

**MILITARY AFFAIRS IN RUSSIA'S GREAT WAR AND
REVOLUTION, 1914–22**

BOOK 3: THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR: MILITARY AND SOCIETY

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Bloomington, Indiana, 2021



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On the cover: “Banditizm i ego likvidatsiia” [Banditism and Its Liquidation], from the 1928 poster-map series “Grazhdanskaia voina v 10 listov” [The Civil War in Ten Sheets]. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Cover design by Tracey Theriault.

ISBN 13: 978-089357-440-6
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52500/FPYK9706>

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stoff, Laurie, editor. | Heywood, Anthony, editor. | Kolonitskii, B. I., editor. | Steinberg, John W., editor.

Title: Military affairs in Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914-22 / Laurie S. Stoff, Anthony J. Heywood, Boris I. Kolonitskii, and John W. Steinberg, eds.

Description: Bloomington, Indiana : Slavica Publishers, 2018. | Series: Russia's Great War and Revolution ; 5 | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018043320 | ISBN 9780893574314

Subjects: LCSH: World War, 1914-1918--Russia. | World War, 1914-1918--Campaigns--Eastern Front. | Soviet Union--History--Revolution, 1917-1921.

Classification: LCC D550 .M53 2018 | DDC 940.4/0947--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018043320>

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Bloomington, IN 47404-2146
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Russian Cossacks in the Civil War

Andrei V. Ganin

The First World War was the Cossacks' last war against a foreign enemy. After this conflict, the Cossacks, as well as the rest of Russia, descended into a worse fate: an internal, fratricidal civil war, during which the Cossacks' very survival came into question. A traditional military caste (*soslovie*) marked by centuries of service to the tsars as soldiers and enforcers of order, the Cossacks saw their world overturned by the upheaval of the Civil War. Their traditional direct loyalty to the tsar over other institutions of Russian society, together with their concentration in river basins along the southern periphery of the tsarist empire, made the Cossack hosts (territorial and administrative units into which the Cossack caste was divided) natural centers of resistance to the new Soviet regime. Accordingly, the Cossack hosts found themselves at the virtual center of the pivotal and tragic events of 1917–22 that unfolded across the vast territories of the former Russian Empire.¹

The Bolshevik seizure of power on 7 November 1917 in Petrograd, and later in other centers, had an undeniable impact on the status of the multi-million mass of Cossacks, who had a multifaceted reaction to this event.² The Cossacks saw the Bolsheviks as defeatists in the First World War, a party that wished to transform the world war into a civil war, placed their party inter-

¹ All dates are New Style.

² On the Cossacks generally, see Stanislav Auskii, *Kazaki: Osoboe soslovie* (Moscow: Olma-press, 2002); T. B. Tabolina, ed., *Rossiiskoe kazachestvo: Nauchno-spravochnoe izdanie* (Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii RAN, 2003); Vladimir Trut, *Dorogoi slavy i utrat: Kazach' i voiska v period voin i revoliutsii* (Moscow: Iauza, 2007); Maurice Hindus, *The Cossacks: The Story of a Warrior People* (New York: Doubleday, 1945); Philip Longworth, *The Cossacks* (New York: Holt, 1970); Robert Hatch McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack, 1855–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Shane O'Rourke, *Warriors and Peasants: The Don Cossacks in Late Imperial Russia* (London: Macmillan, 2000). See also A. V. Ganin, *Nakanune katastrofy: Orenburgskoe kazach'e voisko v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka (1891–1917 gg.)* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2008).

ests above the interests of the country, and were unafraid of mass casualties and impoverishment if they helped them to reach their goals. Bolshevik leaders had returned from emigration in 1917 with the assistance of the German government, and took Russia out of the war immediately upon seizing power. Moreover, one of the first decrees of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) and the new Soviet government, the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), officially abolished the Cossack status as a *soslovie* on 30 November 1917.

As a *soslovie* founded upon the principles of military service to the tsar and the maintenance of order, the Cossacks were inevitably drawn into the burgeoning civil war. It is no exaggeration to state that without the Cossacks' role as a social and military base of resistance, there could not have been a White movement. The territories of the Don, Kuban', Orenburg and Transbaikalian Cossack hosts became the first flashpoints of the anti-Bolshevik struggle in the fall of 1917.

