

THE LIFE STORY OF

Marshal VOROSHILOV



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By
GEOFFREY TREASE

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"HOW THEY DID IT" LIFE STORIES (PALLAS)

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THE RED MARSHAL

by

GEOFFREY TREASE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS book was first written before the outbreak of war and before Voroshilov led his armies into Poland and before Russia attacked Finland. It has been brought up to date in minor particulars, but actually much of what had already been written on the subject of Poland and the Ukraine will serve to explain, without further additions, the Soviet action of September, 1939.

In the rapidly-changing conditions of to-day it is impossible to forecast the future. By the time these words are read, the Finnish campaign may be over or the heroic little people may have checked the giant Russian steamroller. Any forecast of the future is not only difficult, but useless.

Whatever happens, however, cannot alter past history or the fact that Voroshilov is one of the key men in the modern world. An understanding of his life and personality, without prejudice, cannot fail to be of interest and value.

G. T.

*(but misguided
by outside influences)*

CLEM VOROSHILOV

I

THE MAN OF MAY DAY

Moscow, Red Square, the first of May. . . .

Where could you match the setting, for grandeur and historic association ? In London you would need to double Trafalgar Square, put St. Paul's at one end, and place the Tower to dominate the whole.

It is a wide enough square, really, but its great length makes it seem almost narrow. Along the south-western side tree-shaded grass slopes rise to the base of the Kremlin wall. High above, towers soar into the pale blue heavens, and giant Communist emblems, replacing the eagles of the Tsars, are silhouetted on their topmost pinnacles.

St. Basil's Cathedral, a fantastic coloured jumble of domes, rises at one end of the square. Towards the other, a massive red granite pyramid covers the embalmed body of Lenin. Just behind, in graves at the foot of the citadel walls, or in niches of the walls themselves, rest the bodies or ashes of the great Communists, not only the Russians like Krassin and Sverdlov, but foreigners like the American writer, John Reed.

For the Kremlin is a symbol, whether of good or evil,

to all men and all nations. When the bells chime behind those battlements it is with a sound familiar to millions all over the world—familiar as our own Big Ben. It is a sound full of hope for the thousands listening in, behind locked doors and shut windows, in certain countries, but one which, if heard by an ill-disposed neighbour and reported to the police, may mean the concentration-camp or even death.

But the shadow of ideological enemies, though it lies even across Red Square on this sunny morning of May 1st, seems paler and less terrifying than usual. . . .

The crack troops of the Red Army, biggest land fighting-force in the world, are paraded facing the Kremlin. The sun glistens on thousands of bayonets, thousands of basin-like helmets. The motionless figures seem squat and wooden from a distance, like Noah's family in a toy Ark.

There is a slight stir on the top of Lenin's Tomb, which serves as the saluting base for Red Square reviews. Stalin has taken his place, quietly jovial as usual, wearing the inevitable peaked cap and plain, high-collared tunic. But for once he is not the man of the moment.

Who is then ?

Not serious, plump-faced Molotov, the Premier and Foreign Minister. Certainly not Kalinin, with his little goatee beard, though he is the official head of the Soviet State. Not even Dimitrov, the smiling, curly-headed Bulgarian, who defied General Goering at the Reichstag

Fire trial, and lived to become Secretary of the Comintern.

No, none of these. For they are all in their places on the red granite rostrum, and, like the motionless troops and the faintly stirring crowds behind, they too are waiting.

The central figure has yet to appear.

He comes—and what an entrance ! Not for him are the dimmed lights and the spot-lights of Nuremberg.

A clatter of hoofs, the hoof-beats of a single horse echoing through the stillness. He gallops out of the dim archway of the citadel, down into the square, and then, almost as though he were leading a cavalry-charge, he rides full pelt along the line.

Clement Efremovitch Voroshilov, Marshal of the Soviet Union and Minister of Defence, takes over the parade.

Newspapers and news-reels have made that annual May Day parade well known, in its general outlines, to every one. We all know of the massed tanks rumbling through Red Square, some of them so huge that they are like crawling battleships. We know that for hours the unending column rolls past Lenin's Tomb—the infantry with their rifles held ready for action, the cavalry, the trundling wheeled machine-guns, the artillery. . . . We have seen pictures showing the Moscow sky dark with low-flying aeroplanes.

Voroshilov, one-time beggar-boy, ragged shepherd, pit-lad, must be a specially proud man on this day of all days.

The more so because he knows—no one in the world better—what a reality lies behind this display of strength.

On this same day other parades, scarcely smaller, are taking place in the other cities of the Soviet Union. In the great Uritsky Square of Leningrad, below the windows of the Winter Palace, march the forces which guard the Baltic frontiers. In Minsk, capital of White Russia, and in Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, parade the vitally-important western armies. Many hours earlier, because of Far Eastern Time, the streets of Vladivostok have echoed to the feet and wheels of another host which has already had its baptism of fire against the Japanese.

Nor do the parades represent more than a part of the immense fighting-force which, in his fourteen years as Defence Minister, Voroshilov has planned and built up.

With over 12,000 miles of land-frontier to defend—and twice that length of sea-board—he has no light responsibility, especially when we remember how much of that frontier is shared with war-torn China and now with the dubious ally, Nazi Germany.

So, to-day, the Marshal looks beyond the banners and the bayonets. He sees in his mind's eye his ready-created No Man's Land along the border, and his secret concrete strongholds buried underground beneath the waving grass. He sees his coastal forts fringing the Black Sea, his unseen guns grinning across the Sea of Japan. He sees his slant-eyed horsemen, galloping across the Central Asian

deserts on their wiry mounts, their field-glasses watching Mongolia. He sees the white-clad, ski-equipped soldiers of Karelia, high up on the Arctic Circle, ready for foreign invaders, whether they come again by sea to Murmansk and Archangel, or drive eastwards out of the Finnish forests. And to-day he sees them fighting against a not-at-all contemptible foe—the hardy, courageous Finns.

This is the army which Hitler admitted to Lord Londonderry in 1936 to be “first-class.” It is the army which, in any war in which it is involved, must inevitably be one of the two or three decisive factors.

Clem Voroshilov is not only its military commander, he is its Ministerial head and one of the handful of Soviet leaders who, in the moment of crisis, decides when and how its huge weight shall be thrown into the scales of History.

He is also the man who, if he survives Stalin, seems most likely to succeed to his position as political leader.

A man, in short, who—though still unmentioned in the august pages of last year's *Who's Who*—has as much present and future importance to humanity as any other individual alive.

II

COALFIELD CHILDHOOD

CLEM VOROSHILOV was born on February 4th, 1881. His father was a casual worker, collier and railway-watchman by turns. His mother had been in service.

Clem was cradled in the Don Bas—the busy industrial region which is the basin, not of the famous River Don, but of its tributary the Donets. Here are the greatest coalfields, power-plants, and industrial enterprises of modern Russia. It is part of that vast territory known as the Ukraine, on which Herr Hitler until last September had designs. There are two reasons why: the Ukraine contains one of the world's most fertile grain-belts, and it combines immense mineral resources with a highly-developed industry.

But Voroshilov knows all about the Ukraine, the why and the wherefore of its defence.

He has worked at its pits, in its fields, and in its foundries. He has fought across its rolling plain, retreating and advancing, from west to east and from north to south. He has seen its bridges shattered, its rails twisted and rusting, its chimneys smokeless against the sky, and its furnaces cold, and he has played no small part in getting the wheels to turn again.

When he first saw the light of day, the Don Bas was a rapidly developing district. Modern industry, financed by

foreign capital, was just entering a Russia from which serfdom had been finally banished only a few years before. Russia was witnessing something of the same mushroom-like development which characterised the United States about the same time. The old windmills were still turning their sails above the wheatfields and the sunflowers, but more and more factory chimneys were pointing along the monotonous horizon.

So it was that his father Efrem (Ephraim) could indulge in a show of individualism and independence which would have been unthinkable a generation before. If Efrem disliked a job or the foreman's face, he could walk out—and he very often did. There were always other jobs for an intelligent workman. It was a far cry from the life of his forefathers, serfs tied to the estate of one landowner.

Clem inherited that quality of sturdy independence, that conviction that men mattered more than jobs, and that there was a level of human dignity beneath which one should not fall.

Those words may ring hollow when we remember that the first money Clem Voroshilov ever "earned," was for begging in the gutter. But the rest of his life has been a witness to their essential truth. Begging, in old Russia, was not like begging in England—it was itself an industry. The giving of alms was the recognised method whereby the well-to-do person exhibited his Christian charity, and—as in Spain, formerly, and other countries—the beggar

was regarded as useful and necessary. Without him, how could you practise charity?

So, in his earliest years, when he was too young to be "gainfully employed," little Clem went out with the other local children to beg coppers from such rare well-dressed people as might chance to appear in such a depressing industrial neighbourhood. There was, needless to say, no question of compulsory school—even in 1917, when the Revolution arrived, between 70 and 80 per cent of the population were still illiterate.

Clem got to school in the end, but only after what—to a small boy—must have seemed a little lifetime of wage-earning.

He began at seven, picking over pyrites at the mines for the equivalent of about twopence a day. After that he had a spell as a lamp-hand. Then, yearning no doubt for a breath of fresh air and a sight of the sun, he got a job with a farmer.

Fresh air there was in plenty. Plenty, too, of the torrid South Ukrainian sun, beating down on the shadeless steppe. Clem worked from dawn till dusk, twelve hours a day.

He changed again, getting a job as shepherd-boy to a local landowner. This was an easier job. There was a chance to relax occasionally, lying back in the sweet-smelling grasses and wild flowers, with the flock slowly eddying round him. There was a chance to swim in the

sluggish rivers of the great plain, and a chance (we may guess) to ride a borrowed pony. Galloping along, the boy would indulge in many a romantic fancy, picturing himself as a wild Cossack leader or a Tartar Khan. But no day-dream could have surpassed his actual future, when he was destined to charge across those same steppes at the head of his own Cavalry Corps. . . .

Shepherds have time to think. Clem did not waste that time. When he was thirteen he got the chance, through influence, to enter the elementary school. Not every boy, with six years' wage-earning behind him, would have taken that chance. He did.

It was no golden gate of opportunity. It was only for a mere two years, and he started from scratch, not knowing even the alphabet. Nor was a Russian elementary school in 1894 a very wonderful institution. After a generous period of time had been devoted to corporal punishment and the Church catechism there was not much left for general culture.

But Clem was an intelligent youth and he knew what he wanted. Once he could read and write, he could manage the rest for himself.

There was no question of a "ladder to the University." From the school-desk he went straight into the Lugansk metal-works. There he showed that he was a good and capable workman, for within a few months he was promoted through several intervening grades to the post of

crane engineman. Clearly there was nothing feckless about him, and he could stick in a job when he wanted to. As a matter of fact, despite all his political vicissitudes, he remained closely connected with the Lugansk metal-works for many years.

Very soon he began to display his intelligence and initiative in a manner far less pleasing to his employers. He read voraciously—and his favourite reading consisted of illegal pamphlets, full of revolutionary politics. What was worse, he circulated these pamphlets among his work-mates, and was continually stimulating discussions and debates on their contents.

Theory and practice were never far apart in the life of Voroshilov. Even in those days he would have heartily endorsed (had he heard it) the Communist dictum: "Theory without practice is sterile: practice without theory is blind."

In 1899, when he was still only eighteen, he led his first strike. When we realise that it was also the first strike that had ever taken place in the district, we may gauge what a dominating personality he must have possessed to make it possible. Later in the same year he led another, which won partial concessions but made him a marked man, known to the Secret Police.

