

The Northern Corps for the period October 1918–May 1919.

This material is kindly provided by Reigo Rosenthal.

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The official date of creation of the Pskov Independent Volunteers Corps of the Northern Army was 10 October 1918. The area of creation was Pskov–Ostrov–Rēzekne.

Though the final aim was to create a full-sized army, at first only a corps was to be formed. It was to have included two rifle divisions, a cavalry brigade and supporting units–altogether about 50,000 men. But on 21 October 1918 a meeting of senior officers decided that at the start only a rifle division (three rifle regiments plus an artillery regiment) was to be formed.

Until 16 November 1918 the Corps was commanded by Major-General Aleksei Vandam, with Major-General Boris Malyavin his Chief of Staff. The 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Rifle Division was at first commanded by Maj.-Gen. Nikiforov, then from the end of October by Lt.-Gen. Panteleimon Simanskiy. But in the second half of November the staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Rifle Division was disbanded, probably because there were too few soldiers for such two big staffs (corps and divisional).

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The OOB for the corps on 25 November 1918, before the Red Army's offensive:

Commander: Col. Heinrich-Karl-Timoleon von Neff

Chief of staff: Cpt. Wilhelm von Rosenberg.

Corps' staff	180–220 men (counter-intelligence included).
1 st Pskov Volunteer Rifle Regiment	Col. P. Lebedev. 680–740 men, 8 MGs. <i>This unit was formed in Pskov.</i>
2 nd Ostrov Volunteer Rifle Regiment	Col. Anton Dzerozhinskiy. 580–610 men, 4–6 MGs. <i>Formed in Ostrov.</i>
3 rd Rezhitsa Volunteer Rifle Regiment	Col. Otto Heinze. 400–430 men, 0–2 MGs. <i>Formed at first in Rezhitsa (Rēzekne), at the end of October transferred to Ostrov.</i>
53 rd Volhyn Infantry Regiment	Lt.-Col. Daniil Vetrenko. 100 men. <i>This unit arrived from Ukraine in early November.</i>
1 st Pskov Volunteer Riflemen Artillery Regt	Col. Aleksei Issaev. 260 men, 8 light cannons, in two batteries. <i>Unit was formed in Pskov.</i>
Bulak-Balakhovich's Partisan Detachment	Cpt. Stanislav-Marian Bulak-Balakhovich. 450–460 men, 10 MGs, 2 light cannons.
Colonel Bibikov's Partisan Detachment	Col. Georgiy Bibikov. 150 men. <i>A cavalry unit, which was formed in Ostrov. Later it is known as Horse-Jaegers Divizion.</i>
Colonel Afanasev's Partisan Detachment	Col. Mikhail Afanasev. 150 men. <i>Located in Rezhitsa (Rēzekne).</i>
Detachment for Pskov's Outer Defence	Cpt. Leonard Mikosha. 150 men, 2 MGs. <i>This unit was formed for guarding duties on the demarcation line. It was formed from the holders of the St. George's Cross and is therefore later known as the Georgievskiy Rifle Detachment.</i>
Talabsk Detachment	Cpt. Boris Permikin. 300–400 men, 2 MGs, 2 artillery pieces – probably trench artillery. <i>On 20 October a group of about 20 officers had landed on the Talabsk islands in lake Pskov, invited by a delegation sent to Pskov by the islanders. The Red garrison on the islands surrendered. The Talabsk Detachment was formed from the locals.</i>
1st Pskov Volunteer Engineer Company	85 men.
Automobile Detachment	50 men, 7–9 automobiles.

Signals Detachment	40 men.
Special Detachment	50 men.
Armoured Train Detachment.	Col. V. Neplyuev. 30 men, 3 MGs. No armoured trains.
Aviation Detachment.	Lt-Col. P. Danilin 50–60 men, with no aeroplanes. 60 men in warehouses and workshops.
Pskov’s Commandant Office.	Col. A. von Stein. 20 men.
Lake Peipus Flotilla.	Cpt. 2nd Rank Dmitri Nelidov. 4 armed ships (“Tsesarevich Aleksei,” “Imperator,” “Ganza,” “Delfin”) armed with 7–8 guns and 7 MGs. <i>These ships deserted from the Red Peipus flotilla at the end of October 1918.</i>

Also on 24 November 1918 the Pskov’s Commandant Office started to form a self-defence unit from the inhabitants of Pskov–Detachment for Pskov’s Inner Defence

Altogether on the eve of the Red’s offensive the Corps consisted about 4,000 men, up to 42 MGs and 19–20 artillery pieces (the flotilla included). The Corps was poorly supplied, with insufficient proper clothing and footwear. Some of the equipment the Germans gave was broken.

