Screenplay for the film "1920 — Piotr Wrangel. 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 weaves together two main storylines around the year 1920: the Bolshevik regime's exploitation of Russia's cultural treasures, and the last stand of the White movement in the Crimea under General Baron Pyotr Wrangel.

It opens with Lev Trotsky and his wife Natalia Sedova living in the Yusupov palace at Arkhangelskoye near Moscow. Sedova, a highly educated Social Democrat, has become head of the Museum Department of the People's Commissariat for Education and moves into the palace, now turned into a museum. Trotsky later joins her and receives foreign diplomats, military missions, and the painter Yuri Annenkov, who paints his portrait. In a telling dialogue, Trotsky explains that the rusting armored cars and guns abandoned along the road from Moscow are deliberate "camouflage": they must make capitalists think Russia is in total chaos — later, when the regime has consolidated, military parades and foreign-made tanks will serve as the opposite kind of display to inspire fear.

The narrative then shifts to the economic collapse of post-revolutionary Russia. World revolution has not materialized, war communism has failed, and the Bolsheviks need foreign currency. A 1918 decree obliges all citizens to register any works of art and antiquities; these can be confiscated if deemed poorly kept, and failure to comply is punishable with full revolutionary severity. Confiscated objects pour into warehouses and into Gokhran, the new State Repository of Valuables, where items can be melted down and sold as bullion regardless of artistic worth.

Within the Trotsky household there is a symbolic dispute: Trotsky sees the treasures in bulk, as gold and carats, while his wife believes they should be sold as artworks to foreign museums. Lenin's position settles the matter in favor of speed and volume — "we must hurry to the utmost" before revolution spreads and the market for such valuables disappears. The text follows the fate of the Diamond Fund, based on the imperial crown jewels, which becomes a massive hard-currency reserve. Publicly it is showcased through albums, exhibitions, and carefully staged visits for diplomats, as proof of the regime's respect for history; in practice, more and more items are quietly sold abroad: jewels, Fabergé eggs and other masterpieces are dispersed through antique dealers and auction houses. Some museum officials try to resist the sell-off; the director of the Kremlin Armory, Dmitry Ivanov, driven to despair, eventually commits suicide.

The second half of the text moves to military and political developments in the south. After Kolchak's defeat and Denikin's resignation, Wrangel is elected Commander-in-Chief of the last White army on Russian soil, in the Crimea. He states bluntly that he cannot promise victory, only the preservation of the honor of the Russian flag. The text sketches the figure of General Yakov Slaschev — brilliant, unstable, addicted to drink and narcotics, and mentally shattered — later turned into General Khludov in Bulgakov's Flight.

Wrangel sets up a military dictatorship with reformist overtones: arbitrary requisitions are banned, abuses by the army are judged by military courts under prosecutorial supervision, trade unions operate (though strikes are punished by sending workers to the front), and even generals can be

stripped of rank rather than shot. Most importantly, Wrangel launches a land reform in the Crimea with the help of Alexander Krivoshein, former right-hand man of Prime Minister Stolypin. Land is to be transferred into hereditary ownership of those who work it, against payment of one-fifth of the harvest over twenty-five years — a pragmatic, Stolypin-style attempt to win over the peasantry, at the very moment when, elsewhere in Russia, peasants are rising en masse against Bolshevik grain requisitions and terror. The text briefly sketches huge rural uprisings, such as the Tambov rebellion, crushed with regular troops, foreign units, and even chemical weapons.

At Perekop and across the Sivash, the Whites face overwhelming numerical superiority. Despite stubborn counterattacks, their thin line cannot hold forever. Wrangel concludes that the army's limit of endurance has been exceeded and orders a full evacuation of troops and civilians from the Crimea by sea. Admiral Mikhail Kedrov, responsible for the Black Sea Fleet, organizes an enormous operation: all available ships are mobilized, tonnage allocated to Crimean ports, loading procedures carefully planned. In a few days, roughly 145,000 people are embarked in relative order and eerie calm. Some choose suicide on the quays; others, trusting Bolshevik promises or clinging to illusions, remain behind.

What follows is described as a deliberate slaughter. Once in control of the peninsula, the Soviets, under the direction of Béla Kun and Rosalia Zemlyachka, carry out mass terror: officers are summoned for "registration" and then shot; soon civilians, family members, and anyone well-dressed are also arrested. Whole districts are cordoned off and people sorted into those to be shot or spared. Bodies are hung from lampposts and trees, left unburied; cadets knock out the gold teeth of the dead. Eyewitnesses and the poet Maximilian Voloshin evoke roads littered with corpses, machine-gun fire in the night, and a "Holy Week" of 1920 in which, symbolically, "Christ did not rise."

The text ends on the exile itself: horribly overcrowded ships, days of hunger and thirst, journalists theatrically throwing bread from a launch while refugees, on an officer's command, refuse to touch it; pregnant women giving birth to stillborn children during the voyage. Those dead infants become a stark image of a world that has been extinguished — the end of imperial and White Russia, and the beginning of a long era marked by the loss and dispersion of its people and its cultural inheritance.

Screenplay:

1920 – Pyotr Wrangel

In 1920, that is, in the third year of the Civil War in Russia, the headquarters of Trotsky, the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army and Navy, was located in the Yusupov estate of Arkhangelskoye, near Moscow. However, the first to move into the palace, back in 1919, was Trotsky's wife, Natalia Sedova.

Natalia Ivanovna was a cultured woman: eight years of gymnasium, naturally, history courses in Geneva, lectures at the Sorbonne, French language. Since 1902 she had been a member of the Social-Democratic Party. In 1919, when filling out a questionnaire, in response to the question "What kind of work would you prefer to do?" she answered: "Administrative work in central

institutions." In the same questionnaire she indicated her address — the Kremlin — and her telephone number — 820. They called her and offered her the post of head of the Museum Department of the People's Commissariat for Education.

The palace in Arkhangelskoye had just at that time been declared a museum. Being an educated woman, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova knew the estate and its outstanding art collection. In 1919 she moved with her sons into the palace, occupying seven rooms on the second floor. A little later Trotsky joined his wife in the palace. Rooms were fitted out for him on the mezzanine floor.

Trotsky's residence in the Yusupov palace was a lively topic of conversation across the Moskva River, in Barvikha, which in 1920 had not yet become a government zone, but was a popular dacha area where the philosopher Berdyaev and the writer Ossorgin rented a cottage. In fact, it was from Barvikha in 1922 that Berdyaev and Ossorgin were expelled from Russia forever on the famous "philosophers' ship."

All sorts of guests had visited Arkhangelskoye, including Russian emperors and Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin. In 1920 Trotsky had his own visitors — among them foreign diplomats and members of military missions. The artist Yuri Annenkov painted Trotsky's portrait there.

During one sitting Annenkov asked Trotsky:
"Why is the entire road from Moscow to the estate lined with rusty hulks of armored cars and abandoned guns? All that could be easily cleared away."
Trotsky answered:
"That's camouflage. Let the capitalists think for now that we have complete bedlam here and that they have nothing to fear. But soon we'll need a very different kind of camouflage. When it becomes clear that our bedlam is not stopping but expanding, we'll arrange things so that the capitalists will be afraid of us. And then we'll start showing them grand military parades; we'll demonstrate to them guns and all sorts of tanks, bought in their own rotting West."

Under Stalin those parades would indeed be held; everything would happen just as Trotsky had said. But in 1920, in order to hold on to power, the Bolsheviks had to do something about the ruin into which they had plunged Russia, which had previously been on the rise. War communism — with the abolition of private property, trade, and money — had produced nothing. World revolution was not flaring up. There was no longer any hope in the foreign or in their own proletariat.

Economic aid could only come from the world bourgeoisie; for that they needed gold. There was gold in Russia. It existed in the form of cultural treasures for which Russia was famed throughout the world. After the confiscation of the tsar's property, the abolition of inheritance rights, and the nationalization of private collections, a decree was issued in the fall of 1918 "On the registration, accounting, and safeguarding of works of art and antiquities."

This decree now applied to every citizen of Soviet Russia. Within one month it obligated everyone to register any works of art and antiquities in their possession — right down to snuffboxes and icons. The decree specified that works of art could be forcibly confiscated if the owner did not know how to preserve them. "All those guilty of non-execution of this decree shall be held accountable with the full severity of revolutionary laws, up to and including deprivation of liberty."

An endless stream of confiscated items poured into all kinds of warehouses. Chekists were allowed to keep for themselves five percent of what they requisitioned. In Petrograd, confiscation was handled by an Expert Commission headed by A. M. Peshkov. In the commission's documents he

appears under his real name, not under the pseudonym “Gorky.” Its task was to gather and evaluate items of artistic significance for sale abroad.

At the beginning of March 1920, in response to a letter from Gorky, Lenin submitted to the Council of People’s Commissars a draft resolution:

1. Decide to sell valuable items abroad as quickly as possible.
2. Send experts plus merchants abroad at once, promising them a good bonus for rapid sales.
3. Strengthen the membership of Gorky’s expert commission and give them rations on condition that they finish their work quickly.

As for the last point, Gorky quickly sorted through other people’s property, had his own artistic preferences, and had no need of rations. The worker’s ration in 1920 was 124 grams of bread, 12 grams of meat, 12 grams of vegetable oil per person per day — that is, if one managed to get the ration card honored.

On May 15, 1920, a resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was issued ordering the arrest of Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy, daughter of the writer L. N. Tolstoy. The reason was an anonymous denunciation. Trotsky’s wife, at the People’s Commissariat for Education, was in charge of museum collections. In the same government resolution, Lenin addressed the People’s Commissar for Education: “They say that the Narkompros has already selected items for our museums. I agree to give the museums only a strictly necessary minimum.”

That is, everything except the minimum was to be sold abroad. After this directive from Lenin, the sale of valuables was taken up in earnest. An Antique Export Fund was created under the umbrella of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Trade. A couple of months later this already seemed insufficient, and the State Fund of Valuables for Foreign Trade was established. This fund formed its own expert commissions which all over the country, at their own discretion, selected works of art for sale abroad.

In 1920 the State Repository of Valuables of the RSFSR — Gokhran — was created. Its appearance was accompanied by the decree “On the seizure of precious metals, money and various valuables.” Any item that reached Gokhran, regardless of its artistic value, could be turned into scrap and sold by weight.

Over this “scrap” a conflict arose in the Trotsky family. Trotsky regarded the valuables in bulk, in puds and in carats, as a means of payment. His wife believed that it was more profitable not to break up works of art, but to sell them to foreign museums. From today’s vantage point, the woman’s approach looks certainly more humane. Russia, in the literal sense of the word, paid for its indifference to its own fate in 1917. It lost its cultural heritage, but that heritage did not vanish from the face of the earth — it remained alive, though in foreign hands. And that ought to warm the soul.

The argument in the Trotsky household was settled by Lenin: “Urgent measures must be taken to speed up the sorting of valuables. If we are late, we will get nothing for them in Europe or America. In Moscow we could mobilize a thousand party members for this. The whole business is moving archi-sluggishly.” Trotsky understood Lenin and responded: “The onset of the proletarian revolution in Europe will completely paralyze the market for valuables: the bourgeoisie will start exporting

and selling them, the workers will begin confiscating them. Conclusion: we must hurry to the utmost.”

Gokhran was located — and is still located — in the center of Moscow, in the former building of the Loan Treasury, equipped with special underground galleries that could be flooded with water in emergencies. One employee of the Foreign Currency Department of the People’s Commissariat of Finance recalled:

“I walked through huge halls, lined on both sides up to the ceiling with all kinds of containers: chests, baskets, boxes. Attached to each was a tag with a number. No one had even tried to sort the enormous number of these bales.”

The jewels of the imperial family had been sent, in the very first days of the First World War in 1914, from Petrograd to Moscow, to the Armory, for safekeeping. The fact is that the coronation regalia, wedding crowns, diadems, as well as the secular jewelry of the Russian empresses since the time of Peter I, were state property.

The Bolsheviks transported them to Gokhran. The crown jewels amounted to 25,300 carats of diamonds, 1,000 carats of emeralds, 1,700 carats of sapphires, 6,000 carats of pearls, as well as rubies, topazes, alexandrites, aquamarines, chrysoprases, turquoise, agates, labradorites, and so on and so forth.

They created the Diamond Fund. In fact, the former Imperial Diamond Room, which had existed since the time of Catherine the Great, was turned into the Diamond Fund. This was a colossal foreign-currency reserve for the Soviet government. Selling off the Diamond Fund turned out to be, in Lenin’s expression, an “archi-difficult” task.

Lenin did not live to see the day when the task he had set would be carried out. In 1925 Goznak published an album, *The Diamond Fund of the USSR*, with editions also appearing in English, French, and German. This was the beginning of a grandiose advertising campaign showcasing the treasures of the Diamond Fund. Private viewings of the jewels were arranged there for the diplomatic corps. Finally, an exhibition was opened there for anyone who wished to visit. Everyone could see the careful attitude of the authorities toward national history.

On December 18, 1925, the exhibition was open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Anyone who wished could see what treasures had become “the property of the people.” A year later, nine kilograms of items from the Diamond Fund — sold by weight — were sold to the English antique dealer Norman Weiss for fifty thousand pounds sterling. Weiss resold everything to the auction house Christie’s, which broke it up into lots and put them up for sale.

The most valuable lot was the wedding crown of the last Russian empress, Alexandra Fyodorovna, made of 1,535 old-cut diamonds. It is now in the Hillwood Museum in Washington.

What followed was a simple arithmetic problem: after the sale of the jewels to Norman Weiss, the remaining part of the Diamond Fund was divided into four categories, according to their historical and artistic value. In 1927 and 1931, seven Fabergé eggs listed as low-value items were sold from the fourth category. Along with them another 145 objects were sold.

Among the Fabergé works sold were the “Coronation” egg, with a miniature replica of the carriage in which the empress rode to the coronation, and the “Lilies of the Valley” egg. They were acquired

by the Wartski gallery in London. In 1979 they were sold to the Forbes collection. These were the Fabergé eggs that Victor Vekselberg later bought from the Forbes collection and brought back to Russia in 2003.

In 1927 the eggs were sold from the Kremlin Armory. The director of the Armory, Dmitry Dmitrievich Ivanov, spent all of the 1920s trying to save state property from being sold off. In 1927 he managed to wrest from Gokhran 24 Fabergé Easter eggs that were already in the shop of the Moscow Jewelry Company. He received them on an invoice as merchandise and immediately entered them in the museum fund. But he did not have the strength to keep them.

The director of the Armory, Dmitry Ivanov, threw himself under a train on January 12, 1930, leaving a suicide note: “I did not plunder, I did not sell, I did not trade.”

In 1928–1929 the Soviet budget deficit took on a catastrophic character. Already in 1928 the Council of People’s Commissars adopted a secret resolution to intensify the export of antiquities and works of art.

Thus, however much one might wish it, it is impossible to regard the sale of valuables as a barbaric yet exceptional measure limited to the first post-revolutionary years. The unrestrained trade in Russia’s heritage is the mirror of the economic policy of both the Lenin and the Stalin periods.

In 1933 one of the most beautiful, in the eyes of specialists, Fabergé eggs — the “Mosaic” egg — was sold to the British Royal Collection for 5,000 rubles, as well as the “Basket of Wild Flowers” egg for 2,000 rubles. The “Red Cross” egg of 1915 was sold in 1930 for 500 rubles.

Let us explain what this money represented in 1933. According to the staffing table of the Main Administration of Camps, the Gulag of the OGPU, dated November 9, 1930, the salary of an officer for especially important assignments was 210 rubles. That is, this Fabergé egg was sold to feed ten Gulag employees for one month. They ate it and didn’t notice.

And the egg with the Gospel verse “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” was sold for a single month’s salary of a People’s Commissar, not counting the value of his special commissar’s ration.

In 1932 only 71 treasures remained in the Diamond Fund. Once again they were divided into four categories. This time the sale of items from all categories was permitted except the first, which included the crown, the sceptre, the orb, and fourteen more items.

How church valuables were sold and where the money from their sale went will be discussed in another chapter of our book.

At the beginning of 1920, when Lenin in Moscow was demanding the urgent sale of Russian cultural and state treasures, the White Army held on to the last piece of Russian land — the Crimean Peninsula. In Siberia, active anti-Bolshevik military resistance had in fact ended in January 1920. On January 4 Admiral Alexander Vasilievich Kolchak laid down his powers as leader of the anti-Soviet movement and surrendered himself into the custody of the Czechoslovak Corps.

The Czechs handed Kolchak over to the SRs in Irkutsk, and they turned him over to the Bolsheviks. On February 7 Kolchak was shot. Legend has it that before the execution he sang the romance “Burn, burn, my star.”

In southern Russia at that time General Denikin decided to step down as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia: “God has not blessed with success the troops I have led. The inner bond between leader and army is broken. I propose that the Military Council elect a worthy man to whom I shall hand over authority and command.”

On March 22, 1920, in Sevastopol, at a meeting of the Military Council in the Great Palace, a new Commander-in-Chief of the last White Army on Russian territory was elected — Lieutenant-General Baron Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel.

After his appointment Wrangel declared: “Under present conditions we cannot count on victory. I can promise only one thing: to preserve the honor of the Russian flag to the end.”

The man who held the Crimea until Wrangel’s arrival and appointment was Slaschev — General Yakov Alexandrovich Slaschev, the prototype of General Roman Valerianovich Khludov in Bulgakov’s *Flight*. Bulgakov writes of Khludov: “He wore a soldier’s greatcoat, belted with a strap, somehow woman-like. The shoulder straps were of cloth, and a black general’s zigzag was carelessly sewn on them. On his hands — mittens.”

Wrangel writes of Slaschev: “He held the Crimea with makeshift, random troops. But complete impunity went to his head. Unstable by nature, poor judge of men, he was moreover afflicted with a morbid addiction to narcotics and wine.” Slaschev suffered from an acute form of neurasthenia requiring serious treatment.

Bulgakov on Khludov: “He is ill with something, that man, ill from head to foot. When he tries to smile, he bares his teeth. He inspires fear. He is ill — Roman Valerianovich.”

For the psyche of a career officer like General Slaschev, the Civil War was categorically contraindicated. When Slaschev was in Sevastopol and not at the front, he lived in his own railcar at the station. Surrounded by birds. In his car there was a crane, a crow, a swallow, a starling. They hopped on the stove, on the sofas, fluttered onto their master’s shoulders and head.

Soon Slaschev would command, under Wrangel, a successful breakthrough of the army north into Tavria. The day after he took office as Commander-in-Chief, Wrangel staged a review of the troops in Sevastopol. He climbed up to the monument to Admiral Nakhimov. The troops marched past him: weather-beaten faces, trampled, yellowed boots, faded shirts. Many had no outer shirts, replaced by woolen undershirts. One man wore a chintz shirt with linen shoulder straps sewn on, faded khaki trousers, yellow English shoes; next to him another in knitted long johns. Horrifying, screaming poverty. But their weapons were polished to perfection.

Wrangel reviewed the parade: “No, no, not everything is lost yet, no, we can still hold out. I firmly believe that they will help me fulfill my duty toward the Motherland. God will not allow the death of a just cause.”

The White Army was the last shard of that Russian army which had fully honored its allied commitments to Great Britain in the First World War. In March 1920 Great Britain presented Wrangel with demands to cease all military actions. Britain entered into negotiations with the Soviet leadership. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, proposed to the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, not to continue the offensive in the south and not to invade the Crimea, where the Armed Forces of South Russia were located.

Chicherin haggled, gave no answer, and demanded many political concessions. On April 29 Lord Curzon sent a telegram from London to Constantinople to the British High Commissioner, Admiral de Robeck. Through the Commander of the British Army in the Black Sea, General Milne, Admiral de Robeck informed the head of the British mission in Sevastopol, General Percy, of the contents of the telegram. General Percy handed the note to General Wrangel.

The meaning of the note was as follows: General, if you wish to remain in the Crimea, you must come to terms with the Soviets yourself. If you continue the war, we will not give you any material assistance.

In response to the British note, Wrangel, first, stated that any direct negotiations with the enemy were out of the question. And second, in an official dispatch to the representative of the British military mission, the experienced professional soldier, 42-year-old General Wrangel, wrote what, 59 years later, the writer Vasily Aksyonov would turn into the plot of his fantasy novel *The Island of Crimea*.

Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel essentially wrote this to the English: there is no need for a new offensive on Moscow. All that is needed is to preserve a healthy core in Russia; it is enough simply to guarantee the inviolability of the territory of the Crimea with the 40,000-strong army remaining there, with the population that has accepted this army, and with the refugees from all over Russia, numbering half a million people. This is sufficient to bring the Civil War in Russia to an end, and it is necessary for civilized humanity as a whole. The Crimea will be a model of future Russia.

In fact, Wrangel had begun to build the Island of Crimea a month before this correspondence with the British. On March 29 an order was signed on the administration of the territories occupied by the Armed Forces of South Russia. Essentially, this order established Wrangel's dictatorship. He held full military and civil power. Beside him was a Council with consultative powers.

The requisition of horses and cattle from the population was forbidden. In order to reduce the slaughter of livestock for the army and the population, three meatless days per week were introduced. Export of grain and fish outside the Crimea was prohibited. The production of confectionery was banned. The army was supplied by its own bakeries; the population received bread by ration cards.

According to the recollections of Kira Khrushcheva-Shamro, her husband, an officer, rented a small plot of land and grew vegetables for the family. Workers in the Crimea were given the most favorable treatment. Workers received three to seven times more pay than intellectuals and office employees. The maximum salary of a staff officer was 132,000 Crimean rubles; a construction worker received 40,000. Professors, engineers, teachers went to work as laborers. Trade unions functioned. Strikes were suppressed simply — by sending the strikers to the front.

In the front-line zone they decided to develop mineral resources, and a branch line was laid. Finally, a land reform was planned. Wrangel decided there was only one man capable of carrying it out — Alexander Vasilievich Krivoshein. Wrangel chose very well. Krivoshein had been the right-hand man of the assassinated Prime Minister Stolypin, and Stolypin was the author of pre-revolutionary Russia's economic miracle.

Wrangel said of Krivoshein: "He could not be among those who are ready to accept the revolution, but he clearly understood the necessity of taking it into account." That is, he would not work by rote.

At that moment Krivoshein was not in the Crimea but in Paris. He would have to leave his family, risk his life, and travel, on sheer patriotism, to the Crimea — a place cut off from the rest of Russia.

The Crimea was cut off right at the throat — at the Perekop isthmus. In early April, the namesake regiments of the Markov, Drozdovsky, and Kornilov divisions, under General Slaschev, repelled the Red offensive on the Perekop-Sivash line. Kornilov, Drozdovsky, Markov themselves had been dead for two years. It was the regiments bearing their names that were now fighting.

On the day when the fighting on the Perekop isthmus ended, a courier from Wrangel sailed to Paris with a letter to Krivoshein. That same day Wrangel invited journalists and presented them with his view of the tasks ahead.

To eradicate looting, robbery, and requisitions, military judicial commissions were created. They handled all cases of abuses against the local population by the army. Later, representatives of the peasants would be included in these commissions. Punishments in the Crimea included hard labor. In the case of two generals, hard labor was replaced with expulsion from the army and deprivation of uniform. A special local punishment: in the event of an evacuation from the Crimea, not to take the condemned on any ship. Obviously, this punishment was equivalent to death.

Death sentences in the Crimea were forbidden to be carried out publicly.

At the beginning of Wrangel's rule, bodies of Bolsheviks hanging from lampposts along the tram tracks were a common sight. It is known that such instructions had been given by General Kutepov. By May 1920 Wrangel was saying: "Given the general coarsening of morals, the public execution of sentences did little to intimidate; it only produced moral numbness."

Starting in 1920, commanders of the Red Army who had gone insane from taking part in executions during punitive operations and simply during combat on their own country's territory were brought for treatment and rehabilitation to the former Yusupov estate of Arkhangelskoye.

The palace where Trotsky lived at that time was separated by barbed wire from the area where Red soldiers' psyches were being restored. One of the key participants in the Soviet atomic project of the 1940s, Professor Vsevolod Nikolsky, refused to carry out executions in 1920. He could not. He went insane. He underwent treatment. The horror of the Civil War would periodically come back to haunt him.

In the Crimea, for persons proven to have clearly sympathized with Bolshevism, as well as for those who had engaged in excessive personal profiteering at the expense of the region's dire economic situation, a special punishment was introduced — deportation to Soviet Russia. Such deportation could be ordered only by the Chief Prosecutor.

Wrangel had a separate conversation with the press about counterintelligence. "Last year (that is, in 1919)," Wrangel said, "in the areas occupied by the White Army, counterintelligence organs were created which committed a multitude of abuses. Henceforth investigations into state crimes shall be placed under prosecutorial supervision." In other words, for the first time in three years of Civil War, political investigations were brought under the control of the prosecutor's office.

By an order dated April 29, Wrangel freed from punishment all officers and soldiers who had previously served in the Red Army and had been taken prisoner or had surrendered.

On June 8 Wrangel issued an appeal to the serving officers of the Red Army:

“Three years ago, forgetting their duty, the Russian army opened the front to the enemy, and a crazed people began to burn and plunder their native land. These sons, dark and irresponsible, were led by you, former officers of the once-invincible Russian army. I have spoken with many of you who have voluntarily left the ranks of the Red Army. You all said that mortal horror, hunger, and fear for your loved ones drove you to serve the Reds. There are few strong people capable of self-denial. I, General Wrangel, as an old officer who has given the best years of his life to the Motherland, promise you oblivion of the past and grant you the opportunity to atone for your sin.”

Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel’s grandmother was the great-granddaughter of Abram Petrovich Hannibal, and thus a first cousin once removed of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin.

Wrangel’s mother, Maria Dmitrievna, spent two and a half years of the Civil War in Petrograd. In her memoirs she wrote: “I lived under my own name. In the work book that replaced a passport, I was recorded as ‘Miss Wrangel, office clerk.’”

In 1918 she worked as a freelance employee at the Alexander III Museum, that is, the Russian Museum. Later she got, as she called it, a “better position” at the City Museum in the Anichkov Palace, where she rose to the post of curator. Curators were not entitled to rations. She went to work without stockings, wrapping her legs in rags. She was over sixty at the time. Maria Dmitrievna Wrangel recalled:

“The Red Army soldiers were desperate to go back to their villages, but they were only granted leave after they had had typhus. So the soldiers came up with the idea of giving themselves typhus by means of lice. Suppliers immediately appeared. A box containing five lice from a typhus patient cost 250 rubles. Business flourished.”

From the memoirs of high railway official Yuri Lomonosov: “I saw for myself at the Kursk Station that the layer of lice on the floor of a freight car reached twenty centimeters. They were poisoned again and again, but could not be exterminated.”

On May 25, 1920, Commander-in-Chief Pyotr Wrangel issued the Land Order. According to it, and I quote: “Land is transferred to working owners in perpetual hereditary property, but not for free, in return for payment to the state of its value in order to settle accounts with the owners of the expropriated lands.” Payment for the land was set at one-fifth of the average harvest annually over twenty-five years.

In other words, land was given only to those who actually worked it; there were no promises to provide land for everyone, and nothing was given for free. In reality this was the implementation, at a new turn, of what had not been completed in the reform of 1861.

The irony of Russian history is that in 1920, instead of a vast empire, all that remained for land reform was the tiny Island of Crimea. Former landowners retained their land within the established norm. Anticipating landlords’ displeasure, Wrangel stated in the order: “Discontent and disputes around the land question must cease. It is necessary to surrender one’s personal interests.”

Wrangel said: “I am myself a landowner, and mine will be the first land to be divided.”

Even before the Land Order, individual peasants from the southern districts of Northern Tavria crossed the front line to inquire how the Commander-in-Chief intended to resolve the land question. Wrangel would later write in his memoirs: “Had this convergence of the army’s cause with the aspirations of the peasantry been achieved at the time when the Russian Army was victoriously marching on Moscow in 1919, the general course of the White cause would have been different.”

Poor peasants did not want to take land. They were waiting for the outcome of the military campaign, thinking they would receive it for free. Well-off peasants preferred to buy it outright. Land in tiny Crimea was precious. They wanted to live and work in their homeland.

The Land Order was made public on the eve of Wrangel’s offensive into Northern Tavria.

Five days before the offensive and before the start of the land reform, Alexander Vasilievich Krivoshein, Wrangel’s hope in the matter of agrarian transformation, arrived in Sevastopol from Paris. He came on the British cruiser *Cardiff* together with Admiral Hopp, who handed Wrangel a note from the British government:

“Sir, I am ordered to inform you that in the event you attack the Bolshevik forces, His Majesty’s Government will no longer be able to take any part in the fate of your army.”

Wrangel replied: “I hasten to answer you. To prevent a hopeless situation and to supply the army and the population of the Crimea with food, I am forced to take measures to expand the area occupied by my army.”

The offensive in Northern Tavria marked the beginning of prolonged and fierce fighting that lasted until the end of October, effectively up to the Red offensive.

In July, the Crimean newspaper *Great Russia* published, as a leading article under the title “A Bet on the Village,” an interview with Krivoshein:

“Together with the late Stolypin, I worked to raise the economic well-being of the Russian countryside. I deeply believed in its common sense. I still do. We are now making a bold attempt to shape the future state order.”

In 1920, on the territory of Central Russia, the Volga, the Urals, and Siberia, there were no more White armies, but in thirty-six provinces a state of war was in force — the struggle against the peasantry.

From January to March 1920, in the Kazan, Ufa, and Samara provinces a “pitchfork uprising” took place, so called after the peasants’ pitchforks. According to Cheka reports, the total number of insurgents reached 400,000. The uprising was crushed by regular troops reinforced with armored trains and artillery.

Reports of growing armed peasant resistance came from the Vitebsk, Vyatka, Voronezh, Kursk, Orel, Penza, Smolensk, and Tula provinces. The most active were the peasants of the Ekaterinburg, Perm, and Ufa provinces.

By a resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars dated February 19, 1920, signed by Lenin, the peasant war was equated with banditry. To suppress the peasant war, forces of the regular army, the Internal Guard (VOKhR), and special detachments (CHON) were used.

As for the peasants in Siberia, they could not be bought off with the slogan “land,” because they already had land. They had received it under Stolypin’s reform. There had never been large landholdings in Siberia.

In the six months of 1920, more than a million men deserted from the Red Army.

Already in 1919, former Red Army soldiers who had fled the army to their villages joined the anti-Soviet struggle hand in hand with their former landlords. In the Yaroslavl province the uprising was led by Prince Gagarin. In the Vologda province, by Prince Golitsyn.

The Red Army was 77 percent peasant. These soldiers refused to take part in punitive operations in the villages. In July 1920, in the Samara, Saratov, and Orenburg provinces, a peasant uprising would be led by the Red division commander Sapozhkov, a recipient of the Order of the Red Banner for fighting Kolchak.

In August, in the Tambov province, the famous 50,000-strong peasant uprising began, headed by the local police chief, Antonov. The insurgents’ demands were: overthrow of Soviet power; abolition of the Communist Party; until the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, the establishment of a provisional government composed of individuals who had not participated in the struggle against the Bolsheviks; admission of Russian and foreign capital to restore the economy.

To suppress it, 100,000 Red Army soldiers were sent, including Hungarian and Chinese units. Chemical weapons were used. The uprising was crushed only a year later.

One evening in August 1920, Wrangel sat on the terrace of his house in Sevastopol with his chief of staff, General Shatilov. They often talked there in the evenings. They generally tried not to recall the past.

Wrangel writes: “The sunset was dying out, the sea shimmered with iridescent colors, and lights were coming on in the city sinking into the dark.”

Shatilov said: “It’s only three months since we arrived here. I don’t know if you believed it, but I considered the cause utterly lost.”

Wrangel replied: “Whatever happens next, the honor of the national flag has been restored. The heroic struggle will end beautifully.”

When Wrangel speaks of the Crimea, he calls it “the country.”

At Perekop, the first line of defense was the Turkish Wall, built for the Turks by captured Zaporozhian Cossacks. Twenty kilometers behind it lay ordinary trenches. The minefields on the White side are a Red invention — a fantasy.

Wrangel’s entire defensive line was held by 22,000 men, 120 guns, and 750 machine guns. The Red Southern Front opposed them with 198,000 men, 550 guns, more than 3,000 machine guns, 57 tanks and armored cars, and 84 aircraft. Commander of the Southern Front was Mikhail Frunze.

The main operation began on the night of November 8. Frontal assault on the Turkish Wall was carried out by Blücher’s group. Twenty thousand men advanced across the Sivash along three fords — ten times as many as the defenders.

The night was cold, minus twelve degrees. The Sivash mud had frozen. A west wind had driven the water away. The attackers went almost dry-shod. The mud churned up by feet and gun carriages was left to the last to cross.

On the Sivash as at Perekop, the Reds attacked in waves. At the Turkish Wall, Blücher launched the offensive in five waves. The wind shifted. The water began to return to the Sivash. Frunze ordered the local population driven together and forced to build a dam, holding back the water with wattled hurdles.

Of Wrangel's army Frunze would say: "As for the troops under Wrangel's command, they must be given an absolutely positive appraisal." The defenders, though outnumbered ten to one, several times counterattacked and held out until three o'clock in the morning on November 12.

Twenty-two thousand Whites, 198,000 Reds, 10,000 losses for the latter.

From the memoirs of a Wrangel officer:

"New hordes and still new ones were driven forward to replace the dead. There was no end. They came at us at night and at noon, at dawn and at dusk, almost without stopping. They came to die and died without number. It was like some kind of hymn to death… So, there is no Russia left for us. Behind us stretched the Black Sea."

Three days before the final breakthrough by the Reds, Wrangel said: "The limit of the army's resistance has been exceeded. Urgent measures are needed to save the army and the population."

Since October, the Black Sea Fleet had been commanded by Admiral Mikhail Kedrov, and from the outset he was charged with responsibility for any possible evacuation.

"My God, why did I agree to bear this cross?" burst out Kedrov when he came to Wrangel and the latter informed him of the catastrophic situation.

Admiral Kedrov had shipping capacity for 60,000 people. The receipt from Constantinople of an additional consignment of coal on the eve of the evacuation made it possible to hope to take aboard 70–75,000 people. Wrangel ordered that all vessels capable of staying afloat be used, and that all possible ships be called in from Constantinople. He also ordered that all commercial vessels in Crimean ports, including foreign ones, be detained.

General Kutepov promised to do everything possible to slow the Red advance and thereby ensure order during the evacuation. Kutepov promised, but it was clear he had no absolute confidence.

Calm in Sevastopol had to be maintained. There were almost no troops in the city. Those present were ordered to occupy key institutions, the post office, the telegraph, and to place guards on the piers and the railway station.

Tonnage was finally allocated by port: Kerch — 20,000 people to be evacuated; Feodosia — 13,000; Yalta — 10,000; Evpatoria — 4,000; Sevastopol — 20,000. Procedures were worked out for loading rear institutions, wounded and sick, and food supplies so that once the order was given loading could begin immediately.

Wrangel summoned representatives of the Russian and foreign press. The news spread instantly through the city. Troops that had broken contact with the enemy were directed to move toward the ports for embarkation. "Leave your baggage behind. Put the infantry on wagons; the cavalry is to cover the retreat."

On November 11, 1920, the famous order of Wrangel was signed, beginning with the words "Russian people!"

"On my order, the evacuation has already begun of all those who have shared the army's way of the cross. Our future paths are full of unknowns. There is no other land left for us but the Crimea. I openly warn everyone of what awaits them."

Wrangel's thought was continued in a government communiqué:

"The Government of South Russia considers it its duty to warn all those arriving from within Russia of the severe hardships awaiting them. Everything compels the government to advise all those not threatened by violence from the enemy to remain in the Crimea."

In the night of November 11–12, Wrangel received a Soviet radiogram. The Red command proposed that he surrender and guaranteed life and inviolability to the higher command staff of the army and to all who surrendered their weapons.

The radiogram came from the commander of the Red Southern Front, Mikhail Frunze. Lenin rebuked Frunze: "I have learned of your proposal and am surprised at the leniency of the conditions. If the enemy accepts them, every effort must be made to seize the fleet, that is, to prevent a single ship from leaving the Crimea."

On December 6, at a meeting of Moscow party activists, Lenin said: "The Crimea is a source of future speculation and espionage. But we are not afraid of them, we will digest them." And they digested them all.

Operations to exterminate those who had not been evacuated from the Crimea were led by Béla Kun and Rosalia Zemlyachka. According to writer Vikenty Veresaev, all officers were ordered to come for registration. Those who did not appear would be declared outlaws and could be killed on the spot. Those who came to register were arrested, taken out of town, and shot.

After the officers, it was the turn of the civilian population. Members of officers' families and civilian officials were seized and shot. People who were well dressed were arrested. Then entire neighborhoods were cordoned off; people were herded into barracks and sorted: some to be shot, some to be spared.

In Sevastopol they not only shot people, they hanged them. By the hundreds. According to recollections:

"Nakhimov Avenue was hung with the bodies of officers, soldiers, and civilians. The city was dead."

"Officers were hanged in full uniform, with shoulder straps." All the poles, trees, and even monuments were used. The entire Historical Boulevard was festooned with swaying corpses. The same fate befell Catherine Street, Bolshaya Morskaya Street, the Seaside Boulevard. The bodies were not even buried. Cadets of the Simferopol Cavalry School rode around knocking gold teeth from the mouths of the executed.

Béla Kun lived for a time in Koktebel in the house of the poet Maximilian Voloshin. In 1921 Voloshin wrote of the year 1920:

> In winter, along the roads, lay corpses
> Of men and horses. Packs of dogs

Gnawed at their bellies and tore the flesh.
The east wind howled in broken windows.
And at night machine guns clattered,
Whistling like a whip on the bare flesh
Of men’s and women’s bodies…

That winter was a Holy Week,
And the red May merged with a bloody Easter,
But that spring Christ did not rise again.

Voloshin showed this poem to Faina Georgievna Ranevskaya. She was in the Crimea at the time. Anton Chekhov’s sister, Maria Pavlovna, recalled how in the port of Yalta weights were tied to people’s feet and they were thrown into the sea. From the pier you could see the bodies swaying in the water.

Past Chekhov’s house, people were driven every day to be shot.

To cover the evacuation, troops occupied the line of fortifications from 1855, left from the defense of Sevastopol in the Crimean War. It runs through the city.

Loading onto the ships proceeded according to a clear plan. The workers of Sevastopol, who had lived seven months under Wrangel, pleaded with officers to stay. They sincerely assured them that they would take them all under their protection and would not allow the Bolsheviks to commit atrocities in the Crimean cities.

Some workers even thought that in the Crimea the Bolsheviks would have to pass an exam before the West. Everyone in his own way tried to reassure himself in order to stay.

Others said farewell to everything at once. They shot themselves right on the pier. There was a moment when shots rang out one after another.

A cadet on a ship that had just pulled away suddenly heard his mother’s voice begging him to stay. Without realizing what he was doing, he jumped from the ship. In 1925, having miraculously escaped execution, he would seize a small boat and flee death with his mother to Bulgaria.

Nine-year-old Alexei Shcherbatov said good-bye that day to his eighty-four-year-old grandmother, who refused to leave Russia. To the ship he was escorted by the dog Volchok. The eighty-four-year-old old woman was arrested and shot. The dog Volchok was also shot, so it would not bark at the Chekists.

On 126 ships there were 145,693 people, not counting the crews. The city was completely calm; the streets almost empty. The cavalry held off the enemy to the last, then quickly broke contact and withdrew to Yalta.

In his memoirs, when he writes about his last days in his homeland, Wrangel does not give vent to emotion. No emotion at all. He simply says: “The boarding went brilliantly. An enormous weight fell from my soul. All the ships were extremely overloaded, literally covered with people. Everyone who wished to leave was taken aboard.”

For three days no one ate. When they entered the Bosporus, the ships began to signal: “We are suffering from hunger, we are suffering from thirst.”

A launch with journalists pulled up alongside one of the ships. Next to the movie camera stood a table piled high with pieces of white bread. Ladies on the launch, to the sound of the camera and the flashes of the photographers, began throwing pieces of bread onto the ship. One of the hungry children on board rushed to grab a piece. A command rang out on the ship: “Don’t touch it.” The crowd of refugees pressed together and recoiled from the rail; no one picked up the bread.

During the five-day voyage, pregnant women went into premature labor. A separate cabin was set aside for them. All the babies born on the way were stillborn.