He had to leave Lugansk, and for the next three years was "on the run." His career as a professional revolutionary had commenced.

III

BAPTISM OF FIRE

A NEW century was dawning. In Russia, as in England at the same time (the England of the Boer War and the old dying Queen), the air was full of change.

Economic crisis had hit Russia. Between 1900 and 1903, the years in which a fugitive Voroshilov was flitting shadow-like through the Ukraine, no fewer than 3,000 factories and other enterprises closed down, throwing their workers on to the streets. Elsewhere, wholesale wage-cuts were the rule.

We in Britain (where we enjoy at least an imperfect degree of democracy) saw in 1931 the profound political effects of such a crisis. They can be imagined in the Russia of thirty years earlier, a land without the ballot-box or any form of unemployment insurance.

Russia was stirred to the depths. The workers struck, at first against their wage-cuts, but soon for more general and political demands. The authorities answered with whips and bullets. The peasants took their cue from the town-workers, and in Voroshilov's native Ukraine they were especially active. Scenes were re-enacted reminiscent of the French Revolution and of the Middle Ages—the night sky glowed with burning mansions, some landowners and officials were killed, and with triumphant shouts the peasants drove their ploughs across the boundary-marks

of their masters. Naturally, their triumph was short-lived. Soon the steppe rumbled to the hollow thunder of the cavalry, and Cossacks swept down on the villages "to restore order." Those who resisted them were shot down or cut down with sword and *knout*. Hundreds were arrested and sent to prison.

Nor did the students escape the general ferment. Students in Russia were always inclined to be anti-Government. It was inevitable, for to be a university student implies at least a minimum belief in logic and reason and progressive ideas. The Government shut down universities, imprisoned hundreds of students, and conscripted others for the army. The main result was a general strike of 30,000 university men.

Repression was always the favourite weapon of the powers above, but it was wielded with an inefficiency and weakness characteristic of the old Russia. A Hitler might have held down the Russian people longer, by executing men like Stalin and Voroshilov, and by engineering the assassination (or faked suicide) of men like Lenin who were abroad. Tsarism, though harsh, was not ruthless enough to succeed. Revolutionaries went not to the gallows or the concentration-camp but to Siberian exile which (by the standards of a modern dictatorship) was absurdly mild. They were able to continue reading, writing, and planning. Not seldom, they were able to escape.

None the less, you kept out of the hands of the police if you could—and at this stage Voroshilov could. He passed under several aliases, such as Plakhov and Volodka, though (unlike Lenin and Stalin) he never became so well known under any one of them that he adopted it instead of his real name.

After a while he judged it safe enough to return to Lugansk, where he got work in the electrical department of Messrs. Hartmann's factory. Though still only twenty-two, he had acquired a good deal of political experience, and he was listened to with respect. It was in this year, 1903, that he joined the Social Democratic Party, corresponding roughly to the British Labour Party in its earlier days. The Lugansk workers made him chairman of their committee—a striking tribute to the qualities he must already have shown. Plenty of twenty-two-year-olds are fiery orators and plucky leaders in a political battle, but they have to have steadier qualities too, judgment and tact, if men old enough to be their fathers are going to vote them into the chair.

Even in these early days, Voroshilov showed his true character. He was an intelligent, but not an original, thinker. Not for him the involved abstract arguments, the jaw-breaking Marxist jargon of the intellectuals. He never despised such theoretical discussion, but he was content to take his lead from a man he trusted—Lenin then, Stalin later. Then he could turn round, face the

crowd he knew—the metal-workers or the colliers or the railwaymen—and tell them what needed to be done in language they could understand, simple, racy, and free from political jargon.

But there were others who could do that. Merely as an orator and organiser, he might never have risen from the ranks. There was something more.

He realised the importance of armed defence. Just as, twenty years later, he became the architect of the modern Red Army, so, in 1903, he was the organiser of the workers' defence squads.

It was no youthful desire to play at soldiers. It was simply that whenever a meeting was called it was likely to be broken up by the Cossacks. Voroshilov got tired of the whip, and he was not alone in this. The workers formed squads, armed themselves with precious revolvers and a little ammunition smuggled from abroad, and hit back. In this way, if the police charged a meeting, they could hold them back long enough for the main part of the crowd to escape, and, if any workers were arrested, there was a chance to rescue them.

There was nothing in Voroshilov's mental make-up which ever inclined him to soldiering as such—indeed, during the Great War, which he regarded as an imperialist quarrel and none of his business, he contrived to evade military service. But it seemed as though circum-

stances were always to make him a commander almost in spite of himself.

Arming his little local detachments was no easy task. There are stories of twenty Smith and Wesson revolvers which he brought back from his first visit to Leningrad (then St. Petersburg), and of a large consignment which he smuggled in from Finland, concealed in ladies' dress-boxes. Bombs were easier to come by. Miners had access to dynamite, and other ingredients could be obtained from sympathetic chemical workers, or, if need be, stolen from the stores. There were even a few precious machine-guns, reserved for some great day when there would be no risk of their falling quickly into the hands of the enemy. Nor did Voroshilov scorn the humblest weapons—it is said that he originated the practice of keeping a pocket full of sand to throw in the eyes of an adversary. Even children's toys, such as marbles and hoops, could be effective in breaking up a charge of Cossack horsemen.

Once he was arrested and beaten senseless, but the threat of a general strike throughout the district compelled the police to set him free. That incident illustrates the relative strength and weakness of the people and the authorities. The police had their man under lock and key, but they could do nothing with him. They dared not face the consequence of keeping him there.

Voroshilov was well aware that these skirmishes were but a prelude, a necessary prelude, to bigger things. Week

by week he studied the pages of *Iskra*, the revolutionary paper which Lenin was editing from his place of exile. In the columns of *Iskra* Lenin was hammering out the correct course of action for the Russian people, in harmony with the universal theory of Karl Marx. Lenin was calling for a political party, not of vague sympathisers with a general policy but of disciplined, whole-time revolutionaries, each pledged to full responsibility and activity.

Voroshilov read *Iskra*. The copies had to be smuggled into the town, for the censorship forbade all such papers. The dense shrubberies of the Lugansky Botanical Gardens were equally popular with courting couples and with workmen studying illegal literature.

It was common knowledge that Lenin had his opponents—enemies, indeed—inside the Social Democratic Party. There were plenty of members who wanted a looser, freer organisation, on the lines of an English political party, in which members did not pledge themselves automatically to any work and retained complete liberty to disagree and criticise as publicly as they liked.

Lenin won, though it split the party. His supporters were known then as the Bolsheviks and his opponents as the Mensheviks, from the two Russian words, *bolshinstvo* ("majority") and *menshinstvo* ("minority"). This was the real genesis of the modern Communist Party, with its strict discipline and emphasis on 100 per cent. active membership, with no "passengers."

Voroshilov was a Bolshevik, a follower of Lenin, from the start. None knew better than he did that a revolution could not be made by talking. Intellectuals might like to split hairs over a point of theory, and, if they lost the argument, hold aloof and continue to criticise. Voroshilov, trained in the hard school of the workshop strike and the street battle, knew that nothing ever mattered quite so much as unity. You must stick close to the masses, even when you disagreed with the route they were following. A soldier may think that his troops are attacking the citadel from a wrong angle, but he knows it is better to charge with them than to run round the other side by himself.

In his fighting-squads he soon came up against the problem of discipline.

It is not easy to secure discipline in work of this kind. It attracts a reckless, individualist type of man, almost as impatient of authority on his own side as of the official authority he is fighting against. It has always (as we saw in Barcelona in 1936) attracted men of anarchist philosophy, and these were not uncommon in the Russia of 1904. There are apt to be other men, too, who use civil strife as an excuse to wipe off old personal scores, and unless such men are disciplined they do infinite harm by discrediting the movement to which they belong.

Voroshilov had men of all types in his fighting-squads at Lugansk, and it needed all his personality to control

them. It was in these days that he began to learn the truth which has guided him in his life's work ever since, that the best soldier was also the one with the best political understanding. Those members of his fighting-squads who had thoroughly grasped the teaching of Lenin were no trouble at all from the disciplinary point of view. It was not they who fired their revolvers before the word was given, or who indulged in useless, individual acts of violence.

Speaking this year at the 18th Congress of the Communist Party, he voiced this truth once more. "The Red Army as a whole in peace time," he said, "is a vast and extensive school where hundreds upon thousands of men receive training not merely in their own speciality—where they learn not only the art of defeating the enemy but also, from the man in the ranks to the highest commander, politics as well, broadening their knowledge and mastering the theory of Marxism-Leninism."

In foreign armies, he claimed, the rank-and-file were forbidden to engage in politics. On the other hand, "Our Army's strength lies in its political consciousness."

Those are the lines on which he has always worked, from the time he commanded a few dozen men with revolvers and home-made bombs, skirmishing in the streets and parks of Lugansk, to the day when he took over the whole military machine of the Soviet Union.

It was not long before the fighting-squads got a real test. The year 1905 witnessed a full-dress rehearsal of the revolution which was to succeed twelve years later.

The Japanese were thrashing the Tsar's armies and navies, just as the Germans were in 1917. Then, as later, Lenin and the Bolsheviks favoured the defeat of their own country, knowing that a blow to Tsarism was a blow in their cause. And then, as later, military defeat led to unrest and rebellion at home.

In December, 1904, there was a huge (and successful) strike of oil-workers in Baku. On January 3rd, 1905, strikes began in St. Petersburg, and for the following twelve months Russia tottered on the brink of revolution. High-lights of the years were Bloody Sunday, when unarmed crowds demonstrated before the Tsar's windows and the troops opened fire, killing or wounding 3,000; the mutiny of the battleship *Potemkin*, whose crew sailed away with it to Rumania; and a succession of strikes, street-battles, peasant risings, and military mutinies.

Voroshilov played his part in this eventful year. There were barricades in Lugansk, and some of the hottest fighting took place there. In the end the revolt was crushed, although not without concessions being granted by the Government. The fact was, the people were not yet sufficiently organised to take over the country. Only Lenin's Bolsheviks had a clear-cut policy, and, as none realised better than Lenin himself, they were still too

small a group to swing the great Russian masses behind them.

They bided their time. Lenin took refuge in Finland. Other leaders fled to Western Europe. In Lugansk, a young man methodically supervised the burying of arms and ammunition. He felt quite certain that some day they would be wanted again.

What he did not know was that some day the name of Lugansk would vanish from the map of Russia, and in its place be printed: *Voroshilovgrad*.

IV

ENCOUNTERS AND ESCAPES

IN 1906 Voroshilov made the first of his few and brief trips outside the frontiers of the Russian Empire. He went to Sweden, to his Party's conference at Stockholm.

The Tsar, at this time, was playing with projects of reform. He had permitted the calling of the Duma, a kind of people's assembly with very limited powers. The composition of the Duma was unreal from the start, for the electoral roll was picked so as to deprive most of the lower classes of the vote. And, as soon as the Duma did anything to displease the Tsar, he could dissolve it at will—and did. That Russia was no nearer democracy may be gauged from the fact that the Social Democratic Party could not hold its conference on native soil, but was compelled to assemble its delegates at Stockholm.

Sweden probably made little impression on the young delegate from Lugansk. One political conference is much like another, wherever it is held. From morning till night he listened to a flood of oratory—and the Russian capacity for speech-making is excelled by no other race in the world. In any intervals, and far into the night, there were personal discussions and arguments, lobbying and intrigues.