During the years of the Civil War, the overwhelming majority of Cossacks fought in the ranks of the White armies. The Red Cossacks, revolutionary sympathizers, were quite limited in number and, according to one specialist on Cossack history, primarily drawn from elements that had abandoned traditional Cossack society.³ The Bolsheviks' Red Army did not create any specifically Cossack military units, despite having a number of formations drawn from particular ethnic groups. The history of the Cossacks in the Russian Civil War is therefore primarily a history of their participation in the anti-Bolshevik movement. The course of the Cossack struggle against the Bolsheviks can be roughly divided into five periods, which form the framework for this study: (1) the initial period of the struggle, late 1917 through early 1918; (2) the insurgent period, until summer 1918; (3) the autonomous period, through the winter of 1918–19; (4) the period of integration with White armies from the end of 1918 until the end of large-scale fighting; and (5) the period of insurgency in Cossack regions after the departure of White forces, from 1920 onward. These periods will serve as a general roadmap for understanding the complex events of 1917–22.

The Initial Period of the Struggle

Scattered efforts at resistance, including on the part of the Cossacks, began in the first days following the Bolshevik coup. The Cossacks of the Petrograd garrison remained neutral in the October Revolution: even if they had taken

³ V. A. Shuldiakov, "Raskazachivanie i okazachivanie kak fenomeny russkoi revoliutsii i Grazhdanskoi voiny," in *Istoriia beloi Sibiri: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii*, ed. S. P. Zviagin (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2003), 72.

a different stance, the small size of their force would have doomed any armed protest against the Bolsheviks. On 7 November 1917, Prime Minister of the Provisional Government Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerenskii issued Order no. 314 of the Supreme Commander in Chief from Pskov, calling on all government functionaries to remain at their posts and fulfill their obligations to the motherland.⁴ Following this order, units of Major General Petr Nikolaevich Krasnov's Third Cossack Corps moved toward Petrograd to crush the Bolshevik uprising. Don, Orenburg, and Amur Cossacks took part in this "Kerenskii-Krasnov expedition." At the same time, a frontline Cossack Assembly near Kyiv sharply condemned the Bolshevik coup.

The Cossacks were in a delicate position. At the start of the Civil War, they were quite hesitant to take part in punitive actions, knowing that this would increase popular resentment of them, fueled by left-wing propaganda. The Cossacks were, however, Kerenskii's last reserve, even though he had previously considered them counterrevolutionary and undermined their organization. The expedition toward Petrograd was entirely made up of Cossack units, but the advance of Krasnov's corps toward Petrograd was hesitant, and occurred primarily through negotiation with Bolshevik representatives. The only military clash occurred near Pulkovo, south of Petrograd. Krasnov's Cossacks clearly lacked the strength to occupy Petrograd, a city protected by a massive Bolshevized garrison. Krasnov's corps withdrew to Tsarskoe Selo and then to Gatchina, from where Kerenskii fled once failure became clear. These events were arguably the opening salvoes of the Civil War.

The first serious centers of anti-Bolshevik resistance emerged in the Cossack regions. On 8 November 1917, Orenburg Cossack commander Colonel Aleksandr Il'ich Dutov signed a general order declaring the violent seizure of power by the Bolsheviks to be unlawful.⁵ From 9 November, Orenburg was under martial law. Dutov was thus the first to begin armed struggle against the Bolsheviks by creating an independent resistance center completely outside of Red control. On 21 November, the Orenburg town Duma (municipal council) created a special government organ, the Committee to Save the Motherland and the Revolution, which brought together Cossack, town, and *zemstvo* (rural council) representatives with political and party activists (except for Bolsheviks and Kadets). It arrested 25 Bolshevik members of the Orenburg Soviet of Worker, Soldier, and Cossack Deputies for allegedly preparing an uprising, but they managed to escape from prison.

⁴ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (RGVIA) f. 2007 (Polevoi shtab kazach'ikh voisk pri verkhovnom glavnokomanduiushchem), op. 1, d. 88, l. 171 (A. F. Kerenskii, Order of the Supreme Commander in Chief no. 314, 25 October 1917).

⁵ *Orenburgskii kazachii vestnik*, 27 October 1917, 1.

