

November 1919 Polish-Soviet War Tactical: Soviet Impression Guidelines

Uniform:

More often than not, the kit and uniform of the Soviet soldier during the Russian Civil War and the Polish Soviet War was surplus from the Imperial army that had been repurposed. These items would have been heavily used, soiled, and almost on the brink of destruction due to their prior use and current use with the fighting Red Army.

Gymnasterka

The pull-over style tunics can be either cotton or wool, with buttons of wood, bone, or horn. Many uniforms by this time were extremely worn from constant use, so the more nasty, the better. Materials can consist of khaki/tan/green wool, cotton, and tent material. Tunics with chest pockets, without, with simplified construction, and more can be used, there is a wide variety of styles, so any doubt just ask. Tunics would be devoid of any Tsarist insignia and often had buttons for shoulder boards removed or ripped off. Recommended vendors are Voin, Voenspec, and Liebstandart.



Two original examples, one in cotton and one in wool. There is an immense diversity outside of these two examples.

Sharovary

The simple trousers close with three buttons on the front, two on the waist, and one on the fly. The back adjusts with a string tie between two rings on fabric. Pants can be made of khaki/tan/green wool, cotton, and tent material. Buttons can be wood, bone, or horn. Similar to that of the tunics, these were also worn from extended use, so they would be faded or threadbare. Any doubt, just ask. Recommended vendors are Voin, Voenspec, and Liebstandart.



Pants in tent material and wool, they are mostly straight legged with a small hip breech.

Headgear

There is a plethora of correct headwear that can be used in a good mix, but we will simplify it down to the two most common ones. Tsarist surplus visor caps (Furajka) and winter fur caps (Papahka) should be used as often as possible. Either is correct for the scenario, but due to the colder weather the papahka may be desired. Hats should have no imperial cockade on them, and most should be blank of any insignia, with a few having 1918 model hammer and plow cockades. Furajkas can be made of cotton, tent material, or wool in brown, dark green, or tan colors. Papahkas should be made of green wool with accurate artificial fur.



Two original examples of the Furajka, one in cotton and one in wool. Note the cotton example has the 1918 model hammer and plow cap star. The wool example retains the imperial insignia, which should be stripped for this event. The far right is an example of an original papahka in its blank state. Notice the mixed color short pile fur, it almost resembles carpeting.

Cold Weather Garments

The event is slated to be quite cold, if not during the day, then definitely at night. The standard wool overcoat (Shinel) will be your best friend. Tsarist surplus overcoats with stripped insignia are the way to go. Colors ranging from brown to gray are correct, and imperial coats differ from those produced by the Soviets in the 20s and 30s. Key details are in the collar, which is more wedge shaped, and the cut of the overcoat, which is more bell-like rather than hourglass. Accepted vendors are Voenspec, Schuster, and Voin.



The humble overcoat. The photo on the right shows two Imperial soldiers wearing their coats. It gives a good idea on the fit and how they differ from Soviet coats.

The model 1915 padded jacket and trouser set (Telogreika/vatnik) may also be employed for this event, as they appear often in footage and photos from the Polish Soviet war. The jacket closes with a set of 5 ties offset down the front, with some being modified to accept buttons. Again, these sets differ from the later Soviet counterparts. Accepted vendors are Voin and schuster (With modification).



The Telogreika set. Note the lack of quilting on the front of the coat unlike the Soviet ones. The pants maintain quilting throughout without knee pads and have an added bandage pocket on the hip.

Footwear

As with other aspects, variation was huge with footwear, and supply greatly impacted what was worn. Boots were a hard found commodity, so often men went with lapti (woven peasant sandals) or even barefoot. But, when boots were available, a mix of imperial pattern low boots and jackboots were worn. Low boots were of simple construction in brown leather with smooth leather soles worn with tan or pea green puttees. Jackboots were made of smooth black

leather with shafts that reached at least calf height, with smooth leather soles. Both are worn with cotton foot wraps. Vendors for low boots include Nestof and Voenspec. Jackboots have become difficult to find, but used pairs by Voenspec are ideal. Make sure the leather is greased and supple to prevent damage to the boots.



Lapti (Woven bast sandals), Imperial Low Boots, and Imperial Jackboots.

Equipment and Gear:

Most men fighting in the Red Army at the time continued to use the surplus items from the Imperial Russian Army before them. These men were fairly lightly equipped, carrying all they needed to survive and fight with them. Remember when building your kit, be light, it will help with movement and comfort too.

Ammo Pouches and Bandoliers

A common sight with Red Army fighters is the cotton ersatz model bandolier strung across the chest. Leather box ammo pouches are also common, being

seen in single rather than in pairs as was common during the First World War. Cotton ersatz ammo pouches are also acceptable. Bandoliers can be purchased from Dorian at Red Guard Militaria, Schuster, and Voin. Cotton ammo pouches from Dorian and Schusters. Leather Ammo Pouches can be purchased from Nestof, Schuster, Voin, and Dorian occasionally. Make sure the leather is greased and darkened.