Voroshilov had little time to explore the beautiful Scandinavian capital, but he could not fail to notice, even

in passing along the street, that the general standard of dress, education, and nourishment, was very different from that of home, or even that of brilliant St. Petersburg. Russia in 1906 was the most backward country in Europe, whereas Sweden was already well on the road to being one of the most truly civilised and highly cultured nations in the world.

But he saw something more important to him than Sweden. He saw, for the first time, Lenin.

Dennis Wheatley has recorded Voroshilov's memory of that meeting: "That remains the most vivid impression of my whole life. Everything about Lenin seemed to me extraordinary—his manner of speech, his simplicity, and above all his piercing, soul-uncovering eyes."

If there had ever been any doubt as to where Voroshilov stood in the political disputes of his party, those doubts would have been settled by that personal contact. Although, on this 1906 Conference, Lenin suffered a temporary setback and was outvoted on certain issues by his Menshevik opponents, Voroshilov remained his unshaken supporter. So did most of the delegates from the big industrial centres. The opposition came rather from the smaller towns and rural areas which were more backward politically.

Voroshilov met another man at this conference, a man scarcely less remarkable, and one with whom he was destined to work much more closely than ever he was

with Lenin. That man was Stalin, the sallow Georgian from Baku, who now shivered slightly in the sharp air of a Scandinavian April.

There were, after all, only 111 voting delegates at the conference, and the fifty-odd Bolsheviks hung together, so that in so small a group it was possible for men to get to know each other. It was essentially a gathering of youth. Voroshilov was only twenty-five, Stalin twenty-seven. Lenin himself had just reached his thirty-sixth birthday that month. It would have been easy to make jokes about young men getting together to settle the world's troubles, yet in sober fact these young men were now almost within a decade of achieving the complete leadership of one-sixth of the world, and an inestimable influence over the remainder.

They met again in London, the following year, for the next conference. Gay, Edwardian London, with hansom-cabs still rumbling through Bloomsbury squares where the trees were putting out their May-time green. . . . London where Lenin could point out to his colleagues the great museum in which Karl Marx had collected material for his book *Capital*, and where he himself worked during the time he lived in England under the name of Richter.

But Lenin was always fonder of asking questions and listening. Voroshilov was able to give encouraging reports of progress in his own area. One of the few things the Duma had been allowed to do was to legalise trade unions,

and he had at once set to work to organise his fellow-workers at Hartmann's. He was now chairman of this union, which had a membership of several thousand. Questioned about his fighting-squads, he could say that they were now re-organised in a body known as the Red Guard, comprising over seven hundred men, most of them his mates at Hartmann's.

Altogether, Voroshilov must have enjoyed the London conference more than the Stockholm. It was much bigger for one thing—336 delegates—and the Bolsheviks, with the support of several small nationality groups, had a working majority. Lenin was more firmly in the saddle than before, and Voroshilov felt that things were going on the right lines again.

He went back to Russia with new inspiration and new ideas for developing his work, but he was not allowed to put them into practice. The police realised at last, from his trips abroad, that this young trade union organiser was a more dangerous adversary than they had thought. His arrest was ordered.

For several weeks he played hide-and-seek with his pursuers, aided by his innumerable friends. Sometimes he went to earth in the basement of some tenement, sometimes he had to hide in the open countryside. That was no hardship, for June in the Ukraine is a kindly month with short warm nights and little rain.

There is a good story told of him at this period—how

he took part in some amateur dramatics held in a public park for charity, and how at one point he abandoned the script and delivered a seditious speech, which resulted in the untimely interruption of the show by the police.

Even then, he escaped. It was not so difficult to elude the police in a country where the vast majority of the population hated the government and regarded every uniformed official as a natural enemy. The chief danger was from spies and traitors, of whom the police employed large numbers.

It was one of these who betrayed Voroshilov. He was captured, tried, and sentenced to three years' deportation to the far northern port of Archangel, on the White Sea.

He did not remain there long. This type of exile did not involve close confinement, and it was the easiest thing in the world for a practised revolutionary to escape. The exact circumstances of Voroshilov's departure have never been published, for the Russian leaders do not indulge in personal reminiscences of that kind. At all events, escape he did, and judging that it would be unwise for the present to show his face in the Ukraine, he went south to Baku, the great oil-centre on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Here he remained for several years.

It would be hard to imagine a greater contrast in settings than that between the flat inland plain of the Don Bas and the Caspian coast where the last foothills of the Caucasus Mountains stoop to the tideless water.

Baku itself was a city of contrasts. The population, numbering several hundred thousand, included a medley of races—Georgians, Russians, Persians, Armenians, Germans, Kurds, Jews, and many more. There were extremes of wealth and poverty, the millionaire's seaside villa rising within a mile or two of the oil-worker's hovel. Mosques and palaces and the tombs of dervishes stood not far from either.

There was one (literally) underlying factor which unified the whole—oil.

The oil had made Baku. There were no less than 270 different firms exploiting the oil-wells—or, as Voroshilov maintained, exploiting the oil-workers. The seaside mansions and villas were built on oil. So were hundreds of family fortunes in Russia, and not a few abroad.

Baku was in Stalin's country. Stalin came from Tiflis, midway between Baku on the Caspian and Batum on the Black Sea, whither the oil goes by pipe-line to be shipped all over the world. In those three cities Stalin did most of his work prior to 1917.

Voroshilov made contact immediately with Stalin, and worked under his direction. There was plenty to learn, for, in a number of ways, Baku conditions were different from those of the Ukraine.

Baku was a melting-pot of races and religions, in which it was hard to get unity. Here in Georgia the Russian was an outsider, a member of the hated ruling race. The

position of Voroshilov (a Ukrainian, strictly speaking, but a Russian near enough in Oriental eyes) was in some ways as difficult as that of an Englishman trying to organise Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, or Moslems and Hindus in India.

Stalin taught him a good deal.

Stalin's most distinctive contribution to the political development of the Soviet Union has been his grasp of the nationality problem—a problem which was then as bitter in Russia as it is in the rest of Europe to-day. From Stalin, Voroshilov got a valuable corrective to the airy, theoretical "internationalism" he had heard from men like Trotsky in the conferences abroad.

It was Stalin who invented the phrase, "national in form, socialist in content." In other words, so long as your political and economic system is fundamentally socialist (and so ultimately internationalist), by all means keep a healthy local pride in your own language and literature, dances and sports and customs. So long as they are good customs, that is.

The young Ukrainian could understand and appreciate this point of view. He was well aware that the Ukraine had its own national traditions, and that, when he went to St. Petersburg, there was a distinct difference between the language he spoke and the true Russian he heard around him. This sense of Ukrainian nationality has never died—it is still fostered to-day by certain interests

who would like to slice off this rich region of the Soviet Union, attach it to the Ukrainian districts of Poland and Rumania, and form the whole into an "independent" Ukrainian State. It is interesting that one of the men who stands in the way of such plans is himself the most influential Ukrainian alive. Voroshilov learnt from Stalin that it was quite right to cling to the homely speech of his native plains, quite right to be proud of his capital-city, Kiev, with its gilded domes, but quite wrong to suppose that the Ukraine could have a political and economic future independent of Russia, any more than Wales could, independent of England.

Since the foregoing paragraph was written, Voroshilov has solved the question of Ukrainian unity by the exact opposite of the Nazi-inspired "nationalist" plan! He has marched his troops into the Polish Ukraine, forcing the Nazis to withdraw, and joined the territory to the Soviet Union.

It was because Stalin and Voroshilov adopted this attitude towards the nationality question that they were able to work with such success in Baku. In that cosmopolitan city it would have been comparatively easy for an astute government to "divide and rule," setting Christian against Moslem and both against Jew.

Baku is on the threshold of Persia and the great deserts of Central Asia. It is only lately that the Soviet has put an end to child-marriage, the blood-feud, and similar

Oriental survivals. By all the rules, Baku before the War should have been one of the most backward areas in the Russian Empire, at least a generation behind St. Petersburg and the Don Bas.

Yet it was not so. We have seen how the great Baku oil-strike of December, 1904, was the beginning of the 1905 Revolution. From this time onwards Baku remained a stronghold of militant working-class activity, well in the vanguard of the movement.

If Stalin, throughout this period, was the presiding genius, Voroshilov was his trusted and efficient assistant. When—as sometimes happened—Stalin was in exile or in hiding, Voroshilov could be relied upon to keep the machine running on prearranged lines. During these years of constant contact, the two men learnt to trust each other implicitly and to co-operate without friction. Thus they were gradually prepared for the more important partnership they were to have during the Civil War, and the still more important one they have to-day.

Meanwhile the war clouds thickened over the western plains. . . .

The Great War broke.

Hitler marched in the uniform of an Austrian private, Mussolini wrote anti-war articles until he sold his pen overnight and was ignominiously expelled from the Socialist Party. Lenin was arrested in Austria and allowed to take refuge in Switzerland. Stalin was in rigorous exile in Siberia, from which he was not freed until 1917. And Voroshilov . . . ?

Voroshilov was using forged documents to evade military service, and was soon engaged in munition-making, where he used every opportunity for spreading sedition.

To the ordinary Englishman that may not sound a very savoury war-record. But the rest of Voroshilov's career shows that he has never cared at any time either for personal safety or for money.

The Bolsheviks had foretold this conflict. Their political theory taught that war, under a capitalist system, was inevitable. The working class had no interest in the struggle between Kaisers and Tsars—it was their job to overthrow both, and this could be done now by transforming the "imperialist" war into a civil war.

Voroshilov left Baku. It was still unsafe to return to Lugansk or any part of the Don Bas, where he was well

known under his real name. He went first to Tsaritsin, a town on the lower Volga. It was a depressing town, with innumerable low wooden shanties extending for miles along the banks of the river, and, apart from a cathedral, hardly any buildings of architectural merit. After a time he left it for St. Petersburg.

St. Petersburg was the symbol of Tsarism in all its power and its glory—and, one might add, in its rotten foundations and ill-concealed squalor.

Built by Peter the Great on a marshy delta looking out into the Baltic, it was a little like a northern Venice with its numerous waterways, its islands, and its profusion of palaces. Here rose the Winter Palace from the riverside. Behind it spread the broad expanse of Uritsky Square, where the people were shot down on Bloody Sunday. Behind that again the Nevsky Prospect, perhaps the grandest street in Europe, cut its way for nearly three miles through the heart of the city.

There were really two St. Petersburgs—the city of canals and statues, of tolling cathedral-bells and chiming sleigh-bells, of jewels and furs and uniforms, candles and incense and ikons . . . and the St. Petersburg of the hungry slums and the grimy factories. It was to the latter that Voroshilov came, entered a munition-works, toiled there twelve hours a day, and devoted his remaining time to political propaganda.

This is no place to re-tell the story of Russia in the first

years of the Great War, but there is one question of interest to Englishmen old enough to remember—"Why didn't the 'Russian steam-roller' roll?"

The answer to that question is also the answer to "Why did the Revolution succeed?" and "Why is a former factory-hand now driving the steam-roller of to-day?"

The Russian Army was largely one of ignorant and illiterate peasants, conscripted for a war of which they had no understanding. They were officered by men who were sometimes very brave, rather less often intelligent and efficient, and almost always of good birth. Between officers and men yawned a great social gulf. Whereas the former were regarded as the salt of the earth, the latter were the scum. Public parks sometimes had the notice outside:

"Soldiers and Dogs Not Admitted."

Men who are treated like this are not going to give of their best.

