Screenplay for the film "1919 — Anton Denikin. Historical Chronicles with Nikolai Svanidze" written by Marina Zhukova, translated by AI, and preceded by a summary also written by AI

Screenplay Summary:

The text follows the story of the Russian Civil War on the Southern Front between 1917 and 1919 through the figure of General Anton Ivanovich Denikin. It begins by contrasting two versions of the same soldiers' song: the Bolshevik one, "For the power of the Soviets," and the older, patriotic one sung by the Whites, "For Holy Rus'." Denikin, the son of a former serf and a professional officer, becomes one of the main leaders of the Volunteer Army, formed from the generals involved in Kornilov's failed coup and a few thousand officers and cadets.

Already in the autumn of 1917, Russia appears deranged: trains packed with soldiers full of hatred and revolutionary hysteria, destroying everything, believing in Lenin's promises and absurd myths. The generals escape from prison almost unhindered; no one yet knows whom to arrest. In 1917–1918, the Volunteer Army numbers only a few thousand men, poorly armed, poorly equipped, with almost no support from the population and not even from the Cossacks, who are long hesitant and sometimes deeply influenced by Bolshevik propaganda. Out of this is born the legendary "Ice March" and First Kuban Campaign, where a tiny army, top-heavy with generals and senior officers, marches through snow and mud with almost no ammunition, living on bold raids and sacrifice.

The Cossacks, divided, swing between Reds and Whites before discovering the Bolshevik policy of "decossackisation" and physical destruction of their elites. Gradually, Denikin's forces grow: recruitment of Red prisoners, partial support from Cossacks, military successes in the North Caucasus, the capture of Ekaterinodar, and consolidation on the Black Sea coast. At the same time, the Red Army is transformed from voluntary Red Guards into a mass conscript peasant army, led by old tsarist officers rehabilitated by Trotsky and reinforced by "internationalist" mercenaries, especially Chinese.

The narrative strongly emphasises the systemic brutality of the Bolshevik side: the Cheka, elaborate torture, mass executions, and terror unleashed against peasants, workers and Cossacks. It recalls the peasant and workers' uprisings of 1918–1919 against food requisitions and hunger. Yet it also shows that the White army is far from innocent: looting, anti-Jewish pogroms, atrocities committed by certain commanders. Denikin is portrayed as one of the very few leaders who openly acknowledges the crimes of his own side, issues orders against the "scoundrels" in his ranks and demands hanging for rapists and pogromists.

In 1919, Denikin's army reaches its peak: 150,000 men, 18 provinces freed from Bolshevik control, and a front line stretching from Tsaritsyn to Odessa. The goal becomes an explicit march on Moscow. But Kolchak retreats in Siberia, Yudenich fails before Petrograd, the Red Army grows to 2.5 million men and finally launches a successful counteroffensive. Denikin acknowledges defeat, analyses his camp's failures without self-justification and continues to view the conflict as a "Patriotic" war against what he sees as a criminal regime. In contrast, former Duma deputy Vasily Shulgin argues that the revolution must be allowed to run to its bitter end so that the country will be utterly disgusted with it – a grim view that foreshadows the entire Soviet twentieth century.

Screenplay:

In the summer of 1919, Bolshevik regiments were loudly singing a song whose content is well known to the older generation:
“Boldly we will go into battle / For the power of the Soviets / And we will gladly die / For all of this.”

In the Volunteer Army, they sang the song in its old version, as it still sounded in 1914:
“Boldly we will go into battle / For Holy Rus’ / And we will gladly die / For what is dear.”

The original text of the song is given in the memoirs of General Anton Ivanovich Denikin. In 1919, General Anton Ivanovich Denikin is the main figure on the Southern Front of anti-Bolshevik resistance. In 1919, Trotsky considers the Southern Front the most dangerous and notes: “The forces of the enemy consist of two independent parts: the Cossacks, especially those of the Kuban, and the Volunteer White Army, recruited from the entire country.” As for “the entire country” – that is perfectly true.

In the autumn of 1917, in the town of Bykhov, in Belarus, in the building of a former girls’ gymnasium turned into a prison, the main participants in the Kornilov mutiny of August 1917 were under arrest. Among them were General Kornilov, General Markov, General Romanovsky, General Denikin. Communication between the prisoners was constant. They discussed what to do next. They decided each would make his way by different routes toward Rostov and Novocherkassk.

They walked out of prison without hindrance. It was, after all, the autumn of 1917: nobody really understood yet who needed to be kept under lock and key. They changed clothes, radically altered their appearance. Markov dressed as a soldier, imitating the manner of a “conscious comrade.” Romanovsky swapped his general’s shoulder boards for those of an ensign. According to the cover legend, Denikin was a Polish landowner. Part of this legend was true – but only part.

Denikin was born in the Warsaw province of the Russian Empire. His mother was Polish. His father came from a family of serf peasants. The landlord had sent him into military service. He retired with the rank of major. The family lived in great poverty.

Besides the memory of poverty, one of General Denikin’s childhood memories is his father’s story about the army punishment of “running the gauntlet”: the offender was driven between two ranks of soldiers who beat him with rifle rods. He was often beaten to death. Leo Tolstoy described this well.

In the autumn of 1917, the train in which Denikin was travelling from Bykhov to Rostov was packed with soldiers. Denikin lay on the top bunk; no one paid attention to him. He listened and later recalled:

“In all the conversations there flowed a boundless hatred. They spoke little of the Bolsheviks, but revolutionary hysteria had settled on people’s souls. There was hatred even toward inanimate objects, toward any sign of culture. With the same hatred they tore the upholstery from the carriage seats to shreds, threw a bourgeois out of the carriage window, smashed the stationmaster’s skull at a stop.

There was one desire alone – to seize and to destroy. Not to rise up, but to drag everything down to their own level, anything that in any way stood out. The enemy was anyone who was intellectually or socially above them. Someone told them that Comrade Lenin had already begun to pay peasants

and workers compensation for the past hundred years, at the expense of bourgeois fortunes. Everyone believed this.

They also believed another tale: they said that on the Aral Sea there lives a bird that lays its eggs in a good watermelon, and that there is never any famine there, because one egg is enough for a large peasant family."

During a change of trains, Denikin suddenly ran into Generals Markov and Romanovsky. Markov was playing the role of Romanovsky's batman, running to get boiling water. Some random lieutenant sent Markov to buy cigarettes, then nervously crumpled the note in his hand, not sure whether to give a tip – would he be offended?

The lieutenant suddenly turned to Denikin: "Your face looks very familiar. Weren't you in the 2nd Division in 1916?" The 2nd Division had indeed been part of Denikin's corps on the Romanian Front in 1916. Denikin laughed: "Not at all, not at all."

At last they arrived in Rostov. Denikin said goodbye to the lieutenant: "In the 2nd Division, dear lieutenant, we really did meet and we fought together. Farewell, may God grant you happiness." The lieutenant stood speechless with amazement.

At exactly the same time, at the Konotop station, one of the former Kornilov officers went to the buffet for food. A lame old man in worn felt boots called out to him: "Hello, comrade." – "Good… good day." The old man disappeared into the crowd. The old man in worn felt boots was General Kornilov. Three days later, General Kornilov would meet General Denikin in Novocherkassk.

On 27 December 1917, an appeal proclaimed the goals of the Volunteer Army:

"As three hundred years ago, as under Minin and Pozharsky, the whole of Russia must rise in a nationwide levée en masse to defend its desecrated shrines. The Volunteer Army cannot accept and will never accept any party coloring. As for the future structure of the state, it is necessary to elect a Constituent Assembly. It will determine the form of government."

Afterwards, throughout 1919, this military man, the son of a serf, General Denikin, would often repeat: "The Russian people will express their will themselves when this elemental madness is over." Only much later, in his memoirs, with general staff clarity, would he write: "Theory diverged from practice. We did not take the element of time into account. We strove for prose, while the people still wanted the 'poetry' of demagogic slogans."

It is hard to say what slogans the Russian officers wanted. The main centers of Russia – Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Mineralnye Vody, Vladikavkaz, Tiflis – were simply jammed with officers. They waited; they were killed; they were sent to the Cheka; or they quietly went to register with the Bolsheviks; or they took off their uniforms and turned into civilians.

In the first psychological attack near Novocherkassk, it wasn't officers who went forward, but boys – a battalion of cadets. These boys advanced at full height, practically unarmed. One platoon was wiped out completely. It was they who covered Novocherkassk from the Bolsheviks a week before Kornilov's arrival.

Denikin writes: "When the onslaught of the Bolsheviks was being held back by children, the cafés of Novocherkassk were full of young, healthy officers who had not joined the army." And it was like that not only in Novocherkassk.

There were up to 18,000 officers in Rostov; only 300 responded to the call. General Alekseyev, the ideologue and actual founder of the Volunteer Army, said at the funeral of the cadets who had died in the first battles with the Reds:

“I see the monument that Russia will erect to these children. On a high rock – a ruined nest and dead eaglets. But where were the eagles?”

At the beginning of 1918, the strength of the Volunteer Army did not exceed three to four thousand men. During the heavy fighting for Rostov, it shrank to utterly negligible numbers. The army treasury allowed only the payment of miserly salaries. Sometimes only rations. For soldiers and officers alike. In the officers’ battalions, officers served in the ranks as common soldiers.

In early 1918, there were only 235 enlisted men in the Volunteer Army. There was shortage of everything: not enough weapons, ammunition, no field kitchens, no warm clothing, no boots, even though the Don army depots were overflowing. But there was no money to pay the Cossack committees that were selling off everything at outrageous prices.

At the beginning of 1918, the Cossacks did not support the volunteers at all. Cossack regiments returning from the front were thoroughly saturated with Bolshevik propaganda. “In the Don District there were recorded cases of Cossacks selling their officers to the Bolsheviks for a cash reward” – these words are from an appeal of the Don Army ataman, General Kaledin. Cossack regiments easily went over to the side of the Reds, but did not fight for long. They scattered back to their hamlets, abandoned their artillery and took the regimental money with them.

On 29 January, General Kaledin declared: “The population not only does not support us, but is hostile to us. We have no forces. I do not want unnecessary victims, unnecessary bloodshed. I lay down my powers as army ataman.” That same day, General Kaledin shot himself.

After this, a mass upsurge was expected. They said a “spolokh” – a general alarm, a call-up of all Cossacks from 17 to 55 – had been proclaimed on the Don. Expectations were not fulfilled. The Don Circle – the Cossack government – hoping for a compromise, sent a delegation to the Bolsheviks. The delegation received an unequivocal reply: “The Cossacks as such must be destroyed.”

Strangely enough, this answer did not produce a resolve to fight. It was mainly older Cossacks who rose up, but since nobody could offer them food supplies, they held meetings for a couple of days and dispersed back to their stanitsas.

As for the Bolsheviks, from the very beginning they had defined their line in the civil war. First, they wanted a civil war and did not hide it. Lenin’s cherished dream of the world war turning into a civil war had finally come true and turned into a nightmarish reality. Second, the Bolsheviks clearly stated that the aim of the war was extermination. One of the key Chekists, Latsis, specified who was to be exterminated:

“Do not look in interrogations for materials and evidence that the accused acted by deed and word against the Soviets. The first question you must ask him is what his origin is, upbringing, education or profession. These questions must determine the fate of the accused.”

Thus, the ruthlessness born on the battlefield was constantly reinforced by a clear directive for terror.

The word “murderer” in Russia was no longer an accusation. Cruelty was justified and seen as expedient. Because civil war and open, systemic terror were the only means to preserve seized power.

General Denikin clearly defined the long-term consequences of the civil war: “This bestial time hardens hearts for a long time and lowers the price of a human life.” To depress the value of human life – in this sense, Lenin’s venture with the civil war was simply brilliant. Trotsky said with satisfaction: “Civil war is a great devourer of men and characters.”

But unlike Trotsky and Lenin, Denikin has many doubts. One voice of Anton Ivanovich Denikin says: “What right do we, a small handful of people, have to decide the fate of the country?” Another voice immediately answers:

“If, at the tragic moment of our history, there had not been among the Russian people men ready to fight against the madness and crime of Bolshevik power and to give their lives for their native land, that would not be a people, but manure to fertilize boundless fields. Fortunately, we belong to a tormented but great people. It’s just that this people is insane today.”

During the hardest battles for the city of Rostov, the powerful financial circles and the bourgeoisie of Rostov did not provide any material help to the volunteers. After a month of fighting, little remained of the Volunteer Army. The Reds took Rostov. Commander-in-chief General Kornilov decided to withdraw to the Kuban. They left Rostov on 10 February 1918. In fact, on that day – or rather, that night – the star hour of the Russian White Guard began: the legendary First Kuban Campaign, unparalleled in military history.

This army numbered only 3,206 men, just a bit more than the standard strength of an infantry regiment. But the issue was not just numbers. Such a composition had never existed anywhere. Three full generals, eight lieutenant-generals, twenty-five major-generals, 190 colonels, 52 lieutenant-colonels, 15 captains, 251 staff-captains, 392 lieutenants, 535 sub-lieutenants, 668 ensigns, 437 cadets and officer-candidates, 630 civilian volunteers.

This was all that the south of Russia provided – a region that was already becoming a refuge for those fleeing Moscow, Petrograd, Kiev, and that was famed for the Cossacks’ traditional thirst for freedom. But at the beginning of 1918 people also joined the Red Army with extreme reluctance, and in battle they abandoned the defeated and went over to the victors.

General Denikin writes: “Russian life in the first half of 1918 showed a striking anomaly of popular psychology.” Trotsky adds: “The army had a vivid but unstable face. The army needs shots of enthusiasm. Treading water ends in catastrophe.”

On 10 February 1918, the Volunteer Army marched into the Don steppe. Denikin says: “We went off after the Blue Bird.” Across an endless smooth field of snow trudged some civilian-looking people, wagons rolled like in a gypsy camp, women in city dresses and light shoes sank into the snow. These were nurses, doctors and about a hundred refugees. Mixed with them were the army columns. Some in officers’ greatcoats, some in overcoats; in boots, in felt boots, in bast sandals. Schoolboy caps. Denikin wore a city suit and boots with torn soles.

As for armament, they had eight three-inch guns, six shells per gun, and two hundred rounds per rifle.

General Markov, commander of the composite officers' regiment, addressed the officers with these words:

"There are not many of you here. To tell the truth, from a three-hundred-thousand-strong corps of Russia I expected to see more. But do not be upset. Battalion commanders will drop to the position of company commanders. But even then, gentlemen, do not be upset. I myself, from the post of front chief of staff, have effectively become a battalion commander."

A general commanded a battalion, and in the assault line, in bayonet attacks, colonel and ensign went shoulder to shoulder. This was the officers' battalion, which, against all rules, became a desperate and excellent fighting unit.

Kornilov appointed Denikin "assistant to the army commander." The idea was obvious – continuity. If Kornilov was killed, Denikin would become commander.

The Cossacks in the surrounding stanitsas were well-fed, well-off and hoped to profit both from the "white" and from the "red" movement. But the Reds had not yet come; the Cossacks did not yet know that when they came they would take everything, and that people would hand over even the last thing to them, with curses in their hearts but without a word of protest. For now, they would not give the Whites food, boots or clothing for any money.

Kornilov saw the Cossacks as the future support of the White movement, but for the moment there was nothing else to do, and he gave the order to begin requisitions for payment. Weapons could be obtained in only one way – by taking them in battle from the Bolsheviks. Horses were stolen. But by the standards of European wars this was considered not theft but dashing bravery.

From the Don region they entered Stavropol province. In one day they marched 46 versts with fighting and river crossings. In a stanitsa, the exhausted men collapsed on the thresholds of huts, right in the street, and fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the Kuban Cossacks in neighbouring stanitsas were surrendering their weapons to the Reds. The Reds had already begun to seize grain, to redistribute land, to kill priests. It still seemed that one could buy them off, save oneself by handing over weapons.

When, in April, the Cossacks of eleven stanitsas rose against the Bolsheviks, it would be an unarmed army: ten rifles per hundred men; some would tie daggers and sharpened strips of iron to poles, and the rest would go with shovels and axes.

Against the Cossack stanitsas marched punitive detachments with the very weapons that the Cossacks had themselves handed over. Behind the detachments came convoys with plundered goods.

On 15 March, the Ice March of the White Guard began. Denikin writes of this march in his memoirs:

"It was neither fairy tale nor chronicle. There was wind, snow, liquid mud underfoot, everyone was soaked through, their boots filled with water. Ahead, a river; on the opposite bank – Bolshevik outposts. The bridge had been washed away. We sent Markov's mounted scouts to look for fords. Finally Markov's loud voice: 'Bring all the horses to the bridge, we'll ferry the regiment over on horseback, hanging on to the croups.'

The crossing began. No more than two horses could go at once, then they came back on a lead for the next batch of infantry. The depth reached halfway up the horses' bodies. Enemy artillery began to shell us. The crossing went on. Evening fell. The weather changed. Suddenly the frost hit and a blizzard began. People and horses were instantly covered with an icy crust, their clothes turned to wood, it was impossible to turn one's head or lift a foot into the stirrup. No one paid attention to the whistling of bullets. There was no end in sight to the crossing."

Markov's officers' regiment turned out to be the first and stood alone against the stanitsa held by the enemy. With the words: "There is no one to wait for; on such a night we'll all croak out here in the field," the general rushed with his regiment under the machine-gun fire.

In the film of all times and peoples, *Chapayev*, there is the famous scene of a psychological attack. White officers, in ranks, dashing and immaculate, caps strapped under their chins, cigarettes in their teeth, advance on Anka's machine gun. And she, with rapture and delight, mows down the flower of the Russian army. Everything in this scene is true: both Anka's exultation, and the desperate, almost cheerful audacity of the officers going to their deaths.

Denikin recalls that General Markov, speaking of such situations, used to say: "It is so hard that it's almost fun!"

Of the many prototypes for Anka, Stalin picked one – Maria Popova. She was given a ticket into life. She received an education, worked in Germany and Sweden. She dressed her daughter in the best and most expensive clothes and gave her an education in a French boarding school.

Apparently the vivid memory of her youth – of those alien people she shot in 1918 – never quite let go of Maria Popova in a strange way. Her daughter spoke good French and poor Russian.

General Sergei Markov spoke excellent Russian. He would die in the summer of 1918. Markov was personally unbelievably brave. Short of stature, with moustache and beard like the last emperor. He had worn his goatee beard since the First World War. On his wife's side he was a close relative of the artist Roerich's family.

In seven months of the Russo-Japanese war, Markov received five decorations: the Order of St Anne, 4th class, with the inscription "For Bravery"; the Order of St Stanislaus, 3rd class with swords and bow; St Anne, 3rd class with swords and bow; St Stanislaus, 2nd class with swords; and St Vladimir, 4th class with swords and bow. In the First World War he received more orders. In March 1918, at the collar of his soldier's blouse he wore his favourite cross of St Stanislaus with swords. And there was no smart, clean uniform. In terms of uniform, nothing was as in the film *Chapayev*. Stumbling and sinking in the thick slurry of mud and snow, the frozen 39-year-old Markov went into hand-to-hand combat with the Reds, side by side with his officers.

On 1 April, they decided to take Ekaterinodar. Markov addressed his men: "Put on clean underwear, those who have it. We are going to storm Ekaterinodar. We will not take Ekaterinodar, and if we do take it, we will die."

The day before the assault, Denikin sat on the bank of the Kuban in a suburb of Ekaterinodar and talked with Staff Captain Betling. Betling has a typical biography of a "first-campaigner", that is, a participant in the First Kuban Campaign. In the First World War he fought the Germans and was wounded. Among the first he enlisted as a private in the Volunteer Army. He fought in the Kuban campaign and was wounded twice. His arm hung, the bone broken. He would later die of typhus.

So, the staff captain Betling said to Denikin on the eve of the assault: “When you attack the Red Guards, they are so many that your eyes blur. But that’s nothing. If only we had a few cartridges, and above all a bit more artillery fire.”

On 31 March, at 8 a.m., the commander of the Volunteer Army, General Kornilov, was sitting at a table in a house in the nearby suburb of Ekaterinodar. An enemy shell pierced the wall near the window and hit the floor under the table. When his adjutant, Sub-Lieutenant Dolinsky, came into the room, Kornilov was lying, covered in fallen plaster. A small wound at the temple, blood flowing from a shattered right thigh.

Kornilov was buried on 2 April, near the Elisavetinskaya station. The grave was levelled and a plan of the burial site drawn up. The Volunteer Army entered Ekaterinodar four months later. It was decided to re-bury General Kornilov. In the opened grave they found only a chunk of the pine coffin.

The Reds had dug up the fresh grave the day after the burial, looking for money and jewellery. Seeing the shoulder boards of a full general on the corpse, they tore off the tunic and took Kornilov’s body, in just a shirt under a tarpaulin, to Ekaterinodar.

In the city they drove into the yard of the Gubkin Hotel on Cathedral Square. The square was packed with Red Army soldiers. A drunken representative of Soviet power came out on the balcony and announced that Kornilov’s body had been brought. The body was thrown off the cart onto the ground. They tore the shirt off, ripped it into rags and scattered them. A few men climbed a tree and began hoisting the corpse on a rope. But the rope broke. They shouted that the body should be torn apart.

When the body was finally taken to the municipal slaughterhouses, it had already been turned into a shapeless mass by sabre blows. They piled straw around it and started to burn it in the presence of Soviet officials who had come to this spectacle in cars. The next day they continued burning what remained. They burned. Trampled the ashes and burned again.

This whole scene of desecration of Kornilov’s body was reconstructed by the Special Commission for the Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes, created by Denikin.

After Kornilov’s death, command of the army passed to Denikin. In April 1918, in the Kuban, the army was reinforced by two thousand Cossacks. A new and unexpected method of recruitment appeared – prisoners from the Red Army. They were usually used as wagon train troops, but sometimes placed in the line.

Volunteers who left the army of their own accord were the exception. On this subject, General Markov addressed his Officers’ Regiment:

“I have heard that in the difficult period of the army’s life, some of you, not believing in success, have left our ranks and tried to hide in the villages. They did not save their precious skins. If anyone wishes to go to a peaceful life, let him say so beforehand. I will not hold him back. To the man who is free – freedom, to the saved – paradise, and… to hell with him.”

By August 1918, the Volunteer Army already numbered 40,000 men. Armoured cars, planes and armoured trains had been captured from the Bolsheviks. The front stretched for 300–400 kilometres. In August, Ekaterinodar was taken, Novorossiysk occupied, and Denikin secured a foothold on the Black Sea coast.

At the end of August, the partisan detachment of Colonel Shkuro, marching to join Denikin, took Kislovodsk. But he could not hold the city. The Bolsheviks returned. All the more or less well-off inhabitants of the city were slaughtered. The same happened in Armavir.

Anti-Bolshevik uprisings rolled like waves through the cities of the North Caucasus. By November, Stavropol had been taken, the whole Kuban was free, and by early February 1919, Denikin's planned operation to liberate the North Caucasus was completed.

The territory from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, with the Caucasus range at their back, was under the control of the Volunteer Army. At the beginning of 1919, anti-Bolshevik military operations in the south clearly acquired the features of a real threat to Bolshevik power in Moscow.

On 8 January 1919, Denikin became Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia. By this time, none of those with whom he had begun the Volunteer movement remained at his side. The very name "Volunteer" Army survived only by tradition. Mobilisation in the Cossack and regular units had been going on for several months. The ranks of the army were swelling, and its appearance was inevitably changing. Nobody spoke of officers' "companies" any more. The White Guard had been wiped out. By composition, the White Army became a popular army.

By 1919, the Red Army too had lost the class character that the Red Guard had had. The voluntary principle had been replaced by mobilisation. The army was being built on the principle of the old imperial one. At its head stood, in fact, the old command staff. This was Trotsky's decision and completely his doing.

The main mass of the army was the peasantry. A harsh system of coercion with blocking detachments was partly offset by rations and pay. Food and money were an obvious privilege in a hungry and poverty-stricken country. No one in Russia was provided with food and money better than the mercenaries in the Red Army. They were also called "internationalists."

Figures vary: the minimum number of mercenaries is 300,000; the maximum, up to 1 million, that is, a third of the entire Red Army. The largest group were Chinese. In many cities, the Cheka was nicknamed "Chinese." Next came Hungarians, Poles, Bulgarians. History has preserved the name of the black Chekist Johnson in Odessa.

General Denikin wrote of the mercenaries: "Contempt for the country and the people, cold cruelty and sadism made this element an extremely convenient tool in the hands of Soviet power."

The thesis of "imperialist intervention" in Soviet historiography was probably introduced precisely in order to cover up the large-scale use of mercenaries in the Red Army.

In January 1919, in the stanitsa of Veshenskaya, homeland of Nobel laureate Sholokhov, author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, an anti-Soviet Cossack uprising began. In the course of the uprising, leaflets were distributed in Veshenskaya by order of commander-in-chief Denikin, stating that the Council of People's Commissars had signed a secret letter ordering the total extermination of the Cossacks.

In fact, Denikin anticipated the contents of a circular letter of the Organisational Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on "decossackisation." The essence of the circular was as follows:

“To recognise as the only correct line the most merciless struggle against the upper strata of the Cossacks by their total extermination. As for the rest, measures must be taken that provide guarantees against any actions directed at overthrowing Soviet power. Confiscate the grain.”

Thirty thousand Cossacks joined Denikin. The uprising spread across the Upper Don.

In March 1919, Yakov Sverdlov, chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and secretary of the Central Committee, died. His safe was opened in 1935. It contained: gold coins of imperial minting worth 108,525 roubles; 705 gold items with precious stones; imperial banknotes worth 750,000 roubles; and foreign passports in different names, male and female (from a report by People’s Commissar Yagoda to Stalin).

By spring, the strategic initiative was entirely in Denikin’s hands. In his proclamations, Trotsky tirelessly called: “Proletariat, forward – to struggle for Soviet coal. The loss of Petrograd would not be as heavy for us as the loss of the Donets Basin. The Soviet Republic is the fortress of the world revolution, and the key to this fortress is now in the Donbass.”

By June, the Donbass, the Don region, and part of Ukraine were free of Bolsheviks. On a wave of enthusiasm, the White Army grew to 150,000. The success of the spring-summer operations made a march on Moscow a realistic prospect – but only after the capture of Tsaritsyn. Taking Tsaritsyn would make it possible to join up with Kolchak’s army.

Admiral Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak already bore the title “Supreme Ruler of Russia.” Denikin had recognised this title.

Besides the fate of Soviet power, the fate of relations between Trotsky and Stalin was also being played out around Tsaritsyn. The story had begun in 1918. Stalin supervised the Southern Front on behalf of the Central Committee. Voroshilov was commander of the 10th Army, which defended Tsaritsyn. Voroshilov constantly demanded better supplies. No Soviet army consumed as many rifles and cartridges as the Tsaritsyn army. At any refusal, Voroshilov screamed about treason by the military specialists in Moscow.

Voroshilov was in general a categorical opponent of Trotsky’s idea of bringing old tsarist specialists into the army. Trotsky recalls that there was a permanent representative of the Tsaritsyn army for supplies in Moscow – a sailor named Zhivoder (“Flayer”).

Voroshilov did not carry out orders from the centre. Trotsky promised him a court-martial and demanded Stalin’s recall. Stalin was recalled. Later he returned and was appointed a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front. Voroshilov was transferred to Ukraine.

Trotsky wrote to Sverdlov: “The Tsaritsyn line, which has led to the disintegration of the army, cannot be allowed in Ukraine. The line of Stalin, Voroshilov & Co. means the ruin of the whole cause. Trotsky.” Stalin never forgave Trotsky for Tsaritsyn. And he kept Voroshilov by his side forever.

Trotsky writes in his memoirs: “Stalin carefully selected people with pressed corns.”

Denikin’s troops, or more precisely the Caucasus Army of General Wrangel, took Tsaritsyn on 30 June. In a telegram, Trotsky recognised the complete collapse of the Southern Front of the Red Army: “Neither agitation nor repressions can make a barefoot, naked, lice-ridden army capable of fighting.”

In this situation of deadlock, on 5 August 1919 Trotsky prepared a secret memorandum to the Central Committee, setting out a plan for the Red Army to break through to India. On the one hand, he saw no way for Soviet power to hold on in Russia; on the other, at that very time came reports of the beginning of Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign.

To India, sadly for Russia and luckily for India, the Red Army did not go.

For many years, Soviet historians explained the defeats of the Reds on the Southern Front by lack of weapons and ammunition. If there was any shortage, it was only because there was an excess of this armament in the punitive detachments.

Motorcycles with machine guns, armoured cars, artillery and cavalry were taken from the fronts and placed at the disposal of the punitive troops, who dealt with the civilian population. Already in 1918 there arose a division of labour between field troops and punitive forces.

This system proved so effective that it was later adopted by Hitler's Germany in the form of the Wehrmacht and the famous SS units.

It must be said that until mid-1918 the peasantry remained neutral toward Bolshevik power. The appearance of food requisition detachments came as a complete surprise to them. The workers refused to serve in these detachments. In the autumn, after the start of mass mobilisation, soldiers began to be sent to the requisition detachments.

To help them stoke class struggle, committees of the poor were created. According to official data from Latsis, one of the Cheka leaders, there were 344 anti-Bolshevik peasant uprisings in Central Russia alone.

In Ukraine, from April to June 1919, there were 328 anti-Soviet actions. On 2–3 March 1919, in the Samara and Simbirsk provinces, the so-called "Chapan War" began (a *chapan* is a peasant coat). There were 150,000 insurgents. Altogether they had a few hundred rifles and a few machine guns. The rest had axes.

Even before the arrival of the Whites, in 1918 peasants had freed vast territories in the Urals from the Reds.

In the summer of 1918, the first wave of anti-Soviet workers' movements began – in Petrograd, Moscow, Tula, Kharkov. The strongest was in Izhevsk and Votkinsk. The workers of these plants formed two divisions that fought to the end in Kolchak's army.

The second wave of workers' movements came in 1919. There was a general strike in Petrograd on the eve of the 8th Party Congress, in Moscow and in the Urals. Workers' actions were against hunger, against atrocities and killings.

The newspaper *People's Power* wrote on 24 January 1919: "You, communist, have the right to kill any saboteur if in battle he prevents you from moving across corpses toward victory."

The earnings of a skilled worker in 1919 exceeded those of an unskilled labourer by only 9 percent. There were no incentives to work. Absenteeism reached 50 percent of working time. Against a backdrop of general hunger, the Soviet system of privileged rations flourished. In 1919 there were already 10,000 special rations for Council of People's Commissars officials.

The Cheka in 1919 was already covering for speculators who shared their profits. The inspector of the People's Commissariat of State Control, Maizel, reported to Lenin that many searches and arrests were carried out by the organs solely for profit.

On 3 July, in Tsaritsyn, Denikin issued his famous directive to his troops, later known as the "Moscow" directive. Its essence: our goal is Moscow, that is, the overthrow of Bolshevism.

There was a parade of units of the Volunteer Army in Tsaritsyn to mark the capture of the city. At the end of August, Denikin's troops entered Kiev. By October, the front ran along the line Tsaritsyn–Voronezh–Orel–Chernigov–Odessa.

Denikin had freed from Bolsheviks 18 provinces and regions with a population of 42 million people and a territory of more than 800,000 square kilometres.

From the materials of Denikin's Special Commission for the Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes:

"Kiev. The entire concrete floor of the garage is covered in congealed blood mixed with brains, bones, clumps of hair. In the garden there are 127 hastily buried bodies. Some without heads. The heads have not been cut off but torn off. Nearby another 80 corpses. Eyes gouged out. Some have their mouths and airways filled with earth. There are old men, women. Children. One woman is tied with a rope to her daughter of about eight."

The writer Mikhail Bulgakov saw all this. In September 1919 he joined Denikin's army as a doctor.

The Odessa Cheka. Vera Grebenyukova, nicknamed Dora, personally cut off ears and fingers of those under investigation and personally executed 400 people. The Chekist Johnson personally flayed people alive.

The Kharkov Cheka. Commandant Saenko smashed heads with a weight, flayed the skin off women's hands to make gloves. He said that of all kinds of apples, the ones he liked best were "apple of the eye." The skin was taken off the hands using a metal comb and special tongs.

Hostage women had their breasts cut and torn off while still alive, their genitals burned and embers left on them. People were scalped alive. Workers from striking factories had their eyes burned out, their noses and lips cut off. Hands were chopped off. The genitals of Cossacks were mutilated in monstrous ways.

Doctors who carried out the examinations noted that this method of torture was known to Chinese executioners and in painfulness exceeded all that the human imagination could conceive.

Denikin reached Tula. Admiral Kolchak in Siberia was in retreat. General Yudenich had been driven back from Petrograd. The defence of Petrograd was a personal success and initiative of Trotsky. Lenin saw no reason to defend Petrograd. The victory over Yudenich was a random but successful injection of enthusiasm into the army. It did not matter that it was injected under the machine guns of blocking detachments. Trotsky did not think of denying the role of the blocking detachments on the Pulkovo Heights near Petrograd.

By autumn 1919, the total strength of the Red Army had been brought to 2.5 million men. All the White armies on Russian territory together numbered 310,000. At the end of October, the Reds launched a counteroffensive.

What happened next Denikin defined in the dry language of a general: "The struggle of the Armed Forces of the South ended in defeat." But Denikin's dryness is deeply deceptive. No other general in

modern Russian history, except Denikin, spoke so frankly and in such detail about the misdeeds and crimes of his own army, even though they could not be compared with those of the enemy.

Denikin does not compare Red and White; he never confuses black and white. He writes: “The army became mired in great and small sins. I must dwell on them.”

The chase after war booty became for many rank-and-file soldiers a goal in itself, and for commanders often a way to set in motion the wavering masses. This phenomenon was new for a regular army, but for the Cossacks it was a historical tradition since the days of the Wild Field and the Zaporozhian Sich.

General Krasnov under Tsaritsyn promised his troops rich loot; General Mamontov sent a telegram from Tambov: “I send my greetings. We are bringing rich gifts to our relatives and friends.”

Denikin writes: “They brought everything: from all kinds of junk to wind-up toy horses. Behind the war booty opens a gloomy abyss of moral decline – violence and robbery. And pitiful are the excuses that there, among the Reds, it was incomparably worse.”

On 19 August 1919, in Taganrog, Denikin signed a secret circular to the troops, No. 0208/167:

“I demand that all commanders immediately take all possible measures to combat the scoundrels who, by their insolent contempt for the Holy Cause in which they are called to take part, once more push our Russia into the abyss of arbitrariness. I demand that they be punished regardless of battle merits and ranks.”

Even so, no one feared punishments other than shooting. Everyone was sure there would be an amnesty in Moscow.

General Romanovsky, Denikin’s closest friend, reported to him: “We risk losing all support of the population. Do you know what they are singing in the markets: ‘The falcons soared as eagles, the falcons came down as thieves.’”

Denikin said: “It’s hurtful, but there are grounds for it. I punish for outrages.”

Romanovsky handed him a folder with 14 pages of report: in September 1919 alone 138 Jewish women had been raped by Denikin’s troops, including girls aged 10–12. Denikin’s reaction: “Brute rapists must be hanged without any mercy.”

And this at a time when anti-Jewish sentiments were very strong in the White Army, because there were many ethnic Jews in the top Bolshevik leadership, and Trotsky, as chief of the Red Army, was perceived simply as enemy No. 1.

Even so, field courts in Denikin’s army passed death sentences for pogroms.

Denikin speaks very candidly: “I have no grounds for any special sympathy for the Jewish people. But out of Christian moral motives, I do all I can to prevent violence against the Jewish population.”

There were Jewish officers in Denikin’s army. Some from the very beginning, from the Ice March.

The refuge of scoundrels was often counter-intelligence. It followed the troops. Everybody had their own counter-intelligence: the headquarters, each unit. It was a morbid obsession, created by the suspicion that soaked the country.

Denikin writes: “I must say that these organs were often centres of provocation and organised robbery.”

There were also individual sadists. In Transbaikalia, the ataman of the Transbaikal host, Semenov, whom Kolchak called a “White Bolshevik,” and the commander of the Asiatic Division, Ungern, raged. In Siberia – the ataman Annenkov, a descendant of a Decembrist. In Denikin’s territory, the general Pokrovsky became known for his atrocities. He coined the aphorism: “The sight of a hanged man enlivens the landscape and whets the appetite.”

Pokrovsky’s aphorism echoes a poem composed on the Red side. The poem is called “Christmas Is Coming Soon” and resembles the children’s song “The Little Fir Tree Was Born in the Forest.” Here is the final quatrain:

Whoever fells the Christmas tree
Is worse than any foe by far,
For on every little tree
You can hang a White officer!

The names of the sadists on the White side are known one by one; the names of the sadists on the Red side, with the rarest exceptions, are not mentioned.

The whole system, the whole machinery of the future regime, which began to turn precisely in the civil war, was thickly greased with legalised brutality.

Already at the end of 1918, Trotsky issued an order: “Under pain of punishment I forbid executions of captured rank-and-file Cossacks and soldiers. The hour is near when they will settle with their officers and will stand under the Soviet banners.”

For Trotsky, the army meant maintaining power.

At the same time, General Denikin issued his own order, addressed to officers serving with the Bolsheviks: “All who do not leave the ranks of the Red Army will face the field court of the Russian Army – stern and merciless.”

In spite of this threat, according to Denikin’s own estimates, the proportion of Red prisoners in White ranks sometimes reached 60 percent. Denikin writes: “Subject to execution were the young Red officers, that is, commanders from the Red officer schools. And they knew what awaited them, and preferred to fight to the last cartridge.”

Prince Bolkonsky, in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, says to Pierre before the Battle of Borodino:

“— I would not take prisoners. They have ruined my home, insulted and insult me every second. They are my enemies, they are criminals by my understanding. They must be executed. — Yes, yes,” answered Bezukhov, “I entirely agree with you.”

Most likely, the son of a serf peasant, General Denikin, would have wholeheartedly agreed with Prince Bolkonsky. For those who unleashed this terrible war in his country had dreamed of it for many years, had planned it far from Russia, for their own personal aims, as only an enemy can plan a war.

This enemy came into every home – the bourgeois household, the peasant’s, the Cossack’s, the worker’s, the professor’s. It is precisely for this reason that General Denikin calls this war, for

himself, a Patriotic War. He is guided only by love for his Motherland, which he called “great and trampled.”

He would always love Russia, would follow the successes of her army in the Great Patriotic War, and would always hate the Bolsheviks.

In that same year 1919, there was another view of how to fight Bolshevism. Formerly one of the best-known deputies of the State Duma, Vasily Shulgin, wrote:

“The most important thing is that the revolution should go to the very end. That everyone should feel disgust for it. This process must in no way be hindered, whatever the sacrifices it may cost.”

The whole twentieth century lay still ahead.