Cloth bandolier, leather ammo pouch, and cloth ammo pouch.

Mess Equipment

The mess kit came in two styles, a kidney style and a round pot style. Both were open tops with no lid, so they were often fastened to the end of the overcoat when rolled in the skatka or horseshoe roll across the chest. The materials differed depending on the style. The kidney style pot was produced out of copper and lined with tin to make it food safe. The circular style pots were first made of tin lined copper, then made from aluminum. However, copper seems to be more prevalent in production, but both are correct. All three styles of pot are correct for this event. Reproductions of the copper mess kits are available from Lukáš Hatina and Voin, and the aluminum can be purchased from Voin as well as New Leningrad (Cyrill).

Make sure you have a spoon as well to eat with, they can be made from aluminum, wood, tin, and can be in a civilian style or the common round bowl style. When not in use, keep it in your rucksack or your pocket, even in your boot, but be wary of it getting lost.



Kidney style, round copper, and round aluminum mess kits.

Rucksacks

The simple drawstring meshok rucksack is most correct for the scenario, or even none at all. Most if not all of what is needed can be carried on your person. But, if you need to hold extra ammo, food, maybe even modern necessities like contacts or whatever, the meshok will be your friend. They can be seen made out of a plethora of materials, but the nicest ones are made from thick woven canvas, and can be obtained from Dorian at Red Guard Militaria. If unable, reproductions that have the wooden toggle attachment at the bottom of the bag are fine. No postwar Soviet metal slider buckles please.



Correct Tsarist model Meshoks, note the wooden adjustment toggle for the strap.

Canteens

Drinking water is valuable, so keep it safe and near you. Canteens can be made out of either green glass or aluminum. Be sure that the glass canteen isn't a Soviet produced model, the Imperial made ones are more teardrop shaped rather than the oval of the Soviet made model. Carrier should be the drawstring ersatz canvas sling style. Canteens can be either original or reproductions from Lukáš Hatina. Carriers can be obtained from Voenspec or Dorian.



Original glass and aluminum canteens,note the teardrop shape of the glass canteen.

Shovels and Carriers

Shovels of the Imperial Russian army carried over into the Red Army until the 40s. They were of the common European Linnemann style, with the square/flat top, rivets on the shovel face, and wooden handle with a metal retaining collar. There were variations with a pointed top rather than a flat top as well. Either is correct. Originals are recommended. The carriers for these shovels were either made fully of leather or fully of canvas, as was the case with the ersatz version. Either carrier is correct, with emphasis towards the canvas model. These carriers can be obtained from Dorian, Voin, or Schuster.





Shovels and shovel carriers

Belt

The simple leather roller buckle belt is what is used to carry your equipment. Brown leather, metal roller buckle in steel, and can be a variety of thickness and widths. However, with lack of supply and often lack of equipment, some men used pieces of rope tied around their waists as belts, and to keep up their pants.



Belt

Rifle

The Mosin Nagant M91 is the rifle of choice for this event. It was the standard issue service rifle of the Imperial Russian Army and continued production by the Soviet Union until at least 1924. They differ from the later M91/30 in length and other details such as the handguard and sights.



The Mosin Nagant M91. Be wary of Finnish modifications of the sling mounts with added metal hangers.

Original Photos



















As can be seen, there's different details from man to man, and even details not covered in this guideline that can be seen. For reenacting sake it's in our best interest to keep to a guideline. But, even within those rules, you can still find many ways to be unique and portray the kit as you see fit. The coordinators can give you instruction and guidance on how to better your impression and make it the best and most accurate it can be.

Impression Photos



Seen here is a more well equipped example, wearing a shovel, bandolier, and glass canteen all in ersatz covers or in ersatz material. On the back lies a meshok rucksack and a tin lined copper round pot. Footwear are the woven peasant sandals, or lapti, with wool coverings to protect the feet.



Another example, with a canvas ersatz ammo pouch, aluminum canteen in ersatz cover, and shovel in a leather cover. This is a lighter example, perhaps for going on the assault. The overcoat is worn in a cape fashion, and could be hooked around the throat

to prevent it from falling off. Leather jackboots are worn with footwraps and a Tsarist papahka void of any insignia is worn stylishly on the head.



And a final example, a soldier on watch for Polish aristocrats during the cold night. Worn is the vatnik padded jacket set with a leather box style ammo pouch. Leather low boots with wool puttees and footwraps are worn along with the fuzzy caucasian papakha hat.

These are just some examples to give a basic idea to what your impression can look like. Odds are, if you can think of a method of wearing your gear, it will probably work for the event. There are countless options and methods of putting your kit and gear together for wear and what items can be used, so if you have any questions, just ask.

See you in the field!