There were other factors which caused the defeat and disruption of the Tsar's armies. There was the inefficiency of the high command, which was based on aristocratic considerations rather than those of merit. There was the corruption of the Army contractors, a thing not unknown on the Western Front, but which reached an unprecedented degree on the Eastern, so that men were hurled into battle without rifles or ammunition or even boots on their feet.

This last factor would have weighed less had it not been contrasted, day after day, with the luxury and profiteering of the men at the top. A man will fight bare-handed in a cause he understands—men did so in the Russian Civil War, in Spain, and in China still more recently, arming themselves from the enemy or from their own fallen comrades. But a man will not endure such conditions when he sees no purpose in the fight, and when his generals, perfumed and corseted, are drinking champagne in the safety of the base.

Early in 1917 the situation had become intolerable. The Russian Front was collapsing. If it did collapse, the German forces opposed to it would be mainly free to turn round and reinforce their comrades on the Western Front, bringing catastrophe to the Allies.

So now not only the common soldiers and the workers talked revolution. The word was on the lips of officers, generals, politicians, even Grand Dukes of the imperial blood. Britain and France looked forward to a Russian Revolution which, by shifting the Tsar from the saddle and substituting an efficient government on the Western model, would enable Russia to pull her weight once more in the war.

When, in March 1917, Nicholas II was deposed it was not by the Bolsheviks but by the upper classes, with the full sympathy of the Allied Governments. The power which took over, and was known as the Provisional

Government, aimed to reorganise the Russian armies and fight on until the Germans were beaten.

Voroshilov and his friends had other views. . . .

They had played their part in the March Revolution, conscious that it was a necessary step on the road to the other revolution which they wanted. Voroshilov himself had helped to bring the munition-workers out on strike, to force the abdication of the Tsar. He had mingled with the soldiers of the Ismailovsky Guards, seducing them from their allegiance so that, at the critical moment, they would not fire on the workers. But he had by no means finished.

The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had issued a manifesto to the whole world. It ran :

"Workers of all countries! Stretching out to you a brotherly hand over mountains of brothers' corpses, over rivers of innocent blood and tears, over the smoking ruins of cities and villages, over the perishing treasures of culture, we call you to restore and strengthen international unity. In this is the guarantee of our future victories and of the complete liberation of humanity. Proletarians of all lands, unite!"

The red banners floating over those March demonstrations had carried three main slogans.

"Down with the Tsar!" The Tsar was down.

"Down with the war!" But the new Provisional

Government intended to carry on the war more energetically than ever.

"We want bread!" But the Provisional Government had no more bread to offer, and was much more concerned with the provision of boots and bullets.

Voroshilov knew perfectly well that the real Revolution had not begun.

But things were beginning to move now. Stalin was freed from his Siberian exile, Lenin was on his way home from Switzerland.

Voroshilov was one of the reception committee who welcomed Lenin on the night of April 3rd when he arrived in St. Petersburg. The Finland Railway Station, and the square in front of it, were packed solid with soldiers, sailors, and workmen. When Lenin stepped from the train, Voroshilov handed him a bouquet of flowers according to the Russian custom. Then Lenin was carried shoulder-high to the square outside, where, mounting an armoured car as rostrum, he delivered an impassioned speech, closing with the slogan: "Long live the Socialist revolution!"

Successful revolutions are not made solely in the capital: they must have a solid foundation in the provinces, too. However much Voroshilov may have wanted to remain in St. Petersburg, at the centre of activity, he recognised that his place was now in his native district. No other individual was better qualified than he to

organise the industrial area of the Ukraine and swing it into action behind the Bolsheviks. He accordingly returned to Lugansk, got himself reinstated in his old position there, and set to work energetically.

His first and most obvious task was to secure a Bolshevik majority in the Lugansk Soviet.

"Soviet" means council. In the history of the Russian Revolution it has come to mean the elected council of workmen or peasants or soldiers in any given unit, such as an industrial town, a country village, or a regiment respectively. There had been such Soviets in 1905, but they had been short-lived. Now they were springing up all over Russia and taking over authority in the places where they functioned. They represented the majority of the population, but not the whole of it. The upper and professional classes, the tradesmen, priests, well-to-do farmers, officers, etc., were unrepresented.

Not by any means all the men elected to these Soviets were supporters of Lenin. In many places the Leninists, or Bolsheviks, were in a minority. But more and more, as the year 1917 passed from spring to summer and from summer to autumn, the Bolsheviks gained the ascendancy. No one else had a concrete, practical policy, and no other group could match the energy and the iron resolution of the Bolsheviks.

It did not take Voroshilov very long to get the affairs of Lugansk in order. One of his methods was to found a

newspaper, the *Donetsky Proletary*, to circulate in the Donets region and put forward Lenin's policy. "Peace and bread!" Those were the words he hammered home, day in and day out, in speech and in print. Peace and bread. . . . That was all that a great number of people wanted at that time. The vision of Socialism was still seen only by a far-sighted minority.

Peace and bread. . . . Down with the Provisional Government! . . . All power to the Soviets! Voroshilov spread the slogans far and wide through the Ukraine.

The position during this summer was one of the utmost confusion. The Germans were pressing back the Russian armies, and deserters were streaming home in thousands. The Provisional Government staggered from crisis to crisis, first under Prince Lvov, later under the lawyer Kerensky. The ex-Tsar was a prisoner, and there was no agreement as to whether he should have a successor, or who it should be. Russia had lost her symbolic figure-head, her "Little Father," the Tsar of All the Russias. She needed something to believe in. Only Lenin and the Bolsheviks offered anything she *could* believe in.

On November the 7th the Bolsheviks seized power in St. Petersburg.

It was one of the least bloody revolutions in history. The Government had taken refuge in the Winter Palace, overlooking the Neva. On the night of the 6th, soldiers and sailors who sympathised with the Bolsheviks joined

with armed workers to surround the building. There was a certain amount of shooting, but very few casualties. The Palace was surrendered, most of the Ministers were arrested, but Kerensky, the Prime Minister, escaped.

At a quarter to eleven, on the night of the 7th, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets assembled in the Smolny Institute, and within a few hours had proclaimed itself the supreme organ of government, passed a decree demanding immediate peace, and another abolishing all private ownership in land. Manifestos were issued to the governments and peoples of the world, enemy as well as allied, calling for an immediate halt in the war, and a just peace without annexations or indemnities on either side. This appeal was ignored by the governments, and, for the most part, was never heard—until years afterwards—by the peoples to which it was addressed.

Voroshilov was sent to St. Petersburg as the delegate of the Lugansk Soviet. But the St. Petersburg he had known on previous visits—the St. Petersburg of brilliant luxury existing side by side with incredible squalor—was gone. The corseted officers had vanished from the Nevsky, and in their places were taut-faced Bolshevik leaders, unshaved and white from lack of sleep.

It had been easy to promise peace and bread. But the Germans were still pouring into the country, and Kerensky was sending a Cossack army, under General Krasnov, to overthrow the Soviets. Even in St. Petersburg itself,

treachery was rife and there was always the risk of counter-revolution.

Voroshilov found plenty to do. He was put in charge of the Defence Committee, responsible for the safety of the city. By an ironical twist of fortune he, who had so often played hide-and-seek with the law, became police prefect of St. Petersburg, working in close conjunction with Dzerzhinsky and the Secret Police.

He did not remain long in these posts. The Germans were invading the Ukraine, the granary of Russia and one of her biggest workshops. If the Ukraine were lost, one of the pillars of economic power would crash beneath the Soviet Government.

Voroshilov remembered his comrades of the Red Guard in Lugansk. They were the men to turn the Germans out of their country and set the wheels of industry turning once more.

Voroshilov went back.

VI

SOLDIER BY CIRCUMSTANCE

RUMBLING slowly and uncertainly southward in the train, he had ample leisure to take stock of the position—and it was not encouraging.

True, he could tell his old friends at Lugansk of the Bolshevik triumphs in St. Petersburg and Moscow, but these victories promised to be hollow indeed unless the Soviet Government could perform miracles against the innumerable enemies arrayed against it.

The Bolsheviks had achieved power with the very minimum of opposition from the Russian people. On March 27th, 1918, the American Ambassador, Mr. Francis, sent the following highly significant telegram to his fellow-countryman, Colonel Robins, who was then in Moscow acting as head of the American Red Cross organisation in Russia :

"Do you hear of any organised opposition to Soviet Government? I have not."

In a series of telegrams sent in the course of the next few weeks, Colonel Robins confirmed and repeated that, to the best of his knowledge, there was no internal force organised in opposition to the Soviets.

Note the word "internal."

For in 1918 Russia, whose one desire was to get out of the European War, found herself invaded not only by

her old enemies, the Germans, but also by her former allies.

While the Germans were pouring through the Ukraine and the Baltic provinces (now Esthonia and Latvia), there were British troops occupying Murmansk and Archangel in the far north, and other regions round the Black Sea. The Japanese seized Vladivostok and the Far Eastern provinces, the Czechs straddled across the vital trans-Siberian railroad, and elsewhere there were French troops, Rumanians, and representatives of half the Allies. Here was a League of Nations with a vengeance—a league against Bolshevism.

Independent Russia had shrunk to a mere circle of territory round Moscow and St. Petersburg. Starvation stared these cities in the face—the bread ration about this time was two ounces on alternate days.

Such was the grim situation Voroshilov had to explain to his comrades in Lugansk.

He had gone home in his political capacity, to make propaganda, to put heart into the people, to see that the principles of the Revolution were carried out. It was a common task then, and the name for the job was Political Commissar. A Political Commissar was attached to every fighting unit, to supervise the propaganda among the men and to keep an eye on the commanders. The latter task was extremely important, for there were almost no tried Bolsheviks who also had a knowledge of military tech-

nique, and it was often necessary to entrust the command to old regular army officers whose enthusiasm for the revolution went only skin-deep. Officers of this type were always apt to desert to the enemy at critical moments, or to use their position to sabotage the efforts of their own side.

Marshal Tukachevsky — whose execution for high treason astonished the outside world in 1937—was an extreme example of this, for he was a former Tsarist officer who had concealed his true political sympathies over a long period of years. Those who doubt that high military commanders will ever betray the governments to which they have sworn allegiance should remember the role of our own Marlborough in the revolt against James II and, in modern times, the action of General Franco and nine other Spanish generals at the outset of the Civil War.

The Lugansk workers were so conscious of this danger that they would have no former officer to command them. They demanded the man they knew and trusted—the man who had never had any formal training in drill or strategy, but who had won his spurs in the warfare of the streets and barricades. Clem must take charge.

He did. He led his detachment north-westwards to join others at Kharkhov, the great industrial centre of the Ukraine, and third city in Russia. Kharkhov—the Birmingham of Russia—was threatened by the Germans.

If it could be saved, it would be of immense economic value to the Bolsheviks, for its works and factories would help in reconstructing and re-equipping the shattered railways, and clothing and arming the troops.

But Kharkhov fell. The hurriedly-assembled Red detachments, commanded by amateurs, could not stand against the calculating hammer-blows of the Germans. The Red forces, of which Voroshilov commanded only one unit, were not merely defeated. They were, as a recognised military force, annihilated.

Meanwhile, behind them, a Cossack rising had taken place against the Bolsheviks.

The Cossacks were the traditional enemies of the workers. They were a backward, agricultural community, dwelling on the steppes. Being magnificent horsemen, they had been recruited for generations into the service of the Tsar, for use both as cavalry and as mounted police. In innumerable street-battles they had fought the workers, and their cruel whips had beaten down not only men but women and children. Their political outlook was barbaric and feudal. They were ideal material to use against the Soviet Government.

General Krasnov led this Cossack rising. A few months before, after the seizing of power by the Bolsheviks, he had led another rising in the St. Petersburg district. He had been defeated then, taken prisoner, and released after giving his word of honour, "as an officer and a gentle-

man," to abstain from anti-Bolshevik activity. This was how he observed his parole.

Voroshilov, rallying his survivors after the fall of Kharkhov, found himself in a desperate situation.

In front, pressing ever on his heels, were the Germans.

Behind, Krasnov's Cossacks had swept across his rear, barring his retreat eastwards. Now they had swung round so far that they straddled the railway line to Moscow and Great Russia. The little band of workmen-soldiers were surrounded.

At least their line of retreat was open as far as their home town, Lugansk, though there was no hope of lasting safety there. They fell back towards Lugansk, rallying stragglers and gathering new forces as they went.

Once they paused and fought a rear-guard action against the over-confident Germans. A whole German Army Corps was forced to a standstill and temporarily driven back, leaving twenty precious machine-guns and other welcome supplies in the hands of the Ukrainians. But they had not enough men to press their advantage. They continued their grim retreat to Lugansk.

Arrived there, they held a council of war.

The sentimental temptation to stay there, to persuade themselves that they could, by some miraculous feat of heroism, defend their native town and roll back the enemy, was very strong indeed, but it could not stand against arguments based on bitter reality.

Voroshilov proposed that they should retreat across the Donets, across the vast intervening steppe to the River Don, and thence across to the Volga, where a Red force was holding that town of Tsaritsin, where once he had been a munition-worker in the early months of the Great War.

"But"—protested some one in amazement—"it's a thousand *versts*!" (That is, over 650 miles, and rather an over-estimate, actually.)

"There are Cossacks everywhere," said another.

"How can we leave our wives and children in Lugansk, with the enemy pressing on our tracks?" demanded a third.

Voroshilov answered them all. As for the Cossacks, they would fight their way through. As for the wives and children, they would take them with them. As for the distance, they would go by train.

The last statement may have sounded to some like an ironical joke, but Voroshilov was in earnest. He felt it could be done.

And so began one of the most amazing "excursions" in the history of the railway, and, at the same time, not the least remarkable of military retreats in the annals of war.

It was the kind of operation which probably no professional soldier would have attempted. It was conceivable only because Voroshilov was himself a skilled

mechanic, realised what could and could not be accomplished in an emergency, and had the confidence of hundreds of men in the ranks who, though amateurs in soldiering, were experienced railway-workers in all grades.

Lugansk stood amid a network of railroads. It was possible, in a few days, to assemble an immense amount of rolling-stock. It is recorded that, at the end of the retreat, there were no less than 500 trains in this huge "flying column," and in view of what had to be transported, the figure seems credible. Voroshilov had something like 15,000 soldiers under his command, and more than twice as many non-combatant refugees. Some of the trains were armoured and mounted with guns. Others were loaded with munitions and supplies.

A through train, travelling even at the modest speeds to which Russia is accustomed, could do the journey to Tsaritsin in a day. It took Voroshilov the best part of three months.

There were enemies on all sides. Every yard of railway track was in perpetual danger of sabotage ranging from the removal of a few bolts to the explosion of a land-mine. At any moment artillery hidden behind some low ridge in the distance might start spewing shells on to the line. A train full of stores or refugees, halted for a few minutes and protected only by a handful of troops, might find itself the object of a lightning Cossack raid. Fortunately aeroplanes, though not unknown in this campaign

(Voroshilov had captured a couple of German machines during the battle before Lugansk), were not able to play the destructive role they would certainly play if a similar manoeuvre were attempted now.

In those three months Voroshilov proved that he was a man of first-rank personality, no mere lieutenant to the Lenins and Stalins.

He was successively—and sometimes almost simultaneously—general, political propagandist, engineer, and traffic controller.

Conceive, if you can, the problem even of moving those several hundred trains across the country, so that the armoured trains and the troops would be where they were required strategically, the ammunition and food trucks handy, the passenger-trains with the refugees as safe as possible!

Imagine the problems of fuel, of spare-parts and repairs, of food, water, wounds, sickness, sanitation. . . . Picture the chaos caused by a blown-up bridge cutting the column in half, or even a routine breakdown, with the consequent piling up of traffic along the line behind it, and the dangerous ever-widening gap in front. . . .

Voroshilov did not despair.

Painfully, mile by mile, the trains crept eastwards across the steppe. The heat of May and June grilled them, the dust crept even through the shut windows, parching throats and coating everything with a grey

film. Babies cried and machine-guns crackled. The women boiled precious water and made pale weak tea. Sugar was at a premium. They dipped even the little strawberries, which they gathered beside the line, into their cups to serve as sweetening.

"Don't worry," said the railwaymen, "we'll get through." And they bent their sunburnt, unshaven faces again to their tasks, oiling bearings, tapping wheels, shovelling coal, replacing rails. In this retreat the oil-can and the hammer were as vital as the gun.

The Germans fell behind them. Now their chief foes were Krasnov's Cossacks, though sometimes even the towns resisted them. In these cases it was because the Bolsheviks in the town were in a minority, and the party in power—Mensheviks or whatever they were—were anxious to curry favour with the other side whose victory seemed so certain.

Voroshilov blasted his way through the unfriendly towns. He fought off Cossack raid after raid. Often the White cavalry got within a few yards of the trains, and the Reds had to lie beneath the waggons, firing between the wheels.

They reached the banks of the River Don at last. They had longed for this moment, knowing what a milestone in their trek it represented. Although Don and Volga flow into different seas, they approach very close to one another at about this point, and, once the Don was crossed,

only about seventy miles remained to be covered. There was hope, too, that the Red forces at Tsaritsin would be able to send troops and supplies to meet them, to ease their difficulties during the last stages of the journey.

Bitter disappointment awaited them. The Don at this point is a very wide river, for it is nearing the end of its long course from just south of Moscow right down to the Black Sea. And the long railway bridge had been destroyed by the Whites, beyond hope of repair. . . .

Voroshilov had to make one of the hardest decisions of his whole career.

Should he continue to cling to the railroad, still regarding it as his life-line, even though that life-line was cut? Or should he abandon his trains, with a great deal of supplies and equipment—not to mention the valuable protection of the armoured trains themselves—and strike away at a tangent with the majority of his people on foot?

Perhaps it was the presence of so many women and children which decided him. There was no hope for them, anyhow, west of the river. The men might have fought their way through, or, if the worst came to the worst, dissolved into a hundred guerilla detachments. That escape was barred to the women and their babies.

Voroshilov bridged the river. Or more correctly—since that was impossible—he dammed it. The men worked stripped to the waist under the torrid sun. The women

helped, and it was not help to be despised, for the women of Eastern Europe are used to heavy manual labour of this kind. Even children, who in England would have toiled at nothing more ambitious than sand castles and mud pies, trotted backwards and forwards along the ever-lengthening mole with their gallant little basketfuls and handfuls of earth.

A month passed. The dam mounted and lengthened. The enemy attacked. The workers dropped their shovels and picked up their rifles. The enemy fell back. The rifles were exchanged for shovels again.

When a rare cloud drifted across the sky, darkening the sun, Voroshilov looked up anxiously. A violent summer thunder-storm, bringing torrential rain and floods, would upset everything.

But the dam was finished without any such mishap. The sleepers were hammered feverishly into the new-heaped earth, the rails bolted down in position. The trains began to rumble slowly, cautiously across.

Meanwhile the Whites beyond the river had not wasted that month. They had destroyed the railway-track as thoroughly as they could. It had to be relaid, mile by mile, by the Red vanguard. Progress was slower than ever before. Despite all their locomotives they were moving at the speed of a man cutting his way through a jungle, or of a climber panting up the last few thousand feet of Everest.

News came from Tsaritsin, and it was not particularly good news.

For Tsaritsin was itself a beleaguered town, and when Voroshilov led his little army into it a few days later, he was hailed not as the hero of an incredible escape but as the head of a relieving force which was expected, in some miraculous manner, to deliver the place from its besiegers.

The irony of the situation must have brought the slow smile to Voroshilov's chubby face.

VII

BESIEGED WITH STALIN

VOROSHILOV was promptly appointed commander-in-chief of the Red forces at Tsaritsin. Actually, his sphere of influence extended far up and down the Volga, but in that vast country communications were often difficult to maintain, and a great deal had to be left to the initiative of local leaders. In the same way, he himself was nominally under the orders of Vazetis, a regular army general, who had been entrusted with the supreme command of the Red forces throughout South Russia, of which Voroshilov's army represented the left wing.

In the autumn Voroshilov was sent a Political Commissar from Moscow—none other than his old friend Stalin. Once more the pair set to work in harmonious partnership.

Voroshilov was glad enough of the assistance. Prior to Stalin's arrival, everything had fallen on his shoulders. In the words of an eye-witness, Tarassov-Rodionov: "Voroshilov was everywhere. If there was trouble with the men loading the grain barges, he went down to the wharves and straightened it out. The Mensheviks obstructed our proposals in the Soviets—he got them expelled. The defeatists among the factory-workers talked of downing tools—he put heart into them again."

Stalin relieved him of the political side of his work,

leaving him free to concentrate on his military measures. Stalin's chief role in Tsaritsin was to weed out the "Fifth Column" of traitors and waverers inside the town.

That so important a member of the party had been sent (incidentally, the party had now formally adopted its modern name of the Communist Party) indicates how vital the defence of Tsaritsin was considered even in far-away Moscow.

From the military point of view Tsaritsin was of great strategic value because it represented a Red sword-point, thrust between the ribs of the White armies.

Economically, it commanded the great water-way of the Volga, and enabled the Reds to send convoys of grain-barges up-river to the starving cities of Central Russia. At this time the threat to the Communist power in the capital came even more from hunger than from the guns of its enemies. Lenin had promised bread: by holding the Volga open for the transport of that bread, Voroshilov and Stalin were helping him to keep his word.

Tsaritsin was beset on three sides by the armies of General Krasnov, who was secretly receiving supplies from the Germans. Only on the east side, where the town backed on the river, was there free communication with the outside world. Yet, as in Madrid between 1936 and 1938, the work and the daily life of the place went on, heedless of shells and bullets.

Voroshilov remembered the munition-works where he

himself had stood at a bench four years before. He got them working again.

He rallied the nondescript troops under his command and forged them into the Tenth Army of the Republic. And because he wanted to assist and maintain contact with the guerilla bands who were fighting even hundreds of miles away, he concentrated on making that army mobile. He commandeered all the motor vehicles in the district and used them as tenders for transporting his infantry. And, though the main railway line towards Moscow had been cut by Krasnov, he continued to use his armoured trains to the fullest possible advantage.

It was in these months that Voroshilov, first among the military leaders of the world, conceived the idea of the mechanised army, which twenty years later he was to develop to an undreamt-of extent.

Curiously, he did not at this time make much use of the traditional Russian mobile arm—the cavalry. Perhaps it was because the horse was so essentially the weapon of the hated Cossack and the Tsarist regular army, and unfamiliar to the miners, industrial workers, and townsmen generally who formed the shock-troops of the Revolution. Lorries and locomotives such men could understand. Otherwise, they were happier fighting on foot.

Voroshilov himself, thanks to his farm experience as a boy, was a good horseman and used a horse frequently for getting round the lines. During the siege, he singled out

and promoted Budyonny, an ex-sergeant of the regular cavalry. A little later, when Voroshilov was entrusted with the task of organising this arm, he bethought him of Budyonny. To-day that ex-sergeant, still very much alive, is one of the legendary heroes of the Civil War and one of the few cavalry generals who is likely to have much influence in any European war to come.

But for the moment Voroshilov was thinking in terms of petrol and coal.

He continued to hold Tsaritsin. Krasnov hammered in vain. The welcome grain-barges crept slowly up the Volga to the hungry cities of the north, while in Tsaritsin the workshops hummed and the Tenth Army became more and more a disciplined fighting machine.

In the stillness of the autumn nights, when the roar and rattle of warfare had died down and flashes no longer lit up the level horizon, the old friends Voroshilov and Stalin talked together. And because they were Communists they talked not sentimentally of days gone by in Baku, but of politics, of to-day and of to-morrow. Especially they talked of Trotsky.

There is a common misconception in England that Trotsky and Stalin fell out after the death of Lenin, like two heirs squabbling over a rich inheritance.

Actually, it was no personal issue at all, though no doubt the personal antipathy of the men acted and reacted on their political disagreements. But if one reads

the history of Russian revolutionary politics from the beginnings of the twentieth century, one sees that the two men were in constant opposition to one another, and that Voroshilov, from the first time his voice was heard in the conferences, took the side of Stalin.

But it was in 1918, during the siege of Tsaritsin, that the antagonism of these three men flared up into violent strife.

Trotsky, then Minister for War, was acting in an extremely dictatorial manner which did not appeal at all to men who, having been through the mill themselves for years, remembered that Trotsky had returned from a comfortable American exile only the previous year. The chief grounds of complaint against him were that he tended to rely too much on the old professionals, like Vazetis, and too little on the Bolshevik "amateurs," like Voroshilov. Further, his ideas of discipline were sometimes more akin to those of the Tsar than that ideal of voluntary, self-imposed discipline which the Communists favoured. He was rather too fond, in many people's opinion, of threatening subordinates with the firing-squad if they disobeyed orders which, being the men on the spot, they thought it unwise to carry out.

Voroshilov had never taken very seriously the idea that officially he was under the orders of an ex-Tsarist general some hundreds of miles away. But to Trotsky's rigid, theoretical mind this was of prime importance. It mattered little if Vazetis was totally ignorant of the conditions existing at Tsaritsin and along the Volga, and that, as

a conventionally-trained regular army officer of the old school, he would have completely failed to appreciate Voroshilov's new-fangled motor-car army. It was almost better (in Trotsky's view) to lose Tsaritsin by "correct" methods than to save it by a violation of strict military discipline.

Voroshilov had good reason to distrust his Minister for War.

When he asked for reinforcements, Trotsky sent him either none or troops of such unreliability that they quickly deserted to the Whites. This may have been deliberate sabotage of the Revolution, or it may have been a purely personal desire to hinder Voroshilov and Stalin, or it may have been because he honestly had no better troops to send. However that may be, the soldiers sent *did* desert, and Trotsky was not thereby endeared to his subordinates in Tsaritsin.

If there was one thing Trotsky did send without stint it was telegrams. They were continually arriving at headquarters, demanding explanations, demanding instant obedience, threatening every possible penalty.

To-day, in the museum devoted to the history of the Civil War, visitors may see one of these telegrams, triumphantly informing Voroshilov that he was to hand over his command to Nossovitch (yet another of the old Tsarist regulars of whom Trotsky was so fond).

Written across the telegram is the terse comment : " No notice to be taken." The handwriting is Stalin's.

But it was clearly impossible for this state of affairs to continue. Trotsky's whole position as War Minister was threatened. He must bring Voroshilov to heel or himself resign.

He turned his powers of persuasion on Lenin, and, often as those two were in opposition, Lenin always listened to him.

The long and short of it was that Stalin was recalled, and Trotsky went down to Tsaritsin in person, thinking it would be an easy matter to discipline Voroshilov alone. There was a dramatic meeting. . . .

"Tell me, briefly, Comrade Voroshilov—how have my orders as War Minister, and those of the commanders at the front, been observed here in Tsaritsin?"

Voroshilov answered—briefly. "We have executed such orders as we thought fit."

"So I thought. Comrade, you will henceforth carry out orders to the letter, exactly as and when you receive them. If a single one is disobeyed, you will be brought instantly before the Revolutionary Tribunal and shot."

Voroshilov refused to work under such conditions. He was transferred to the Ukraine.

It was not long before Tsaritsin fell into the hands of General Wrangel.

If Trotsky was not a knave (and he was certainly not a fool), there were at least times when he was extremely unlucky.

THE DESTRUCTION OF DENIKIN

IT is often a source of puzzlement to English people why some of our war memorials bear the dates "1914-1918" and others "1914-1919." The reason is that, long after the historic moment on November 11th, British soldiers continued to fight and die on Russian soil, not against the Central Powers but against the Bolsheviks.

Mr. Balfour, when Foreign Secretary, stated in the House of Commons in answer to a question: "No, sir. We do not propose to interfere with the internal arrangements of Russia. She must manage her own affairs."

Yet a little later (on November 17th, 1919, to be precise) his Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, declared in that same House:

"There is no country that has spent more in supporting the anti-revolutionary elements in Russia than this country has . . . not one. France, Japan, America—Britain has contributed more than all these Powers put together."

In another speech, at the Mansion House, he estimated that his Government had spent the sum of 100 millions in their attempt to upset the Soviets.

Voroshilov was one of the human reasons why this tremendous expenditure (for which the readers of these words are still paying in taxation) did not achieve the desired object.

When Germany collapsed at the end of 1918, there was

naturally a withdrawal of the German pressure in the Ukraine and elsewhere. But this relief was more than counter-balanced by the manner in which the Allies intensified their own efforts to overthrow the Soviets.

Three White Russian generals threatened the Bolshevik power.

Yudenitch marched through the Baltic provinces to the gateway of St. Petersburg. Admiral Kolchak swept westwards out of Siberia, his troops brimming over the Urals ready to sweep the plains of European Russia. And in the south, Voroshilov's front, Denikin advanced triumphantly to within two hundred miles of Moscow itself.

Nominally, the policy of the foreign powers was one of "non-intervention"—it was similar to the non-intervention observed by the German and Italian Governments in the Spanish War. The *Daily Express* correspondent who accompanied Denikin's army describes how English troops—air-pilots, gunners, and other specialists—were present throughout, and, though they were supposed to be "instructors," taking no part in the hostilities, they could never resist playing an active role when the moment came. Sometimes, indeed, the White Russian units were only saved from disaster by the prompt and vigorous action of the handful of British airmen.

Similarly, in Siberia, there was a popular song about Kolchak:

*" Uniform British,
Epaulettes from France,
Japanese tobacco,
Kolchak leads the dance !*

*" Uniform in tatters,
Epaulettes all gone,
So is the tobacco,
Kolchak's day is done."*

It was easy to sing that afterwards, when Kolchak had been defeated, tried, and executed. But in the dark days of 1919 this lavish foreign assistance of arms, men, and money, was no joke.

Early in that year, Voroshilov had been acting as People's Commissar for the Interior of the Ukraine, commander of the military region of Kharkhov, and commander of the Fourteenth Army. In the summer Denikin made his big push, captured Kharkhov and overran the Ukraine. By October 13th he was at Orel, within 200 miles of Moscow, and pushing on rapidly to Tula, a town formerly famous for the manufacture of samovars but by then far more significant as the seat of a flourishing small-arms industry. With Tula in his hands, Denikin would have gained an invaluable military objective and be within striking distance of the capital. Simultaneously, Yudenitch seemed about to storm St. Petersburg, and the world had plenty of excuse for thinking that the days of the Bolsheviks were numbered.

In this, the darkest hour of the Civil War, Voroshilov came into his own again.

Lenin issued the slogan: "All for the fight against Denikin!" Stalin, Voroshilov, and the ex-sergeant Budyonny, were sent to reorganise the shattered Southern Front. Stalin agreed to take on the job on one condition only—that he should be entirely free from interference by Trotsky. That condition was accepted.

Red reinforcements were hurriedly massing to bar Denikin's advance and to counter-attack. Trotsky and his protégés had drawn up a plan for this counter-attack. It was to be launched on the east flank, right over at Tsaritsin, whence they hoped to sweep down over the steppes of the Don and reach the Black Sea at Novorossisk.

Voroshilov, with his unrivalled knowledge of the whole front, saw the flaws in this plan and emphasised them to Stalin.

It would mean fighting their way through the heart of the Cossack country, where the population was least friendly to the Revolution. It was a roadless land, where mechanised columns would operate with difficulty, and there was only the one direct railroad between Tsaritsin and Novorossisk, which would greatly limit their use of armoured trains and rail transport.

Voroshilov favoured the alternative scheme which Stalin finally submitted to the Central Committee.

According to this, the main Red counter-blow should

be delivered southwards against Kharkhov, thence through the Don Bas, and on to the great city of Rostov at the mouth of the Don. This route ensured a friendly population which could be counted upon to sabotage the retreat of the enemy and welcome the Reds as deliverers. It ensured a thick network of railways and roads which, if not good by western standards, were as good as could be expected in Russia. Finally, the plan—if successful—would restore to the Soviet power all the economic riches of the Don Bas.

The plan was accepted. Voroshilov was given the task of uniting all the scattered mounted units into the First Cavalry Corps, and a few weeks later the First Cavalry Army, of the Republic. In this work Budyonny became his right-hand man.

October and November of 1919 saw the carrying through of a great cavalry campaign, the like of which Allied generals of the Western Front had long since relegated to the files of history.

On October 19th, the Red Army drove Denikin out of Orel, the most northerly town he had reached in his drive for the capital. On the 23rd came the electrifying news that Yudenitch and his army had been smashed the day before when only eight miles outside St. Petersburg. Heartened by this resounding victory from the Northern Front, the Red cavalry swept forward again and captured the important city of Voronezh.

By the last day of October, General Denikin was in full retreat. Moscow had been saved.

But Voroshilov and his comrades were not content to have saved Moscow. Their plan provided for the complete destruction of Denikin. He must be rolled into the Black Sea and sunk for ever.

The plan worked. The First Cavalry Army of the Republic went roaring southwards over the plain like an autumn gale, and like autumn leaves the White troops were blown before it.

On November 19th Voroshilov rode into Kursk, an important railway junction and industrial town. Denikin was now almost cleared from Russia proper. The log huts were giving place to the white-washed cottages of the Ukraine. On December 11th the Reds were in Kharkhov again, on the 13th in Poltava, the 14th in Novo-Nikolaievsk. Their advance seemed irresistible. By the last day of 1919 they had cut Denikin's main army in half, and the Donets coal-field was theirs.

Good news came from the far-flung wings of the Southern Front. In the west, the Reds re-took the lovely old capital of the Ukraine, many-spired Kiev on its wooded cliffs above the Dnieper. In the east, on January 3rd, Tsaritsin (to-day renamed Stalingrad) passed finally into Soviet hands.

Voroshilov and his cavalry rode on. January 6th saw them at Taganrog, where the Don flows into the Sea of Azov. On the 10th they drove Denikin out of the great

city of Rostov, across the river on to the North Caucasian steppe.

It was not the end of Denikin—quite. He reorganised his forces on the heights overlooking the river, and for six weeks withstood the frontal attacks which Voroshilov (contrary to his own views) was ordered to launch against them. Finally, by a brilliant outflanking movement which just anticipated a similar move by the White cavalry, he administered the *coup de grâce* to Denikin.

