**Order No. 227**

**Background:** An order issued by Stalin on July 28, 1942. It is most famous for its line “**Not one step back!**” During the Great Patriotic War (the Eastern Front of WWII), the Soviet Union suffered heavy losses along with mass retreat and desertion. Order No. 227 was released by Stalin to reestablish discipline in the Soviet Army, which including shooting all deserters and retreating soldiers.

The order starts with a very passionate preamble.

**Order No. 227**

“Enemy throws to battle new forces and doesn’t encounter its heavy losses, crawls to into Soviet lands, capturing new regions, havocs and destroys our cities and villages, rapes and kills Soviet population… German occupant forces by all means want to take Kuban and Northern Caucasus rich in bread and oil… Units of South front led by scaremongers left Rostov and Novocherkassk without serious resistance and without orders from Moscow, they covered their colours with shame.

"Population of our country loves and respects the Red Army, but now people are disappointed that the Red Army leaves our people to be enslaved by German oppressors and runs further to the east. Some not so smart people comfort themselves by conversations that we can run further to the east, because we have a lot of land, many people and we’ll always have plenty of bread. They use this to justify their infamous actions on the fronts.

"… but further retreat to the east means to sentence to death our people and our Motherland, every bit of our land given to the enemy will enforce him and will weaken our defense, our Motherland.”

"...The Supreme General Headquarters of the Red Army commands:

1. Military councils of the fronts and first of all front commanders should:

a) Unconditionally eliminate retreat moods in the troops and with a firm hand bar propaganda that we can and should retreat further east, and that such retreat will cause no harm;

b) Unconditionally remove from their posts and send to the High Command for court martial those army commanders who have allowed unauthorized troop withdrawals from occupied positions, without the order of the Front command.

c) Form within each Front from one up to three (depending on the situation) penal battalions (800 persons) where commanders and high commanders and appropriate commissars of all service arms who have been guilty of a breach of discipline due to cowardice or bewilderment will be sent, and put them on more difficult sectors of the front to give them an opportunity to redeem by blood their crimes against the Motherland.

2. Military councils of armies and first of all army commanders should;

a) Unconditionally remove from their offices corps and army commanders and commissars who have accepted troop withdrawals from occupied positions without the order of the army command, and route them to the military councils of the fronts for court martial;

b) Form within the limits of each army 3 to 5 well-armed defensive squads (up to 200 persons in each), and put them directly behind unstable divisions and require them in case of panic and scattered withdrawals of elements of the divisions to shoot in place panic-mongers and cowards and thus help the honest soldiers of the division execute their duty to the Motherland;

c) Form within the limits of each army up to ten (depending on the situation) penal companies (from 150 to 200 persons in each) where ordinary soldiers and low ranking commanders who have been guilty of a breach of discipline due to cowardice or bewilderment will be routed, and put them at difficult sectors of the army to give them an opportunity to redeem by blood their crimes against the Motherland.

3. Commanders and commissars of corps and divisions should;

a) Unconditionally remove from their posts commanders and commissars of regiments and battalions who have accepted unwarranted withdrawal of their troops without the order of the corps or division commander, take from them their orders and medals and route them to military councils of fronts for court martial;

b) Render all help and support to the defensive squads of the army in their business of strengthening order and discipline in the units.

This order is to be read in all companies, cavalry squadrons, batteries, squadrons, commands and headquarters."