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On 25 November 1918 the Reds forced the Whites to retreat from the Pskov area. Many soldiers deserted, and part retreated to Courland (Latvia). About 2,000 men arrived in southern-Estonia.

On 6 December 1918 the terms of an alliance between the Whites and the Estonian Government were settled. The Corps was in bad shape.

In the middle of December the situation was that the remnants of the Pskov, Ostrov, Rezhitsa, Volhyn regiments and Bibikov's detachment were in the area of Valga. On 20 December 1918 this group was named as the Western Detachment under Col. A. Dzerozhinskiy. The group played insignificant role in the defence of the area and by the beginning of January 1919 the units were sent to the rear for refitting.

In the area of Tartu were a group of units under Cpt. S. Bulak-Balakhovich: Bulak-Balakhovich's Partisan Detachment, the Georgievskiy Rifle Detachment, the Talabsk Detachment and the 1<sup>st</sup> battery of the artillery regiment (the guns of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battery were left in Pskov since there were no horses to transport them). On 20 December 1918 this group was named the Eastern Detachment. These units were probably more combat-capable than those in the Western Detachment, but the Estonian command in a panic abandoned Tartu practically without a battle, since there was a Red mutiny in the town.

By the beginning of January 1919 all the Russian Whites in Estonia had been pulled to the rear. The Lake Peipus flotilla had at the end of November retreated to Tartu, where its ships were confiscated by the Germans, and later given to the Estonians. One ship ("Ganza") had been left in Pskov with engine problems. Colonel Afanasev's detachment had retreated to Courland (in Latvia).

When the corps was put under Estonian command, its name was changed into the Independent Corps of the Northern Army (semi-officially – the Northern Corps). From 3 January 1919 the commander of the corps was Col. A. Dzerozhinskiy. The Chief of Staff was Col. Wilhelm von Wahl, having already been appointed on 10 December 1918.

On 3 January 1919 the 1<sup>st</sup> Revel Officers' Partisan Detachment was joined to the Corps. This was commanded by Lt.-Col. Karl-Johan Badendick and at this time consisted about 100 men. The unit was created at the end of December 1918 in Tallinn (Revel, Reval) in agreement with the Estonian government.

Also on 3 January 1919 the Estonian Supreme Commander, Col. Johan Laidoner, ordered the creation of Corps reserve units. For the Western Detachment (which was now commanded by Lt.-Col. Vasili Ananin) he ordered the regiments to disband and instead reform as more manoeuvrable partisan units.

The corps' artillery at this time consisted of 5 light cannons, but by the second half of March there were already 18 light cannons (not all in working order however) and so the Pskov Artillery Brigade (5 batteries) was formed, commanded by Col. Issaev. (The Brigade was only an administrative staff – the artillery batteries and platoons were distributed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Brigade.)

During the following months the Corps was reinforced by Russians from Estonia, volunteers from Estonian POW camps, deserters and prisoners from the Red Army and volunteers who came abroad (for example at the end of January 1919 Col. M. Afanasev arrived with 92 men).

According to the data presented by the Corps' staff on 11 March 1919 there were a total of 5,610 men in the formation. Of them 2,411 (or 43%) were either from Estonian POW camps or Reds who deserted or were captured on the front and then taken into the White ranks.

On 17 April 1919 a new Chief of Staff was appointed – Col. Otton von Krusenstiern.

The first unit sent to the front was a squadron from Col. Bibikov's Partisan Detachment (the Horse-Jaegers *Divizion*) – about 80 men. It served on the front in northern Estonia under the Estonian 1<sup>st</sup> Division from 7 January to 28 February 1919 and then it was pulled back to the rear. There the

Horse-Jaegers *Divizion* was formed into the Horse-Jaegers Regiment, which returned to the Narva front on 3 April 1919.

Bulak-Balakhovich's Eastern Detachment was also sent to the front in January 1919. Now it was called Ataman Bulak-Balakhovich's Composite Detachment and consisted of Bulak-Balakhovich's Partisan Detachment, the Talabsk Detachment and the Georgievskiy Rifle Detachment. Altogether about 900 men with two artillery pieces (a horse-battery in Bulak-Balakhovich's Partisan Detachment). This composite detachment was subordinated to the Estonian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and from 21 to 29 January 1919 it participated in battles in southern Estonia in the area of Tõrva. At the beginning of the February it was sent to guard the Western bank of the lakes Peipus and Pskov – the lakes were frozen. There it served until 19 April 1919 participating in some serious combats.

Meanwhile, on 5 March Maj-Gen. Aleksandr Rodzianko took over the command of this group and its name was changed into Pskov Detachment. At the same time it was reinforced with the 53<sup>rd</sup> Volhyn Infantry Regiment (under Lt.-Col. D. Vetrenko). This regiment, which in January was part of the Western Detachment, had been dissolved and reformed into the Volhyn Detachment. Then, in February, Vetrenko had reformed it back again into the 53<sup>rd</sup> regiment, mostly using POWs.

Around the middle of March the Pskov Detachment was named as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Brigade. By then it had also been reinforced by two artillery platoons. At the end of March the brigade had a total of about 2,500 men with 7 artillery pieces (one of them, a 37-mm trench-gun was captured from the Reds). On 25 March Bulak-Balakhovich's Partisan Detachment became Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse Regiment. Probably about the same time the Talabsk Detachment was renamed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Talabsk Rifle Regiment. By 22 April 1919 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Rifle Brigade was transferred to the Narva front for the planned assault on Petrograd.

In the Western Detachment the regiments were disbanded and several partisan sotnias (i.e. companies) were formed instead. The 1<sup>st</sup> Partisan Sotnia – 109 men, 2 MGs – under Lt. Aleksei Danilov reached the Narva front on 3 February 1919. There it was operationally subordinated to the Estonian 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment. On 8 February Col. Fedor Georg arrived to the Narva front as the commander of the Russian Composite Detachment, which was the staff for all White Russian units on the Narva front. But until 9 March all the Russian units which operated directly at the front were operatively subordinated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment.

In the middle of the February the 1<sup>st</sup> Revel Officers' Partisan Detachment (Lt.-Col. K. Badendick) arrived to the front. It had then 438 men (mostly not officers), four MGs and two 57-mm cannon. Until 3 March it was held in reserve.

On 24 February the 3<sup>rd</sup> Partisan Sotnia and the Staff of the Sotnias (a total of 142 men with one MG) arrived at the front. The Staff of the Sotnias was commanded by Col. Tsibisov. They remained in reserve until 9 March.

On 5 March the 4<sup>th</sup> Partisan Sotnia arrived – 93 men, 1 MG – and on 8 March the 2<sup>nd</sup> Partisan Sotnia under Col. M. Afanasev – 147 men, 1 MG.

On 9 March the Estonian 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment gave its section of the front to the Russian Composite Detachment and now all the sotnias were sent there. The next day the Officers' Sotnia under Col. Kazimir-Stanislav Ezhevskiy with 108 men also arrived at the front.

This Russian Composite Detachment – composed of the 1<sup>st</sup> Revel Officers' Partisan Detachment and the Staff of the Sotnias (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Partisan Sotnias and the Officer's Sotnia) – on 11 March had a total of 165 officers, 660 bayonets, 47 sabres, 23 MGs and 6 light cannon. (Four of guns were captured from the Reds and 2 arrived at the front on 10 March. The 57-mm cannons had broken down and were sent for repair.)

By 14 March, at the latest, the Russian Composite Detachment was renamed the 1<sup>st</sup> Rifle Brigade. The 1<sup>st</sup> Revel Officers' Partisan Detachment was after that renamed the 1<sup>st</sup> Revel Composite Rifle Regiment and was now commanded by Col. K. Ezhevskiy. On the basis of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

Partisan Sotnias, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ostrov Rifle Regiment was formed. The Officer's Sotnia remained as an independent unit, under the name of the Independent Officers' Sotnia.

Between 25 March and 28 March 1919 the staff and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ostrov Rifle Regiment also arrived at the Narva front. The second battalion was composed of men mainly from the Soviet 85<sup>th</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiments, which had deserted to the Estonian army in January. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Ostrov Rifle Regiment was initially commanded by Lt.-Col. V. Ananin, then at the beginning of May Col. Mikhail Yaroslavtsev took over.

On 27 March the brigade was reinforced with an artillery platoon (2 light cannons). On 30 March it consisted of 107 officers, 1,002 bayonets, 58 sabres and 8 artillery pieces.

The Narva front was quite peaceful for most of this time, with the Reds showing low activity. The Whites made a number of successful raids into enemy positions.

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The structure of the Independent Corps of the Northern Army on 11 April 1919

Corps Staff

- Supply Department

- Detachments of the Corps Staff – Signals, Convoy, Court etc

- Depot Company of the Corps Staff

1st Rifle Brigade

- 1st Revel Composite Rifle Regiment

- 2nd Ostrov Rifle Regiment

- Horse-Jaegers Regiment

- Officers' Sotnia

2nd Rifle Brigade

- 3rd Talabsk Rifle Regiment

- 53rd Volhyn Infantry Regiment

- Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse-Regiment

- Georgievskiy Rifle Detachment

- Depot Company of the 2nd Rifle Brigade

- Supply Department

- Hospital

Reserve Brigade

Pskov Artillery Brigade

- 1st Battery

- 2nd Battery

- 3rd Battery

- 4th Battery

- 5th Battery

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For the planned assault on Petrograd the whole corps was collected on the Narva front.

The Estonian army's Baltic Regiment was made operatively subordinated to the White Russians. This unit was composed of men of Estonian men of German ethnic origin.

In April the Estonian command also gave a couple of small ships to the Corps, for transportation on the Narva river.

## The combat OOB of the Independent Corps of the Northern Army on 12 May 1919.

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commander                                                 | Col. A. Dzerozhinskiy                                                                                                                                      |
| Chief of Staff                                            | Col. O. von Krusenstiern.                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Commander of Military Operations</i>                   | <i>Maj-Gen. A. Rodzyanko.</i>                                                                                                                              |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Rifle Brigade                             |                                                                                                                                                            |
| Staff                                                     | Col. F. Georg.<br>86 men (25 bayonets)                                                                                                                     |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Revel Composite Rifle Regt                | Col. K. Ezhevskiy.<br>607 men (379 bayonets, 20 sabres), 24 MGs, 2 mortars; in six sotnias (companies), one of which was the Independent Officers' Sotnia. |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ostrov Rifle Regiment                     | Col. M. Yaroslavtsev.<br>973 men (562 bayonets), 22 MGs, 2 mortars; in 6 sotnias.                                                                          |
| Horse-Jaegers Regiment                                    | Col. G. Bibikov.<br>213 men (48 bayonets, 69 sabres), 4 MGs; in a Horse Squadron and a Rifle Squadron.                                                     |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Artillery <i>Divizion</i>                 | 215 men, 8 artillery piece; in the.1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Batteries.                                                                          |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Rifle Brigade                             |                                                                                                                                                            |
| Staff                                                     | Maj-Gen. A. Rodzyanko;<br>149 men (70 bayonets).                                                                                                           |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Talabsk Rifle Regiment                    | Cpt. B. Permikin.<br>674 men (411 bayonets), 8 MGs, 2 mortars, 1 37-mm trench gun; in 6 sotnias.                                                           |
| 53 <sup>rd</sup> Volhyn Infantry Regiment                 | Col. D. Vetrenko.<br>553 men (420 bayonets), 8 MGs, 2 mortars; in 6 sotnias.                                                                               |
| Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse Regt                            | Cpt Iosif Bulak-Balakhovich.<br>329 men (150 bayonets, 101 sabres), 8 MGs; in two horse squadrons, a rifle company and a partisan detachment.              |
| Georgievskiy Battalion                                    | Lt.-Col. L. Mikosha.<br>140 men (100 bayonets), 4 MGs; in one company<br><i>NB: this battalion was still in the middle of forming.</i>                     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Artillery <i>Divizion</i>                 | 180 men, 6 artillery pieces.                                                                                                                               |
| Company of the Corps Staff                                | Cpt. Stavskiy.<br>110 men (90 bayonets), 4 MGs.                                                                                                            |
| Narva River Flotilla                                      | Cpt. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Rank Aleksandr Schilling.<br>A couple of small ships                                                                                  |
| Baltic Regiment<br>(officially part of the Estonian Army) | Col. Constantin von Weiss.<br>900 men (276 bayonets and sabres), 17 MGs and 2 light cannon. ( <i>NB: this 900 figure is doubtful.</i> )                    |

*Altogether, excluding the Baltic Regiment: 2,255 bayonets, 190 sabres, 78 MGs, 15 artillery pieces (of which 3 were not combat-ready), 8 mortars.*

*(The total figure recorded for the Corps on 9 May was 5,640 men, of which 2 Generals and 673 officers and 1,045 horses.)*

For the offensive the corps' units were divided between combat sectors:

Right Combat Sector                                          Col. S. Bulak-Balakhovich  
Bulak-Balakhovich's Horse Regiment  
Baltic Regiment  
4<sup>th</sup> Battery + Baltic Battery (total of four 76mm guns)

Central Combat Sector                                        Col. D. Vetrenko  
53<sup>rd</sup> Volhyn Infantry Regiment  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Talabsk Rifle Regiment  
A platoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery (two 76mm guns)

Left Combat Sector                                            Col. Aleksei-Friedrich-Leonid von der Pahlen  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ostrov Rifle Regiment  
Horse Squadron of the Horse-Jaegers Regiment  
A platoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery (two 76mm guns)

Narva Detachment                                            Col. F. Georg  
1<sup>st</sup> Revel Composite Rifle Regiment  
Independent Officers' Sotnia  
2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battery (two 76mm guns)

Reserve  
Company of the Corps Staff  
Georgievskiy Battalion  
Rifle Squadron of the Horse-Jaegers Regiment

At the disposal of the commander of the Estonian 1<sup>st</sup> Division were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Talabsk Rifle Regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battery (two 76mm guns) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battery (four 87mm guns, three broken).

The offensive started on 13 May 1919.