

How important was the role of Trotsky?

SOURCE 1 A photograph of Trotsky addressing the troops. He said, 'I issue this warning. If any detachment retreats without orders, the first to be shot will be the Commissar, the second the commander'



SOURCE 2 Orders to the Red Army from Trotsky, 1918

- “■ *Every scoundrel who incites anyone to retreat, to desert, or not to fulfil a military order, will be shot.*
- *Every soldier of the Red Army who voluntarily deserts his post will be shot.*
- *Every soldier who throws away his rifle or sells part of his equipment will be shot.*
- *Those guilty of harbouring deserters are liable to be shot.*”

SOURCE 3 From *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* by V. Serge

“*The news from the other fronts was so bad that Lenin was reluctant to sacrifice the last available forces in the defence of the doomed city [Petrograd]. Trotsky thought otherwise . . . He arrived at almost the last moment and his presence changed the atmosphere . . .*

Trotsky arrived with a train, that famous train which had been speeding to and fro along the different fronts . . . The train contained excellent motor cars . . . a printing shop for propaganda, sanitary squads, and specialists in engineering, provisioning, street fighting, all bound together by friendship and trust, all kept to a strict, vigorous discipline by a leader they admired, all dressed in black leather, red stars on their peaked caps, all exhaling energy. It was a nucleus of resolute and efficiently serviced organisers, who hastened wherever danger demanded their presence.”

SOURCE 4 Trotsky's comment on Bolshevik doubts about using former Tsarist officers in the Red Army

“*[Political] Commissars [attached to each army unit] were required to keep a record of the families of officers and would admit them to posts of authority provided it was possible in the event of betrayal to detain the family in question.*”

SOURCE 5 Trotsky describes how he built up the Red Army

“*The flabby, panicky mob would be transformed in two or three weeks into an efficient fighting force. What was needed for this? It needed good commanders, a few dozen experienced fighters, a dozen or so of Communists ready to make any sacrifice, boots for the barefooted, a bath-house, an energetic propaganda campaign, food, underwear, tobacco and matches. The train took care of all this.*”

1. Use Sources 1–5 and the section on leadership (Reds) on page 53 to explain why Trotsky's role in the Civil War was so important.