monolithic personalities of the actors involved, from Sukhomlinov and Kerensky to Kornilov and Denikin, whose personal biases and aims detracted from the united effort to supply their forces. The lack of cooperation between these men and both the civil and military administrations which they served crippled the attempts made to assuage the supply problems. The vastness of Russia was never truly lacking in natural resources with which to supply its armies, but instead was lacking from the proper management and bureaucracy with which to bring those resources to the Front.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Collin Macharyas was born in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1994. He received his B.S. in International Affairs from Florida State University in Fall of 2014. During this time he was also a Cadet in Army ROTC and had the opportunity to spend a Summer term working with the 151<sup>st</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division of the Romanian Army. Mr. Macharyas has also studied during the Summer term of 2015 at Moscow State University. He will be receiving his M.A. in Russian and Eastern European Studies in Spring of 2016. In April of 2016 he will be commissioning into the U.S. Army as an Active Duty Transportation Corps officer. In December of 2016 he will be reporting to the 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington.