

## Surveillance Reports of National Units of the Red Army Political Departments in 1918–1920\*

Sarkanās armijas politisko nodaļu sastādītie nacionālo vienību uzraudzības ziņojumi 1918.–1920. gadā

---

**Toivo Kikkas, MA**

Junior Research Fellow

Institute of History and Archaeology, University of Tartu

Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu

E-mail: toivo.kikkas@ut.ee

While surveillance as a mechanism of political control was a common practice of states even before the First World War, the introduction of the Political Departments to the Red Army in 1918–1920 was a completely new historical-military phenomenon. Surveillance reports submitted by the commissars of the political departments had to provide an overview of the attitudes of soldiers, progress in political education, and the condition of various military aspects, such as the supply of uniforms. Next to nothing is known about surveillance reports compiled by these institutions in national units of the Red Army. This paper summarizes the instructions for compiling surveillance reports, their implementation, and what was actually reported by the Political Departments of Estonian and Latvian national units of the Red Army.

**Keywords:** political control, surveillance, Russian Civil War, the Red Army, military history.

Lai gan uzraudzība kā politiskās kontroles mehānisms bija ierasta valstu prakse jau pirms Pirmā pasaules kara, politisko departamentu ieviešana Sarkanajā armijā 1918.–1920. gadā bija pilnīgi jauns vēsturiski militārs fenomens. Politisko departamentu komisāru sagatavotajos uzraudzības ziņojumos bija jāsniedz pārskats par karavīru attieksmi, politiskās izglītības progresu un dažādiem militārajiem jautājumiem, piemēram, par formas tērpu apgādes stāvokli. Gandrīz nekas nav zināms par uzraudzības ziņojumiem, ko šīs iestādes sastādīja Sarkanās armijas nacionālajās vienībās. Šajā rakstā apkopotas uzraudzības ziņojumu sastādīšanas instrukcijas, to izpilde un jautājumi, par kādiem faktiski ziņoja Sarkanās armijas Igaunijas un Latvijas nacionālo vienību politiskās nodaļas.

**Atslēgvārdi:** politiskā kontrole, uzraudzība, Krievijas pilsoņu karš, Sarkanā armija, militārā vēsture.

\* This research was supported by the project “War after War” (PHVAJ16908).

## Introduction

After the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917, there were series of rapid changes to the borderlands, including the Baltic region. While a number of Latvians and Estonians were supporting the Bolsheviks, many among both populations found the new Soviet ideology or the idea of democratic, independent republics to be vague. Once mobilized into the ranks of the Red Army, such individuals needed to be placed under surveillance. While surveillance itself was nothing new, the societies that needed to be put under surveillance had transformed with the collapse of the Russian Empire. Mobilizing the masses during the First World War had made citizens more sentient – i.e., they were now harder to order around or even control. Still, the newly emerged nation-states and Soviet Russia needed to recruit and arm those same citizens who had largely participated in the World War, experienced both the inequality of the multinational army, and witnessed unjust behaviour from their commanding officers before the February Revolution in 1917, while growing weary of the war. The former state apparatuses of surveillance had crumbled, and professionals dismissed from their jobs, while interest in politics was more widespread amongst public.

There has been no comparative research on the subject of inner surveillance with a focus on national units of the Red Army. Therefore, our understanding of the processes that took place during the Baltic wars of independence and Russian Civil War is limited. We have very scarce knowledge about the motivation that inspired the battle-worn men to continue fighting after the First World War had ended, or the ways how Soviet Russia managed to control or influence soldiers not only to remain in ranks but actually fight for Bolshevik cause.

The article explores the attempts of the Political Departments of the Red Army to implement political control through surveillance among Estonian and Latvian national units in 1918–1920. Likewise, national units existed in the Russian Army during the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there were Lithuanian and several other national units in the Red Army,<sup>2</sup> but within the scope of the study, this article focuses only on Estonian and Latvian units. The current article fits into the broader research of Russian historians in the last three decades on political surveillance within the Red Army and allows for even more extensive comparisons.

Political control can be defined as a system of different branches of state apparatus with the purpose of gathering and analysing information on a regular basis. This information includes moods and attitudes of different segments of society towards the actions of the authorities and, finally, the behaviour and goals of extremist and anti-government groups. Political control enables a state to create the necessary ideology for the authorities among the people and to receive regular reports on political attitudes, especially regarding the opposition. The mechanisms of political control include surveillance and censorship.<sup>3</sup>

During the Russian Civil War, both Reds and Whites employed surveillance and compiled reports. Peter Holquist has analysed the surveillance of Bolsheviks<sup>4</sup> and Russian Whites<sup>5</sup> during that era. He reached the same conclusions as the Russian historians: both sides had two connected goals – to provide the state apparatus with an overview of the population's attitudes and to shape the consciousness of the people in the direction desired by the authorities.<sup>6</sup> The Soviet regime needed surveillance from the outset to mould “new people”.<sup>7</sup> This article seeks to shed light on the basic workings of the early days of Soviet

surveillance reports, compiled mainly by political departments of the national units of the Red Army. To provide a broader context, some examples of summaries from other units are also described. The main question is: what did the Soviets want to know? And once more precise instructions were given, did commissars report what was required? The control over the army was just one aspect of the general Soviet policy. Similar surveillance reports were also compiled concerning the attitudes of workers and peasants towards authorities.

For this study, the summaries preserved in the Estonian National Archive<sup>8</sup> and the Latvian State Archive<sup>9</sup> have been used. The sources located in the Russian Archives (namely, the Russian State Military Archive, the former Central Archive of the Red Army) were not accessible at the time. In total, 379 reports were used – some of which are from higher levels of command, such as armies and fronts, but addressed the condition of Estonian and Latvian national units. The majority of the source materials are in Russian, and some of these are handwritten. Despite the large number of reports, this primary source is a difficult one, for it offers very little variety. One of the main reasons is the instructions, which did not allow, for example, any illustrative examples – as was the case with military censorship summaries of Russian Empire or Soviet Russia. Another reason is the authors of political summaries, who, not only as members of the Communist Party but also as commissars, were themselves under heavy pressure. On the other hand, surveillance reports offer insight into the conditions in the Red Army and the challenges faced by the Communist Party in attempting to implement an ideological framework. These reports require other types of sources alongside to fill in the silent blanks left there by commissars.

Regarding terminology, in recent research, Estonian historians use the dubious term “Estonian Red Army”,<sup>10</sup> and in addition to this, the incorrect term “Latvian Red Army” is used in the most recent Estonian study.<sup>11</sup> The correct term for the Latvian formation is “Army of Soviet Latvia”. With Estonians, the case is more complicated. In 1919, both terms “Jestljandskaja armija” and “Jestonskaja armija” (Estonian Army) were in use. The initiative to institute such a formation came from Estonian Bolsheviks. As a similar term, “Estonian Army”, has been used to mark the opposing army of the Republic of Estonia, “Army of Soviet Estonia” is used in this article to avoid further confusion. There was, however, no Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic, but instead the Commune of the Working People of Estonia. Regarding the ranks of commanders in the Red Army, their positions are named instead – just as it has been in documents and in Estonian historiography. Regimental commander Leonhard Ritt was not addressed as “lieutenant” (the rank he had gained in the Russian Army) while he was serving in the Red Army. Only when he deserted to the army of the Republic of Estonia was he again addressed as “Lieutenant Ritt”. As for the first names, they are present when known.

### **Estonian and Latvian national units of the Red Army**

Latvians and Estonians had no small measure of activities in the early years of the Red Army. According to the myth, the first victorious battles of the Red Army were fought on 23 February, 1918, in Narva and Pskov. More precisely, there was the first contact of Bolshevik militia – future Red Army – units with opposing German Army. Jukums Vāciētis was the first commander-in-chief of the armed forces

of Soviet Russia. He was assigned to this position on 1 September 1918, when such a position was created.

Aleksei Bezugol'nyj, who has thoroughly analysed the national composition of the Red Army, points out that nationality was not considered an important indicator in the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. Therefore, for a long time, it was not reflected in the various records that registered soldiers. According to Bezugol'nyj, in July 1919, there was still no place to indicate the nationality in the registration form for those liable for military service. On the other hand, he acknowledges that ethnicity was not completely unimportant, and in some regions it was still taken into account – for example, in April 1918 in Petrograd. Likewise, nationality had to be indicated in the questionnaire of the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars from July 1918.<sup>12</sup>

The latest research tells a different story. While formations and numbers, as well as the national composition of Estonian and Latvian units were constantly changing during the Russian Civil War, at least the number of Latvians in the Red Army is now very well documented. Ēriks Jēkabsons has the most precise figures to date concerning Latvian units. At the time of its creation, 6000 riflemen joined the Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division. In November 1918, it had about 18 000 men; at the beginning of 1920, about the same number, with about 80–85% of men being Latvians. However, at this time intensive replenishment of the staff with recruits from Siberia, Central Asia, etc. began. Finally, on 21 November 1920, the Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division had 17 254 soldiers, but only 8000 (48%) were Latvian. According to Jēkabsons, it can be explained by the heavy losses in the battles of 1920 in South Russia, where after the battles several – the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – regiments were eliminated, and

the surviving riflemen of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment were killed in captivity.<sup>13</sup> Afterwards, these regiments were re-established and replenished by non-Latvian soldiers.

The total number of Estonians in national units of the Red Army is known a little less precisely but likely it has not risen above 10 000 at any given moment. According to the latest study, it appears that there were a total 8500 men in Estonian units of the Red Army by the end of February 1919. The forming of the Army of Soviet Estonia on the basis of Estonian units within the 7<sup>th</sup> Army began in the first days of March 1919. The commander of the Army was Mikhail Vasiliev, and chief of staff was August Kork. The Estonian Riflemen Division under the command of Leonhard Ritt was formed at the same time. There were Estonian Riflemen Regiments numbered 1–4 within these formations.<sup>14</sup> As for the composition, there were no pure national units. For example, the ranks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade in 1919 at one point comprised 2815 Latvians, 681 Russians, 99 Poles, 36 Estonians and more than half a dozen other nationalities.<sup>15</sup>

A significant change for the Estonian and Latvian national units came in late spring of 1919. In early days of June 1919, the “project” of Soviet Estonia was discontinued due to the loss of all territory. The institutions of Estonian Workers' Commune liquidated to create preconditions for peace negotiations between Soviet Russia and the Estonian Republic.<sup>16</sup> The Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic was accepted into the military union of the Soviet republics on 1 June 1919, but Soviet Latvia continued to exist formally until January 1920.<sup>17</sup> Soviet Russia had suffered serious defeats by mid-summer of 1919. In July, the commander-in-chief of the Red Army, J. Vācietis, was replaced with Sergey Kamenev. Vladimir Lenin called for concentrating against General Anton Denikin

in the south.<sup>18</sup> Estonian and Latvian national units had also suffered setbacks in the previous months, experiencing reductions in numbers and formations.

The Estonian and Latvian Armies were no more. Many Estonians had switched sides in May, and a lot of Latvians had deserted in late May and early June. By the summer of 1919, the Estonian Riflemen Division had been reduced into a separate Riflemen Brigade under the command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army. However, by the fall 1919, Estonians were reformed again into the Riflemen Division and sent to the Southern Front, where they fought among the ranks of the 13<sup>th</sup> Army, along with Latvian units in the Orel-Kromy operation against Denikin, capturing Orel and Kursk.<sup>19</sup> From July 1919, Latvian national units were among the 15<sup>th</sup> Army as the Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division.<sup>20</sup> In early to mid-September, the Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division was relocated to Belarus, within the 16<sup>th</sup> Army of the Western front. Shortly after, it was being quickly and secretly transferred to the Southern front.<sup>21</sup> Due to their fighting ability and higher morale, Estonian and Latvian national units could be considered a “fire brigade”. That explains how Latvian and Estonian units were transferred from the fronts in or near their homelands, finally ending up in Ukraine, in Crimea, where the most fierce and decisive battles took place.

### **Creation of political departments in the Red Army**

Victor Semykin<sup>22</sup> and, more recently, Georgy Ippolitov have rightly noted that organizational party work in the Red Army was a fundamentally new military-historical phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> Evgenij Naumov writes in a recent article about the 1<sup>st</sup> Army of the Eastern Front of

the Red Army that one of the most important factors that determined the victory of the Red Army on the fronts of the Civil War in Russia in 1917–1922 was the large-scale and productive work of the Bolshevik Party. Its members were engaged in agitation and organizational activities in the rear and directly in the armed forces. Amongst the troops, the implementation of these functions was entrusted to political commissars from summer of 1918 and in the Latvian case, only in the summer of 1919, after the abolishing of soldier committees. Before that, the same functions were carried out mostly by Bolshevik party organisations and soldier committees. Distribution of commissars and their work was coordinated by the political departments of the front, army, and divisional level.<sup>24</sup> Naumov concludes that there were problems with the creation of the system for several reasons until the first months of 1919, including the lack of clear regulation of the process.<sup>25</sup>

In December 1918, the structure of the Red Army included political departments (*politotdel*), under the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) of the front.<sup>26</sup> Later in 1919, it was renamed as the Political Directorate of RMC and, even further on, the Political Directorate of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army (PURKKA, or PUR for short). Prioritizing political work had its downsides. Roger Reese suggested that the politicization of the officer corps started to obstruct the development of professional identity, autonomy, and cohesion.<sup>27</sup> Reese pointed out that within the armed forces, PUR was responsible not only for political education but also for upholding discipline and morale.<sup>28</sup>

Political Departments of the Red Army, among other tasks, submitted surveillance reports – *politsvodki* – as an application of political control. The first known reports date back to September 1918 and

deal with the Hungarian prisoners of war (POW) serving in the Red Army:

*“The mood of the former Hungarian POWs towards the Soviet authorities is favourable; many join the Red Army. The agitation section has an organized library and reading room for soldiers of the Red Army, lectures and discussions take place.”*<sup>29</sup>

According to Yulia Kalinina, reports differ in different branches of the Red Army and also in different units of the same branch. For example, in 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, commissars had orders to submit reports daily, but more detailed summaries of their own work and of the situation in the regiments had to be submitted at least weekly.<sup>30</sup> Kalinina draws attention to the fact that the reports of political department on the mood of soldiers or sailors did not always fully reflect the actual situation, as they provided an assessment of the political department's own work.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the so-called frontline reporting could have presented to the Soviet leadership a false picture of the attitudes and problems of Red Army soldiers. At the same time, there was a risk of downplaying problems or concealing their causes in any reporting, not just in the Soviet camp. This can also be seen in the political reports of Estonian national units in the Red Army. Difficulties were often attributed to poor material conditions rather than weak political and educational work. However, such a condition was not unique for Soviet commissars, Soviet Russia, or even to that era.

In Soviet Russia, there was more than one surveillance agency in the Red Army. There were Bolshevik party organizations in the army, with control and surveillance being one of the main objectives of party members and Communist “cells” in military units. The ideological work in the party organization consisted of observing

soldiers' attitudes toward the Communist Party, ideological work, and agitation.<sup>32</sup> The Army of Soviet Latvia also had Soldier Committees until June 1919, gathering information on moods of soldiers, and there was army's inspector Reinholds Bērziņš, compiling reports on the Latvian Soviet Army's fighting capabilities and moods.<sup>33</sup>

Side by side with the Political Departments, Cheka also submitted summaries. Jānis Šiliņš has written that in the Army of Soviet Latvia, the Secret Police kept a close eye on the attitudes of the soldiers and reported findings.<sup>34</sup> Reports by chekists were compiled from 1 December 1918, in counties every two weeks and in governorates – monthly. These reports had to include possible counter-revolutionary agitation by *kulaks*, clergymen and *whites* in villages. The decision to organize a systematic and widespread compilation of surveillance reports was made on 3 June 1919, during the All-Russian Conference of Cheka. Instruction for compiling reports was also implemented then [*Rukovodstvo gubernsk(im) ChK dlja sostavlenija svodok*].<sup>35</sup> While Cheka was the “hammer” to the potential opposition, whereas political departments leaned towards employing more “subtle” means.

### Instructions for compiling surveillance reports

Three types of summaries of political departments can be found in archives: daily, weekly and two-weekly *politsvodki*. There are also monthly summaries, but these are named *info bulletins* and will not be analysed within this article. The Estonian Riflemen Division of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army submitted weekly reports in June 1919.<sup>36</sup> This leads to the conclusion that perhaps instructions – at least the ones found in archives – were drafted in July of 1919.

One type of instruction demanded daily reporting. According to Kalinina, schemes for compiling reports were created by the Political Department and more precisely, by the Information Section.<sup>37</sup> There are two variations of instructions for daily summaries in the Estonian archive – one seems to be the initial draft (“scheme”) and the second form, which was applied for usage. According to the draft, daily summaries had to observe 12 topics. The pattern for detailed instructions, such as for military censorship, was inherent already to bureaucrats of the Russian Empire. Commissars had to report the following topics in *politsvodki*: fighting ability (including communications and state of weapons) and mood (including combat spirit and relations between lower ranks and commanders, but also attitudes towards Soviet authorities and communism, counter-revolutionary agitation, anti-Semitic statements, and mass-complaints).

The most extensive topic was the “behaviour” of frontline units. That included reporting any refusal to obey orders, violations of discipline, and absences without official leave. Activities considered as fatal for discipline were those that could be considered criminal – looting, unauthorized requisitioning, playing cards, using cocaine, and embezzlement of public property. Crucial indicators of the Red Army’s fighting capabilities were desertion, defection, combat morale, but also attitudes towards defectors and POWs. Besides all the occurrences of a negative type, commissars also had to report acts of bravery.

While most of these subjects can be considered at least in some part related to political attitudes, another lengthy topic was completely of a military kind. In their summaries, the commissars had to list the situation of supplying troops with uniforms, food, salary, but also all kinds of logistical support – artillery, ammunitions,

horses, and transportation. *Politsvodki* had to include the condition of medical support. One section seemed to repeat some of the earlier demands: commissars had to summarize their efforts at the frontline on cultural-educational and party work, any sign of counter-revolutionary agitation, and the progression of mobilization. Somehow, compilers of *politsvodki* also had to get information on the mood of enemy troops, on defectors, cases of fraternization, and the dissemination of Bolshevik literature among Whites.<sup>38</sup> In general, there were very few subjects that commissars did not have to know and report on.

The second copy, a possible final “form number 1” for daily *politsvodki*, was slightly different, with six or seven general topics: fighting ability, mood, supply, medical conditions, frontline situation, enemy troops. In addition, commissars had to especially report important news, but this would not necessarily be a “core” topic, as such information could not be reported on a regular basis. Besides the use of drugs, commissars had to report the cases of drunkenness and conflicts. Regarding supplies, *politsvodki* had to contain, in addition, conditions on the availability of binding materials and newspapers. Curiously, the requirement to report on fraternization disappeared, and instead of that, commissars had to obtain information about the rear area of the enemy.<sup>39</sup>

Possibly the explanation is that it was decided that reporting cases of fraternization between the soldiers of the enemy and Red Army could have shed a bad light on commissars. In the Latvian archive, there is “a form number 1” with some differences – mainly regarding the second topic, which is called “behaviour” instead of “mood”. In addition, Latvian instruction required reporting on different groups: commanders, commissars, political workers, and ordinary soldiers of the Red Army. Besides



drunkenness and card games, Latvian *politsvodki* had to include cases of cowardice, inability to organize, etc.<sup>40</sup> Dividing the mass of the Red Army into groups reflects the theory of political control well.

Another draft for Estonian units was on two-weekly reports, listing 11 topics of interest. These types of summaries required reporting the same topics as daily reports, but in addition expanded more on work with political education. Namely, the seventh section deals in depth with “Relationships and cultural enlightenment work”. Commissars had to report how many “cells” of Komsomol (*komjacheek*) there were in regiments, battalions, and companies. Also, the number of workers of cultural enlightenment, clubs, control and economic commissions (*kontrhozkom*), Comrades’ court (*tovsudov*). Commissars had to report how many of such sections, but also how many schools, libraries, and reading rooms were organized in those two weeks.

Two-weekly summaries had to list the number of meetings, gatherings, lectures, concerts, and what questions arose during these various activities. Finally, commissars had to assess the attitude of the population towards political work. The 8<sup>th</sup> section of the instruction required an assessment of political self-awareness towards Soviet authorities and communists, the Civil War, and the political dealings of the party.<sup>41</sup> Similar instructions can be found for Latvian units. One important difference was requirement to report the percentage of literacy.<sup>42</sup>

Kalinina lists six topics in weekly summaries within the Baltic Fleet: the name of the ship or unit, mood of troops (attitude towards Soviet authorities, relationship between comrades, attitude towards commanders and commissar, relations within the “collective”), agitational-political and cultural-enlightenment work in subunits,

commanding staff (their participation in the daily life and performance of duties), relationship within the collective, between commissars and commanding staff, and finally – important notices of the week.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, no instructions of compiling weekly summaries can be found for Estonian and Latvian units. While focusing on relationships within a ship is fully understandable, the lack of any requirement to report on supplies, medical conditions, or political education is curious.

Did commissars have the skills to assess all the topics the instructions demanded? This is more than doubtful, as “political educators” did not usually include persons with competence in military matters. Not only that – as Roger Reese showed, the military even did not require of the officers to apply basic leaderships practices.<sup>44</sup> However, these instructions show the birth of specific terminology and abbreviations already in the first years of Soviet authorities.

## Implementing instructions

Summaries of Estonian units can be found since June 1919, but reports of Latvian units preserved in the Latvian archive are dated from August and the following months of the same year. *Politsvodki* kept listing the daily problems of the Red Army on a regular basis.

Before dissolution of the Estonian Riflemen Division, a lengthy summary of political work during the first half of June 1919 was submitted by Peeter Peterson, chief of the Political Department of the Division, and Karl Pritso, chief of Information. Each regiment was described separately, starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Estonian Communist Riflemen Regiment. The report was pretty much along the lines of the aforementioned instructions but not yet listed as separately



numbered topics. The summary began by describing the “mood”, which, according to the commissar, depended largely on the new uniforms being received or not. Estonians were alarmed by rumours of possible reforming of their units. The relationship towards some of the commanding staff was termed as “hostile”. “Traitor-commanders” were replaced with communists.<sup>45</sup>

In a letter dated two weeks before this summary, the new commander of the Estonian Riflemen Division, Jakob Palvadre, had listed a number of former commanders who switched sides earlier in May – along with the former commander of Division L. Ritt.<sup>46</sup> The summary continued to assess the fighting ability of subunits of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, concluding that “*the Regiment has not completely healed from wounds caused by traitors*”. In line of duty were listed 536 men, seven cases of desertion were recorded. In regiment were 52 communists and ten “sympathizers”, organized into a regimental collective. The summary concluded that many lacked rifles and there were not enough machine guns, medical equipment, medications, or newspapers.<sup>47</sup> Other regiments of the Estonian Riflemen Division were described as having similar deficiencies.

Summaries of the Estonian Riflemen Brigade were submitted since 22 June. In their daily summary of 24 June, P. Peterson and K. Pritso reported reduced moods due to tiredness among troops and that “*people are not certain of their strength*”. In each company, agitators-organizers focused on political education.<sup>48</sup>

There are daily summaries available of the Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division, while the division’s Political Department was located in Velikiye Luki in August as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army. No strict following of any instruction can be seen in these reports, and problems were listed quite

chaotically. A document dated 3 August assessed the “political mood” of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade as good, and political work was considered energetic.<sup>49</sup> Another summary from 5 August considered the “political mood” in the 1<sup>st</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade as merely satisfactory. A cause for this was indicated as the reforming of Latvian Riflemen. Besides political aspects, supply problems were also mentioned. For example, the situation with horses was especially bad, as no oats to feed the animals had been received in several months. Thrown into the mix were “dark elements” consisting of deserters who agitated against the Soviet authorities.<sup>50</sup>

Instructions in Latvian units were implemented by the end of August, at least in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen brigade. On 30 August, the commissar of the brigade sent a notice to the commissars of the regiments to start submitting daily reports to him without delay – at the latest, by 10 pm. Daily events had to be reported according to the instructions, summarized and precise, “*not to be discouraged by the form of expression*”. Comrades who had difficulties expressing their thoughts in Russian could write in Latvian.<sup>51</sup> Apparently, the commissar of the brigade compiled his own summary from the reports sent by the regiments.

The first summary following instructions for daily reporting appears to be compiled on the following day. The commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade summarized his observations for 31 August with six numbered sections. In the first topic, the commissar reported that no counter-revolutionary agitation was detected, and there were no desertions, but it would be “recommended” for propagandist to visit the unit at least a few times per month. The second section summarized good relationships between communists, commissars, political workers, and combatants of

the Red Army. Then followed a lengthier topic describing the state of armaments – which was considered good, the continuing lack of underwear, boots, and overcoats, poor supply of horse feed, and an even worse state of horses, who were tired and sick. Supply of foodstuffs was considered “very bad” by the commissar. The supply of literature (newspapers) was poor. The fourth section reported a detrimental state of supply of medications but noted a small number of the sick.

The penultimate topic described the attitude of population to be discontent, as there were cases of non-sanctioned requisitions carried out by soldiers, mainly of foodstuffs. Meanwhile, no counter-revolutionary signs were detected. Finally, the commissar noted: “*Today, the next party meeting took place. The mood of Red Army combatants is satisfactory.*”<sup>52</sup> *Politsvodka* from the Estonian Riflemen Brigade from the same day of 31 August was forwarded by telegram and was considerably briefer and less along the lines of instruction than the Latvian summary. Nineteen cases of desertion on the march were mentioned. The supply of uniforms for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Estonian Riflemen Regiment was not considered satisfactory. News of the transfer to another front caused discouragement among the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Regiments.<sup>53</sup> Two weeks later, the commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade stopped using numeration for different topics. *Politsvodka* described the situation on 15 September.<sup>54</sup>

Something must have changed at the end of September, possibly in relation to the transfer of the Regiment from Belarus to the Southern front. The report from the 5<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment to the commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Brigade, dated 3 October, stayed true to the instructions and listed required topics separately. However, it’s confusingly stated to be a “*daily report for 29 and 30 September, 1, 2, 3 October of*

*the same year*”.<sup>55</sup> Later in the same month, regiments again submitted daily reports, but without numeration of different sections. Information was given in a less precise manner. For example, a report describing the situation on the 5<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment on 23 October stated: “*The mood is good. [...] Desertions occur.*”<sup>56</sup>

After two months, in January 1920, the summary of 3<sup>rd</sup> Latvian Brigade addressed most of the topics required by instructions, but at times rather loosely. One report for two weeks from the second half of January in great detail described five topics according to the instruction, marked as fighting ability, behaviour, supply, medical conditions, and political-cultural enlightenment work. Other topics were marked but were described at best with one sentence. A summary was also submitted on 8 February.<sup>57</sup> The timeframe of some summaries did not comply with the requirements. One *politsvodka* was describing the situation within six days,<sup>58</sup> and the other encompassed the period of ten days.<sup>59</sup> Summaries from Estonian units in October were also sent by telegram and followed instructions loosely. A smaller and fragmented number of primary sources for Estonian units makes it more difficult to follow the dynamics of implementing instructions there compared to Latvian units.

### **“Engineers of the human soul” – patterns and language of reporting daily life in the Red Army**

The main task of *politsvodki* could be considered to implement political control by commissars. This system was also a mechanism for higher-ups to control and pressurize political workers, as commissars also had to report the progress of their own ideological work. However, political attitudes were not immune to the influences

of many factors of daily life. As previously seen, commissars could list all the negative aspects regarding mainly logistical problems, but still conclude that their own work had brought positive results.

As *politsvodki* were, in many cases, sent through telegram, the presence or lack of numeration is of no great importance. The lack of certain aspects or keywords required in summaries by the instructions creates more questions. Nobody would have asked about drinking, gambling, and substance abuse, or embezzlement of state property, if such behaviour did not occur. On the contrary, as Ineta Lipša has proved, after the revolution the former barriers such as the temperance movement trying to represent drinking as a sin died down among Latvians.<sup>60</sup> Such trends were not limited to the usage of alcohol and happened elsewhere, as well. Revolution and war broke several moral barriers restricting formerly shunned behaviour also in Estonia. As one Estonian serving in the Red Army wrote in his diary in December 1918, the soldiers of his squad acquired five bottles of vodka right after invading the Estonian Republic from the territory of Soviet Russia and proceeded to party in every village they were stationed.<sup>61</sup>

Hand in hand with such behaviour was the embezzlement of state property – also a topic required to be reported in summaries but curiously missing. The effects were, for example, a lack of uniforms. Sergej Bondarev has written about Cheka on 14 May 1920 being tasked with fighting specifically against speculations of military uniforms on the “black market”.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, revealing anything related to undesirable behaviour would have caused problems for commissars. It is more than likely that some negative occurrences were “forgotten”. From quite a few summaries it appears that while every single aspect of the daily life in the Red Army was

considered to be lacking – to put it mildly, nevertheless, all troubles were “soothed”, for example, by the gathering of the local party collective and, by the end of the day, the mood was “satisfactory”.

Many *politsvodki* tried to create the impression that most of the problems were out of the hands of commissars. Did such a style of summaries become a commonplace? As the Red Army was constantly dealing with various logistical problems, and daily conditions caused severe difficulties, these issues could have affected the morale of soldiers and thus could not be ignored. Perhaps commissars saw it as an opportunity to draw attention away from their own work – or lack of it? Supply of food, shortage of equipment (mainly uniform items), poor medical conditions – these problems appear constantly. Very curious is the small number of desertions being indicated since the summer of 1919. A similarly interesting aspect is that signs of a counterrevolutionary attitude are absent, as well as the mentions of enemy propaganda.

Political education was noted at times, but not much was told about the results – at least not as much as instructions demanded. This can be explained by the situation, as units were in constant battle. Another serious reason was the problems with educational work, propaganda, and especially its mediums – mainly newspapers. Problems with supplying newspapers were mentioned – there were too few copies available or they did not arrive frequently enough. This was not an insignificant problem.

Kalinina notes that one of the most important ways to involve men (sailors, according to her study) was the process of exercising political control through the establishment of the *Pobalt* press organ in March 1919 – the newspaper “Red Baltic Fleet”. Its role in this process was dual. Firstly, the newspaper formed ideas about

the need for the participation of sailors in collecting information about the political life of the Baltic Fleet, determined (although not as clearly as for officials) the circle of information and the differentiation of objects of control. Secondly, it was an important information-gathering tool. However, Kalinina pointed out that it should be noted that the sailors, responding to appeals in the articles of the “Red Baltic Fleet”, did not always send complaints and denunciations to the newspaper, although they referred to its materials.<sup>63</sup>

The lack of newspapers very likely reduced the effectiveness of political education and control in Estonian and Latvian units. For example, a lengthy summary of political work with the Estonian Riflemen Division (before it was dissolved) during the first half of June 1919 complained about the supply of literature for political education. The number of copies of newspapers was considered insufficient, especially regarding Russian newspapers. Two different Estonian newspapers were received.<sup>64</sup> The same problems haunted Latvian units. The commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade noted in his summary of 31 August that the supply of literature was considered “unsatisfactory” as there was one newspaper per 15 combatants.<sup>65</sup> That was one issue besides the logistics that commissars did report, as revealing such a problem was likely to remove the pressure from themselves.

Perhaps the most interesting is the semantics of political summaries. Yulia Kalinina suggested that the peculiarity of the language of the reports was due to previous experience of political control in the armed forces of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Republic. She noted that the nature of the posed questions influenced the specifics of the answers, which were often expressed not in the enumeration of specific facts but in brief value

judgments, such as “good”, “satisfactory”, etc., leading to the formation of a special “clichéd” language.<sup>66</sup> One has to agree with such an assessment, but there is also a notable emergence of a new, specific political language and abbreviations used both in instructions and throughout *politsvodki*. In the daily summary of the Estonian Riflemen Brigade from 22 June 1919, each company had agitators-organizers who cleared the regiment of “unreliable elements” (*nenadezhnyj jelement*).<sup>67</sup> The summary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade from 3 March 1920, used the term *politruk* (short for political worker).<sup>68</sup>

As Dakota Irvin notes about Soviet surveillance reports, such sources offer a rare opportunity to examine the inner workings of the Soviet system.<sup>69</sup> The same can be said about *politsvodki*, which have received little usage or analysis from historians. However, considering what instructions required to be reported, actual summaries contain, at times, very little useful information for historians. Kalinina has quoted Izmozik, who noted the low informative value of early Soviet surveillance reports. For example, in the weekly report for August 16, 1918, the following characterization was given to the mood of the army: “*On the outer front: cheerful. On the domestic front: satisfactory.*”<sup>70</sup>

Kalinina notes that the reports that appeared later, specifically devoted to the mood in the troops, inherited this laconic style.<sup>71</sup> One has to agree that such assessment of the style is quite true, yet *politsvodki* provide us with an understanding of the inner dynamics of early Soviet years, based on what is missing. There are strong signs that commissars learned self-preservation right from the beginning, thus compiling very reserved summaries. It’s also apparent that the political education and propaganda did not yield great results during the height of the Civil War.

## Conclusions

Political summaries (*politsvodki*) were compiled by the commissars of political departments as early as September 1918. Based on the primary sources, more specific instructions for Estonian and Latvian national units were drafted in July or August of 1919 and first implemented in late August 1919. Instructions required commissars to compile summaries daily and also for two weeks. Attitude – or “mood” – of the soldiers, logistical aspects, and the progress on political education had to be reported. There were some significant differences with the first drafts and also between instructions for Estonian and Latvian units. However, this was of little importance, as in reality requirements were followed quite loosely.

While not following instructions point by point, the summaries did slowly, but steadily progress to being in line with reporting what was required. Little light was shed on political education and propaganda compared to listing various logistical

problems. The assessment of attitudes was often described in a laconic manner. Being under constant reformation, transferred across the vast territories of the western parts of the former Russian Empire, and constant battles were probably the main reasons why ideological work suffered. A further important reason for inefficient political control and education was the problem with supplying newspapers to the soldiers of Red Army. In part, reporting very little on dealings with political education can also be explained as the strategy of commissars not to cause criticism of their own work – or, more exactly, the lack of results. Suspiciously enough, certain negative behaviour is not mentioned at all. It is more than probable that certain activities – such as drinking – were not absent but simply did not get reported by commissars. Noteworthy is the emerging of a specific Soviet political language and usage of terminology such as “unreliable element”, and abbreviations – for example, *politruk* – already in 1919.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See for example: AGO PAJUR, TÕNU TANNBERG (Comp.). *Eesti rahvusväeosad 1917–1918. Antoloogia* [Estonian National Units 1917–1918. Anthology]. Tartu 2015.
- <sup>2</sup> See more on the subject: IGOR KOPÕTIN. *Punaarmee rahvusväeosad aastatel 1918–1922* [National units of the Red Army in 1918–1922]. In: *Sõjateadlane* [Estonian Journal of Military Studies] 2016, No. 1, pp. 190–215.
- <sup>3</sup> VLADLEN IZMOZIK. *Politicheskij kontrol' v Sovetskoj Rossii. 1918–1928 gg.* (Avtoreferat) *Dissertacija*. Moskva 1995, s. 13; VLADLEN IZMOZIK. *Politicheskij kontrol' v Sovetskoj Rossii v gody Grazhdanskoj vojny*. In: *Rossija v Grazhdanskoj vojne. 1918–1922. Jenciklopedija v 3 tomah*. T. 2. Moskva 2020–2021, s. 799–801; SERGEJ DIANOV. *Politicheskij kontrol' v Permskom krae v 1919–1929 gg.* *Dissertacija*. Permskij gosudarstvennyj pedagogičeskij universitet. Perm 2007, s. 8–9.
- <sup>4</sup> PETER HOLQUIST. “Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work”: Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context. In: *The Journal of Modern History* 69, 1997, No. 3, pp. 415–450.
- <sup>5</sup> PETER HOLQUIST. Anti-Soviet Svodki from the Civil-War. Surveillance as a Shared Feature of Russian Political Culture. In: *The Russian Review* 56, 1997, No. 3, pp. 445–450.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>7</sup> HOLQUIST, “Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work”, pp. 415–450.

- <sup>8</sup> Rahvusarhiivi Eesti Riigiarhiivi filiaal (Parteiarihiiv) (henceforth – RA ERAF), fund 27. Collection: Estonian Communist Party History Commission; RA ERAF, fund 28. Estonian Workers Commune.
- <sup>9</sup> Latvijas Nacionālais arhivs, Latvijas Valsts arhivs, Rīga (henceforth – LNA LVA), fund PA 45. History Commission of Latvian Riflemen.
- <sup>10</sup> KOPŌTIN, Punaarmee rahvusväeosad aastatel, p. 198.
- <sup>11</sup> LAURI VAHTRE (ed.). Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu. I [History of Estonian Independence War. I]. Tallinn 2020, pp. 424–425.
- <sup>12</sup> ALEKSEJ BEZUGOL'NYJ. Nacional'nyj sostav Krasnoj Armii (1918–1945). Moskva 2021, s. 68–69.
- <sup>13</sup> ĒRIKS JĒKABSONS. Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaita un sastāva izmaiņas militāro un politisko procesu iepaidā 1914–1920. gadā – priekšstati un realitāte [Changes in the number and composition of Latvia's population as a result of military and political processes in 1914–1920 – views and reality]. In: Karš un sabiedrība Latvijā 1914–1920 [War and society in Latvia 1914–1920]. Rīga 2021, pp. 17–50, here p. 38.
- <sup>14</sup> VAHTRE, Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu, pp. 426–429.
- <sup>15</sup> Information on the nationalities of the Red Army units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 12.08.1919. LNA LVA, PA.45-2-91, pp. 74–75.
- <sup>16</sup> PEETER KAASIK. Tartu rahuläbirääkimiste eellugu [The Prelude to the Tartu Peace Negotiations]. In: Ajalooline Ajakiri [Historical Journal] 2021, No. 3/4, p. 312.
- <sup>17</sup> JĀNIS ŠLIŅŠ. Padomju Latvijas militārā un politiskā attīstība (1918. gada decembris – 1919. gada jūnijs). Promocijas darbs [Military and political development of Soviet Latvia (December 1918 – June 1919). Doctoral Thesis]. Latvijas Universitāte. Rīga 2011, p. 181.
- <sup>18</sup> EVAN MAWDSLEY. The Russian Civil War. Edinburgh 2017, pp. 341–342.
- <sup>19</sup> Rossija v Graždanskoj vojne, s. 311–312; DAVID R. STONE, JONATHAN D. SMELE, GEOFFREY SWAIN, ALEX MARSHALL, STEVEN MARKS, ANDREI V. GANIN (eds.). Military Affairs in Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914–22. Book 2: The Russian Civil War: Campaigns and Operations. [S.l.], 2022, pp. 153–154.
- <sup>20</sup> VALDIS BĒRZIŅŠ. Latviešu strēlnieki – drāma un traģēdija [Latvian Riflemen – drama and tragedy]. Rīga 1995, p. 187.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 197.
- <sup>22</sup> VICTOR SEMYKIN. Organizacionno partijnaja rabota politicheskikh organov i partijnyh organizacij RKP(b) dejstvujushhej armii v 1918–1920 gg. In: Izvestija Samarskogo nauchnogo centra Rossijskoj akademii nauk 16, 2014, No. 3–2, s. 451.
- <sup>23</sup> GEORGY IPPOLITOV. Iz Istorii Organizacionno-partijnoj raboty v vojskah sovetского vostochnogo fronta (1918–1919 gg.). In: Izvestija Samarskogo nauchnogo centra Rossijskoj akademii nauk. Istoricheskie nauki 2022, t. 4, No. 2, s. 44–45.
- <sup>24</sup> EVGENIJ NAUMOV. “Partijnyh rabotnikov napravljat” isključitel'no v rasprojazhenie revoljucionnogo voennogo soveta” Raspredelenie komissarov i agitatorov Krasnoj armii vo vtoroj polovine 1918 goda na primere 1-j armii Vostochnogo fronta. In: Voенno-istoricheskij zhurnal 2023, No. 3, s. 54.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibidem, s. 62.
- <sup>26</sup> ROBERT KALJUZHNYJ. Krasnaja Armija 1918–1934: struktura i organizacija. Moskva 2019, s. 318.
- <sup>27</sup> ROGER REESE. Red Commanders. A Social History of the Soviet Army Officer Corps, 1918–1991. Kansas 2005, p. 4.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.
- <sup>29</sup> Iz politvodki politotdela III armii o vstuplenii voennoplennyh-ven grov v rjady Krasnoj Armii. 24 sentjabrja 1918 g. In compilation of documents: Vengerskie internacionalisty v Oktjabr'skoj revoljucii i Graždanskoj vojne v SSSR. V 2 t. T. 2. Uchastie vengerskikh internacionalistov v zashhite sovetskoy vlasti na frontah Graždanskoj vojny v SSSR: Sb. dok. Moskva 1968, s. 163.

- <sup>30</sup> JULIJA KALININA. Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja na Baltijskom flote (1919–1921). Dissertacija. Sankt-Peterburgskij institut istorii RAN. Sankt-Peterburg 2007, s. 29–30.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibidem, s. 30.
- <sup>32</sup> OTT KOOR. Military Personnel and Party Organisation of Estonian Revolutionary Defense Regiment in December 1918 – June 1919. Bachelor's Thesis. University of Tartu. Tartu 2019, p. 41.
- <sup>33</sup> Author thanks Jānis Šiliņš for his helpful comments on these matters.
- <sup>34</sup> JĀNIS ŠILINŠ. The Soviet Army in Northern Lithuania between January and June 1919. In: The Unending War? The Baltic States after 1918 / Nesibaigiantis karas? Baltijos šalys po 1918 metų. Klaipėda 2018 (Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis, 36), pp. 27–44.
- <sup>35</sup> Sovetskaja derevnja glazami VChK-OGPU-NKVD. Dokumenty i materialy. Tom 1. 1918–1922. Moskva 1998, s. 26–27.
- <sup>36</sup> The Estonian Riflemen Division was formed into the Estonian Riflemen Brigade in the second half of June 1919.
- <sup>37</sup> KALININA, Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja, s. 30.
- <sup>38</sup> Scheme for daily summaries [Russian], undated. RA ERAF, 28-3-545, p. 7.
- <sup>39</sup> Form No. 2 [Russian], undated. Ibidem, p. 9–9v.
- <sup>40</sup> Form No. 1 [Russian], undated. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-17, p. 61.
- <sup>41</sup> Scheme of two-weekly reports [Russian], undated. RA ERAF, 28-3-545, p. 7v.
- <sup>42</sup> Forma No. 2 [Russian], undated. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-17, p. 62–62v.
- <sup>43</sup> KALININA, Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja, s. 30.
- <sup>44</sup> REESE, Red Commanders, p. 42.
- <sup>45</sup> The report of political work of the 1<sup>st</sup> Estonian Riflemen Division [Russian], 15.06.1919. RA ERAF, 27-3-16, pp. 53–55.
- <sup>46</sup> A letter from Jakob Palvadre to comrade Anvelt and the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party [Estonian], 29.05.1919. RA ERAF, 27-10-35, pp. 1–3.
- <sup>47</sup> The report of political work of the 1<sup>st</sup> Estonian Riflemen Division [Russian], 15.06.1919. RA ERAF, 27-3-16, p. 53.
- <sup>48</sup> A daily political summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Estonian Riflemen Regiment [Russian], 24.06.1919. Ibidem, p. 65.
- <sup>49</sup> A daily political summary of Latvian Riflemen [Russian], 03.08.1919. LNA LVA, PA.45-2-91, p. 32.
- <sup>50</sup> A daily political summary of Latvian Riflemen [Russian], 05.08.1919. Ibidem, p. 33.
- <sup>51</sup> Military commissar of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade to commissar of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Latvian regiments [Russian], 30.08.1919. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-17, p. 58.
- <sup>52</sup> A daily political summary of 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 31.08.1919. Ibidem, p. 52.
- <sup>53</sup> A daily political summary of the Estonian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 31.08.1919. RA ERAF, 27-3-21, p. 38.
- <sup>54</sup> A daily political summary of 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 15.09.1919. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-17, p. 121.
- <sup>55</sup> Daily political summaries of 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade from 29–30 September and 1–3 October [Russian], 03.10.1919. Ibidem, p. 117.
- <sup>56</sup> A daily political summary of 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 23.10.1919. Ibidem, p. 139.
- <sup>57</sup> A report from commissar of Latvian Soviet Riflemen Division for 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the January 1920 [Russian], 08.02.1920. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-31, p. 11.



- <sup>58</sup> A political summary of 3<sup>rd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade 6–11 January 1920 [Russian], 11.01.1920. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-31, p. 6.
- <sup>59</sup> A political summary of 3<sup>rd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade from 25<sup>th</sup> January to 4<sup>th</sup> February 1920 [Russian], 05.02.1920. Ibidem, p. 9.
- <sup>60</sup> INETA LIPŠA. Sabiedriskā tikumība Latvijā 1918–1940. Promocijas darbs [Public morality in Latvia 1918–1940. Doctoral Thesis]. Latvijas Universitāte. Rīga 2009, p. 207.
- <sup>61</sup> A diary of unknown Army of Soviet Estonia soldier [Estonian], 12.12.1918–08.02.1919. Rahvusarhiiv Eesti Riigiarhiiv, R-1534-1-20, pp. 107–119.
- <sup>62</sup> SERGEJ BONDAREV. Rynochnaja trgovlja v Petrograde v 1917–1921 gg. Dissertacija. S.-Peterb. gos. un-t. Sankt-Peterburg 2015, s. 123.
- <sup>63</sup> KALININA, Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja, s. 81.
- <sup>64</sup> The report of political work of the 1<sup>st</sup> Estonian Riflemen Division [Russian], 15.06.1919. RA ERAF, 27-3-16, p. 53.
- <sup>65</sup> A daily political summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 31.08.1919. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-17, p. 52.
- <sup>66</sup> KALININA, Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja, s. 30.
- <sup>67</sup> A daily political summary of the Estonian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 24.06.1919. RA ERAF, 27-3-16, p. 65.
- <sup>68</sup> A political summary of 3<sup>rd</sup> Latvian Riflemen Brigade [Russian], 02.03.1920. LNA LVA, PA.45-9-31, p. 25.
- <sup>69</sup> DAKOTA IRVIN. Surveillance reports. In: Reading Russian Sources. London, New York 2020, p. 111.
- <sup>70</sup> KALININA, Politotdely v sisteme politicheskogo kontrolja, s. 30–31.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibidem, s. 30–31.

## KOPSAVILKUMS

Uzraudzība kā politiskās kontroles mehānisms bija ierasta valstu prakse jau pirms Pirmā pasaules kara. Tomēr politisko nodaļu ieviešana Sarkanajā armijā 1918.–1920. gadā bija pilnīgi jauns vēsturiski militārs fenomens. Viens no šo departamentu mērķiem bija iesniegt uzraudzības ziņojumus, ko sauca par politiskajiem kopsavilkumiem, – *politsvodki*.

Pirmie politiskie kopsavilkumi Sarkanajā armijā ir zināmi no 1918. gada rudens. Tomēr ļoti maz ir informācijas par uzraudzības ziņojumiem, ko šīs iestādes sastādīja Sarkanās armijas nacionālajās vienībās. Šajā rakstā, izmantojot 379 ziņojumus no Igaunijas un Latvijas arhīviem, apkopoti norādījumi par uzraudzības ziņojumu sastādīšanu, to izpildi un jautājumi, par kuriem faktiski ziņoja Sarkanās armijas Igaunijas un Latvijas nacionālo vienību politiskās nodaļas.

Igaunijas un Latvijas nacionālās vienības 1919. gada augusta beigās saņēma detalizētas instrukcijas par politisko kopsavilkumu sastādīšanu. Bija vairāki instrukciju projekti, kas izveidoti tā paša gada jūlijā vai augustā gan ikdienas, gan divu nedēļu kopsavilkumiem. Instrukcijas nedēļas kopsavilkumiem nav saglabājušās. Galīgajās instrukcijās bija prasīts sniegt pārskatu par karavīru attieksmi, politiskās izglītības progresu un dažādiem militārajiem jautājumiem, piemēram, par formas tērpu piegāžu stāvokli.

Tā kā instrukcijas netika stingri ievērotas, kopsavilkumos pamazām arvien vairāk tika ziņots par to, kas bija nepieciešams. Maz tika ziņots par politiskās izglītības un propagandas progresu. Tā vietā komisāri uzskaitīja dažādas militārās un loģistikas

problēmas. Attieksmes novērtējums bieži tika aprakstīts lakoniskā valodā, izmantojot tādas frāzes kā “apmierinoši”. Galvenais iemesls dažādajām problēmām ideoloģiskajā darbā izskaidrojams ar igauņu un latviešu vienību pastāvīgu pārceļšanos. Vēl viens neefektīvas politiskās kontroles un audzināšanas pamatcēlonis bija problēma ar Sarkanās armijas karavīru apgādi ar laikrakstiem. Dažu ideoloģisko problēmu noklusēšanu varētu skaidrot kā komisāru stratēģiju, lai izvairītos nonākt uzmanības centrā par rezultātu trūkumu. Noteikta negatīva uzvedība, piemēram, dzeršana, vispār nav pieminēta – visticamāk, apzināti. Ievēribas cienīgs ir fakts, ka šajos kopsavilkumos vērojama specifiskas padomju politiskās valodas dzimšana, un tāda terminoloģija kā “neuzticams elements” tika lietota jau 1919. gadā.



© 2023, Latvijas Universitāte

Raksts publicēts brīvpieejā saskaņā ar Creative Commons Attiecinājuma-Nekomerciāls 4.0 starptautisko licenci (CC BY-NC 4.0).

This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)