Denikin's remnants fled southwards to the Black Sea coast, where British and French warships were waiting to evacuate them. The Allied Governments now realised that they had backed the wrong horse, and that the White cause was lost.

On April 2nd, Admiral de Robeck, the British High Commissioner in Constantinople, sent a Note to the White Russian authorities, urging them to accept the terms offered by the Red victors and saying (with personal reference to Denikin):

"The British Government has, in the past, given him a large amount of assistance, *and this is the only reason why he has been able to continue the struggle up to the present*; therefore they feel justified in hoping that he will accept their proposals."

Voroshilov, in that epic advance through the Ukraine, had beaten more than a mere faction of his fellow-countrymen. He had prevailed against governments which, at that moment, were the masters of Europe.

WITH the Soviet Government now supreme in at least the main European Russian territories, Voroshilov must have looked forward not, perhaps, to a rest but at least to a change of occupation.

He was still the right side of forty, good looking, with blue eyes and chestnut hair, a lover of life and of culture in its broadest sense. Circumstances had made him primarily a soldier, a destroyer, but it was the type of destruction which may fairly be likened to the demolition of a slum. He felt he was clearing away the rotten old fabric of Tsarist Russia to build anew. Had he been able to choose his task in that spring of 1920, he might have chosen the reconstruction of the Don Bas and the Ukraine, the country of his childhood for whose liberation he had fought.

But Communists, though permitted preferences, do not make the final choice. They go where their party sends them.

For that same reason, it is not possible to say much about Voroshilov's private life. Married he was, by now, to a dancer named Catherine Davidovna, and sensational stories—of very doubtful truth—are related about her flamboyant behaviour. But public personalities in the Soviet Union have always regarded their private lives as their own business. They neither write memoirs nor

supply gossip titbits to foreign journalists—their own Soviet journalists would not, in any case, be very interested. The Kings and Queens and other notables of the world must envy this unique privacy, though it falls hard sometimes on the biographer.

Actually, the life of a Communist like Voroshilov at this time was so indissolubly compounded with the history of his country that there was little time for any private life at all. Wife and friends were seen when possible, but home-life was non-existent. Voroshilov ate and slept where the stream of events carried him, one day in a log-cabin, the next in the mansion of some former aristocrat or millionaire. He read in such moments as he could snatch from fighting, speaking, and organising.

Now, in the spring of 1920 when he imagined he had freed the Ukraine, a new peril threatened it. Wearily he swung himself into the saddle again. . . .

This time the threat came from Poland.

This ancient kingdom had regained its independence at the end of the Great War—an independence which had been gladly recognised not only by the Allies but by the Soviets, who had declared that—unlike all previous Russian governments—they had not the least desire to hold down other races within their boundaries.

Unfortunately there were some Poles, like Pilsudsky, who were not satisfied with a republic of their fellow-countrymen. Having endured oppression for centuries,

they now wanted some one they themselves could oppress. They dreamed of restoring the boundaries of their short-lived Empire of 1772, which meant carving out a great tract of Soviet territory, especially in the Ukraine.

Poland went militarist. The *Times* Warsaw correspondent cabled: "Every fifth man in the streets seems to be in uniform. One cannot help feeling that it is a pity that so many young men who should be working on their farms, or finishing their education, are doing drill instead."

France and Britain must take a large share of responsibility for encouraging the Poles. On January 5th, 1920, the *Morning Post* said: "The answer to the question whether there shall be a Polish offensive in the spring against the Bolsheviks lies largely with England and France." And two days later the *Times* said:

"If Poland is going to be helped and encouraged by France and England to carry on the war with a view to upsetting the Soviet régime, it is just as important to relieve the internal economic difficulties of the Poles as to supply them with military necessities."

These internal difficulties included famine, and the wide prevalence of tuberculosis, typhus, and dysentery. It would certainly appear that the Poles would have been better advised to set their own house in order instead of embarking on an invasion of yet further devastated territory.

This brief historical sketch of the general position is essential to the understanding of Voroshilov's career, and

to an appreciation of the difficulties with which he was faced. Nor is it without interest in the light of present-day affairs. We have heard much of the Poles' inability to co-operate with the Russians, but the events of 1920 would have given many men in Voroshilov's position a life-long prejudice against Poles.

There is no evidence that it did so. Voroshilov's whole political background makes it impossible for him to think in terms of nationalism. If he hates Hitler, it is not because the Germans drove him out of Lugansk in 1918. His feelings for the Polish masses, the German and the Japanese masses, are utterly different from those he entertains for the statesmen of those countries.

This was illustrated in a remarkable speech he made to the Red Army a year or two ago, a speech such as probably no military leader has ever made before. After speaking with his usual confidence of the Red Army's ability to defeat the enemy in any war, he added significantly "with the minimum loss of life not only to our own forces but to the other side."

Those words revealed a striking humanity. Voroshilov is no bloodthirsty militarist—he has seen too much of war in the front line, and his political philosophy has taught him the essential unity of mankind, irrespective of frontiers. But neither is he a pacifist. If an enemy attacks, that enemy must be resisted and beaten immediately and decisively.

A clean knock-out in the first round is more humane than a victory on points after fifteen rounds of gruelling punishment. So, too, it is the clumsy chess player who—if he knows himself stronger than his opponent—cannot mate without first slaughtering half the pieces on the board.

But we have wandered from the 1920 war. . . .

The Poles waited till Denikin's defeat was certain. They knew that if Denikin won, and became the new ruler of Russia, Poland would eventually be reconquered by him. Also, if he did the trick of upsetting the Bolsheviks, neither England nor France would see any reason to finance a Polish invasion.

As soon as Denikin was out of the way, they presented demands to the Soviet Government which even the *Times*, on May 1st, described as "fantastic."

Needless to say, the terms were rejected. The Poles promptly overran the Western Ukraine and rode triumphantly into Kiev. This event followed a few days after a Polish national anniversary, and most unfortunately a telegram was sent to Pilsudsky in the name of King George V, conveying his congratulations and good wishes for the future of the Polish state. This ambiguous message was naturally given the worst interpretation in Russia, and did not increase the affection there for the British Government.

Voroshilov and his First Cavalry Army were summoned hastily across South Russia from the Don steppe where

they had been mopping up the stragglers of Denikin's forces. They were placed on the left (southern) wing of the line which the Soviets had formed hurriedly against the Poles. Voroshilov found himself now under the supreme command of Tukachevsky, who was later to become his own lieutenant and to plot his destruction.

Stalin was once more working with Voroshilov and Budyonny on the left wing, while Tukachevsky was in close association with their old enemy Trotsky at headquarters. Even in 1920, looking back, we can see the dividing line distinctly drawn. . . .

Again Voroshilov and Budyonny made one of their spectacular advances, cutting through the Poles just as they had cut through the Whites in the previous autumn. Early in June they rode round behind Kiev, cutting its rail communications with Poland and forcing the Poles to evacuate it. They rode on, triumphantly, over the frontiers of the Ukraine and into Galicia. It was said by unwilling admirers on the other side that there had been no cavalry work to equal it since the campaigns of Napoleon. Meanwhile, the Soviet armies in the north and centre pushed forward until they crossed the Vistula. On June 30th the Poles were retreating all along their 500-mile front, and by mid-August Tukachevsky had reached the outer forts of Warsaw itself.

What happened then?

Historians differ. Some say that Trotsky sabotaged

the Soviet victory which was imminent, by starving the troops of munitions and failing to organise the rear. Others blame Voroshilov and Stalin, who continued their impetuous Prince Rupert-like advance in the south instead of immediately obeying Tukachevsky's order to turn northwards and strike Warsaw from the flank. There is no question that, wisely or unwisely, Voroshilov disobeyed an order from his superior officer, and with the approval of Stalin. Nor is there any question that the Poles, under the French general, Weygand, flown to them express from Paris, launched a counter-offensive against Tukachevsky and rolled him back as decisively as they themselves had been rolled back a little while before.

Voroshilov at least brought back his own army intact, out of the jaws of the enemy. When the Russo-Polish armistice was signed at Riga that October, whereby Russia lost the territories she regained in 1939, his reputation had stood the test of that tragically unnecessary war as well as any man's.

Not that he had time to think about reputation. For, ere the delegates had lifted their pens to sign the armistice, there was fighting again in the Ukraine, and he was sent to serve there. General Wrangel, an old comrade of Denikin's, had launched yet another counter-revolutionary attack from a base in the Crimea, and was driving across the Ukraine towards Moscow. Voroshilov joined the Red forces which drove Wrangel back into the Crimean peninsula and finally, after an amazing surprise

attack which involved wading through the sea in the pitch darkness of a November night, stormed his fortified base and hurled him into the sea. Or rather, more accurately if less romantically, into the waiting warships of the Allies, which promptly carried him to the safety of Constantinople.

Voroshilov must often have pondered whimsically the difference between the lots of the victorious general and the vanquished. These White commanders could retire, one by one, to inglorious but not entirely uncomfortable exile on the boulevards of Paris. The victor remained on the field, but for him there seemed no rest. There was always another campaign to fight.

In March, 1921, he went as delegate to the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party. But ten days before this conference opened, a serious mutiny broke out among the garrison and sailors at Kronstadt, the naval base which commands the sea approach to Leningrad. Voroshilov had to lay aside, for a moment, his conference agenda and speaker's notes, and take to the sword again. He was sent to Kronstadt which he attacked across the ice-bound sea, storming the forts which were traditionally regarded as impregnable. Returning to the conference, he was for the first time elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. His political position was now thoroughly established.

This Tenth Congress, at which Voroshilov now came to the fore as a statesman no less than a general, was held

at a time of crisis in the Party, but Lenin's policy, supported by Voroshilov and Stalin as usual, triumphed by a large majority. Incidentally, those people who imagine that the "political purge" is a recent invention of Stalin's may be surprised to learn that the 1921 Congress was followed by the expulsion of no fewer than 170,000 members of the party, or one-quarter of the entire body. Judging by the Kronstadt mutiny and other events, it was not a day too soon.

Voroshilov's long period of unbroken active service was at last nearing its end. Later that year there was a dispute with the Chinese Government over the Chinese Eastern Railway, which, though it ran through Chinese territory, was a life-line to Vladivostok and was partly owned by Russia. Normally, the Soviet Government had renounced all the foreign investments and interests held by the Tsarist Government in other lands, just as it had scrapped all the unequal treaties imposed by the Tsar on weaker countries like Persia. But this railway was a different matter. Russia was prepared to fight to retain her undoubted rights in it, and fight she did. Voroshilov went east, over the Trans-Siberian, and saw service against the War Lords of Manchuria. In this way he obtained first-hand experience of that terrain, now the Japanese puppet-state of Manchukuo, over which any great war in the Far East is likely to be fought in the future.

X

ARCHITECT OF THE RED ARMY

In the next few years Voroshilov's position, both in the military sphere and in the inner political councils of his party, was strengthened steadily.

In 1922 he held the military command of the North Caucasus, scene of his final victory over Denikin. The little town of Voroshilovsk, east of the Kuban River, commemorates this period.

On the death of Lenin, early in 1924, no time was lost in promoting him to the vital military command of the Moscow area. The former holder of this post, the somewhat distrusted Tukachevsky, was moved out of harm's way to Central Asia.

Late the following year, Michael Frunze, the Minister of War, died. Voroshilov was appointed to his place, which he has occupied ever since—probably a unique record among the War Ministries of present-day Europe. Almost immediately afterwards he was also elected to the Politbureau, the extremely powerful committee of ten men which thrashes out the main lines of Soviet policy. His political position was now secure, so long as he remained faithful to the general line of the Communist Party. Trotsky, his former superior and consistent enemy, was powerless and discredited. Tukachevsky, his potential rival in the military sphere, was relegated to a

subordinate position, which goes a long way to explaining the plot of 1937.

Firmly entrenched in the Kremlin, Voroshilov set to work happily on a task dear to his heart—the creation of an efficient, educated fighting force. Until lately, his department was responsible not only for the Army but for the Navy and the Air Force as well. Now that the Soviet Union has embarked on a big programme of naval expansion, it has been necessary to set up a separate Ministry for this, and he has been relieved of this part of his work.

As Marshal and Minister, he enjoys a great advantage over his opposite numbers abroad, where usually the functions are exercised by two very different individuals—a civilian politician who (as in England) may be changed every year or so, and a soldier, such as the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who is outside politics, has no say in his country's foreign policy, and no direct influence on the amount budgeted for armaments.

Voroshilov has himself fought on almost every front where Soviet forces are likely to operate in any future conflict—including the Far East. He has served in many capacities, ranging from the squad-leader of the old Lugansk days to the marshal of to-day.

At the same time he is enough of a civilian to appreciate the full importance of the economic and industrial fields, of propaganda and of education.

Education. . . . Always we come back to it. He does not believe in "cannon-fodder."

Most military experts agree with him in demanding a high standard of technical education for the modern soldier. The weapons of warfare to-day—giant aeroplanes, tanks, and so on—require intelligent, skilled mechanics to work them, not to mention large numbers of experts in chemistry, mathematics, meteorology, and other sciences.

Voroshilov wants more than that. He demands political education, so that the men know not only *how* to fight, but *why* it may be necessary to do so.

Finally, he wants general cultural education. Every soldier is now encouraged to learn at least one language, English, French, or German. Parties are sent to visit museums and art galleries. The Red Army has its own theatres, its newspapers and magazines, its amateur dramatic societies, literary circles, exhibitions of water-colours and oil-paintings.

In his speech to the Communist Party Congress in Moscow this year, Voroshilov said:

"The books in the Red Army libraries at present amount to 25 million volumes. The troops buy 1,725,000 newspapers daily, and read 471,500 magazines regularly. The money now spent on cultural and educational work amounts to 230 million roubles as against 72 million roubles in 1934.

"A great deal of good work has been done, and is being done, for the Red Army by the Union of Art Workers. Entire theatres, the best musicians, actors, singers, and so on, readily bring their talents to the Army."

It is important to remember that the school-leaving age is eighteen, and that only about one-third of the young men eligible for military service are taken into the full-time forces each year. These are the pick, mentally as well as physically, of the Soviet youth. So some of the facts which, to English readers, might suggest an army of "high-brows" are not at all incredible when looked into.

What are Voroshilov's main other achievements during his long period of office?

First, in pure defence. He supervised the building of strong lines of fortification which he felt confident would prevent any more invasions of the Ukraine or the other Soviet lands along the western border. A great No Man's Land was created in advance, sometimes by the burning of forest, sometimes by the evacuation of farm-land. In view of the immense length of this frontier he did not attempt to build a continuous rampart comparable with the Maginot or Siegfried Lines. Instead, there was a complicated system of strong points, dotted about in such a way that not a square inch of country, not the deepest hollow, fell outside the field of fire of at least one of them. Now that the frontier has moved westwards, he

is busy fortifying the new line, which has the additional natural advantage of the Polish rivers as a kind of moat.

These strongholds are sunk in the waving grasses of the plain, camouflaged from enemy observers. They are claimed to be bomb-proof and gas-proof. Similar secret fortresses are dotted along the Black Sea coasts, the Pacific, and the Far Eastern land-frontiers. Those who have been inside them speak not only of their formidable defensive qualities but of the excellent living quarters—gay interior decoration, bookcases, radio-sets, and gramophones. Some of these forts, according to the *Moscow News*, have accommodation for the wives and families of the commanders.

Fire power, which can be offensive or defensive, is one favourite standard of modern military efficiency. A force should be reckoned not only as a number of men in uniform, but as an amount of metal which can be hurled through the air from the muzzles of its guns. Taking as his yardstick a rifle corps (which in the Red Army means about 60,000 men with all their tanks, guns, etc.), Voroshilov has shown that:—

A German rifle corps fires 59,509 kilograms per minute.

A French rifle corps fires 60,981 kilograms per minute, and a Soviet rifle corps fires 78,932 kilograms per minute.

One may be tempted to retort: "So what? Suppose they don't hit anything?"

But Voroshilov, himself a crack rifle-shot, has been at

pains to educate the Soviet peoples in marksmanship. There is a little metal badge, the Voroshilov Sharpshooter's Badge, which is worn by literally millions of the civil population, women as well as men. Thanks to this campaign of his, Soviet marksmen have won the international contest sponsored by Great Britain in 1935, 1937, and 1938.

Always an enthusiast for mechanisation, he has carried it to a high degree. Of the great armies of the world, the Red is the most highly mechanised, and with its native reserves of oil it is free from the fear that (as in Germany or Italy) lack of fuel may bring it to a standstill.

It was under Voroshilov's command, too, that the now-famous mass-parachute-jump was evolved, whereby thousands of picked men can be dropped from the air well behind the enemy lines, complete not only with their machine-guns but even with light field-pieces and lorries. Although this tactic is now, naturally, being imitated elsewhere, it may be questioned whether any other army could use it to the same advantage. Voroshilov himself is in a position to use it against Germany, for instance, and drop not simply two thousand Russian soldiers but two thousand armed German exiles, who would immediately meet with a welcome from large sections of the population.

Yet another development which has marked his period of office has been the setting up of two separate Far

Eastern armies, entirely self-sufficient, and so independent of the Trans-Siberian railway to bring them reinforcements and supplies. Colonists have been encouraged to settle in the Far East and produce food. Factories and mines have been established there. To-day the Far Eastern forces are capable of conducting a war against Japan single-handed, without needing a man or a gun from European Russia.

But Voroshilov's interests—as one would expect from his character—have never stopped short at military affairs. He shares with his friend Stalin a remarkable capacity for switching his attention to a fresh subject, grasping the essential facts, and in a few brief words giving the expert subordinate the lead he requires for action.

Anna Louise Strong, the famous American journalist who has made Moscow her home for many years, tells how she carried a certain dispute to Stalin for arbitration. It was not a big matter—important rather in principle than in itself. But Stalin heard both sides, and Voroshilov came in and listened, and several other prominent Soviet leaders found time to help in clearing up the matter.

Voroshilov (and Stalin too) took a deep personal interest in the expedition which flew to the North Pole and established the now immortal meteorological station on the ice-floe. They both took part in the preliminary discussions, and when, months later, the Arctic heroes

landed safely home at the Moscow air-port, they were there to welcome them in Russian fashion with smacking kisses and bouquets, and to drive with them through the streets to the public banquet in their honour.

Voroshilov has never lost his interest in agriculture, and it is not unknown for him to appear at a conference of collective farmers—and find something to say.

Quite lately, he has been taking a hand in film production. The Moscow Film Studios have started to make a picture entitled "The First Cavalry Army," an epic of the Polish campaign described in the previous chapter. One of his former men, Vishnevsky, has written the scenario, in which skilfully made-up actors will play the roles of Stalin, Budyonny, Voroshilov, and other still-living personages. Voroshilov has delved deep into his personal memories of those days, and corrected the scenario-writer and director on a number of points of fact.

XI

VOROSHILOV FACES THE FUTURE

VOROSHILOV faces the future with the same anxiety which every man of intelligence and humanity must feel in an age of barbarism and war such as threaten the civilised world at the present time.

There is no militarism in his make-up. Proud as he is of the immense fighting-machine he has built up, he suffers from no ambition to try it out in the field of action. He is all too conscious of the suffering which any war will bring to Europe, and the set-back it will inflict upon the peaceful progress of his own country.

At the same time, he faces whatever the future may send with a confidence which other War Ministers may well envy.

He knows that the ill-equipped Red Armies which conquered twenty years ago are now as much things of the past as that Tsarist "steam-roller" which so lamentably failed to function between 1914 and 1917. He knows that his new Red Armies have first-class arms, equipment, education, and morale, and that they have the backing, almost 100 per cent., of an enthusiastic civil population, who have themselves been practising shooting, A.R.P., and other forms of "National Service," not merely for the past few months but for years. (When the present

writer was living in Russia in 1935, A.R.P. drill and black-outs were common occurrences.)

He knows, too, that his forces have the support of a nationalised industry working in complete harmony and under the same political direction—an industry in which profiteering and labour disputes are equally inconceivable. Further that Russia is the only first-class Power (America apart) which has a large proportion of its industrial bases situated beyond reach of enemy bombers—even if Leningrad and Moscow, Kiev and Kharkhov and Odessa, could be paralysed by air attack, there are many new industrial cities in the Ural Mountains, in Siberia, and in Soviet Central Asia which could carry on uninterrupted with the manufacture of munitions, 'planes, and other necessities of war. Voroshilov knows that he has one-sixth of the world behind his own lines, apart from any possible allies. He can snap his fingers at blockade, whether of food, oil, steel, or the other vital materials.

His proclaimed policy is one of counter-attack. He has long declared that any war against the Soviet Union will not be fought on Soviet territory. If a foreign power attacks either the Soviet Union or one of her small neighbours whom she has guaranteed, Voroshilov will send the world's biggest bombing fleet into action against his enemy's bases, and hurl his huge land armada of tanks and armoured cars across the plains of Eastern Europe, at the same time relying on anti-Fascists in the enemy

countries to rise up and, first by sabotage, then by open revolt, to stab his adversaries in the back.

Voroshilov knows too, that, terrible as the devastation of any war, however short, will be, the Soviet Union will suffer less and recover more rapidly, because of its vastness, than any of the other countries.

He is well aware that, war or no war, he may sometime have to take over an even greater responsibility than he has at present. He may succeed to that political leadership which Lenin and Stalin have held successively.

There is no certainty. Stalin is only two years older than Voroshilov, though his health is probably inferior. Voroshilov, at fifty-eight, is a little stouter than in the days when he led his cavalry across the Polish plain, but he still cuts an athletic figure as he canters through the Kremlin gates. Even if he survives Stalin, there is no absolute certainty that he will succeed to the leadership, which is not vested in any particular office—otherwise, Rykov or Molotov might to-day be occupying the position Lenin had.

Whatever happens, Voroshilov can be relied upon to remain loyal to the traditions of the Revolution which he helped Lenin and Stalin to make and defend. He is not, like them, an original political thinker—whereas they have both written important political works, his own writings have been on military subjects—but, with the Soviet Union now moving in a steady and orderly manner

towards its ultimate goal of Communism, there is not the same need for its figure-head to be of Lenin's intellectual calibre.

"The Bolsheviks," said Stalin recently, "remind us of the hero of Greek mythology, Antaeus. They, like Antaeus, are strong because they maintain connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to them, suckled them and reared them. And as long as they maintain connection with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible. That is the clue to the invincibility of Bolshevik leadership."

And that, too, is the political faith—the religion, almost—of Clem Voroshilov, one-time beggar-boy, shepherd, factory-hand, whom sensational journalists now sometimes write of as "the Soviet War Lord," but who would prefer to call himself merely "Red Army man."

THE END.

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