Military actions in Cossack-controlled territory did not begin until mid-November. Dutov disarmed the Orenburg garrison, and volunteer detachments made up of officers and students began to form, making up a significant proportion of forces during the initial stage of the struggle against the Reds. Cossack units began to form in the *stanitsy* (Cossack settlements) around Orenburg. On 24 December 1917, the Orenburg Military District was officially created with Dutov as commander of its troops.⁶

In the Far East, Esaul⁷ Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov declared his opposition to the Bolsheviks, began organizing Mongol-Buriat units, and on 25 November fought against the Reds for the first time. Soon, Semenov created his "Special Manchurian Detachment," which launched an expedition against Chita in early 1918. Semenov was opposed by a mixed detachment of Red forces commanded by Sergei Georgievich Lazo. In the spring of 1918, a Cossack faction of the Third Transbaikal Congress met, proclaimed itself the Third Regional (*oblast'*) Cossack Congress, and announced the liquidation of the Transbaikal Cossack Host. This was possibly linked to the entry of Semenov's detachment into Transbaikal territory on 7 April. To oppose Semenov, the Reds brought together under Lazo's command a force of 13,000 from across the Transbaikal region and the Far East. As a result of the Red offensive, Semenov's men were pushed back beyond the Onon River in May; by June they were pressing toward the Chinese border, crossing into Manchuria in July.⁸ Irkutsk Cossacks led by Ataman⁹ Major General Prokopii Petrovich Ogloblin took part in urban battles on the side of anti-Bolshevik forces during 3–12 January 1918. After this, the failed anti-Bolshevik resistance moved underground, where it remained relatively quiet until the May–June 1918 anti-Bolshevik revolt of the Czech Legion created conditions for a White resurgence in Siberia and the Russian Far East.¹⁰

In late 1917–early 1918, only one Cossack region represented a true threat to the Bolsheviks: the Don. The Don became a refuge for opponents of the Red central government. General Mikhail Vasil'evich Alekseev specifically chose the Don as the staging ground for his Volunteer Army, which he envisioned as the force leading the anti-Bolshevik struggle. In addition to the Volunteers,

⁶ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (RGVA) f. 39477 (Shtab Orenburgskogo voennogo okruga) op. 1, d. 1, l. 1 (resolution on the formation of the Orenburg Military District, 11 December 1917).

⁷ *Esaul*—captain in Cossack military service.

⁸ See G. M. Semenov, *O sebe: Vospominaniia, mysli i vyvody* (Moscow: AST, 1999).

⁹ *Ataman*—Cossack commander.

¹⁰ On the December 1917 events in Irkutsk, see Pavel Aleksandrovich Novikov, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Vostochnoi Sibiri* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2005), 21–37.

Cossack and partisan detachments were also created to fight the Reds. Ataman General Aleksei Maksimovich Kaledin played a considerable role. Substantial anti-Bolshevik forces—the Volunteer Army and the Cossacks—were able to hold on in the Don until February 1918.

Two factors played a significant role in the formation of large anti-Bolshevik centers in the Don and other Cossack regions: first, profound anti-Bolshevik sentiment among most Cossack officers, who maintained cohesion throughout the First World War and, second, the role of Cossack elders. When Cossacks with frontline experience in the First World War returned to their native *stanitsy*, however, they often held a completely different opinion regarding the struggle against the Bolsheviks. The majority of young Cossacks were tired of fighting after years of war; they had also been influenced by socialist propaganda and the disintegration of the Russian army. They had no interest in a new armed struggle against the Bolsheviks' self-proclaimed regime, and adopted a passive or even pro-Bolshevik position. And yet, it was precisely the Cossacks who began the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

On 20 November 1917, Ataman Kaledin declared the Don's independence from the illegitimate government in Petrograd, and introduced martial law. The Cossacks joined with Volunteer forces to crush an uprising in Rostov-on-Don, briefly taken over by local Bolsheviks during 9–15 December. After this, the Don experienced a short period of calm. In January 1918, however, the Council of People's Commissars adopted a resolution for initiating a struggle against Kaledin, and the White situation sharply deteriorated. The Bolsheviks organized a Military-Revolutionary Council (*Voенно-revoliutsionnyi Komitet*, or VRK) in the Kamenskaia *stanitsa* under Sergeant Fedor Grigor'evich Podtelkov, a member of the Bolshevik-allied Left Socialist-Revolutionaries. The VRK adopted a resolution calling for the overthrow of Kaledin's government. Many Cossacks returning from the front backed the VRK.

In early January, Red Guard detachments launched an offensive toward the Don. One group under former Ensign Rudolf Ferdinandovich Siviers advanced toward Taganrog and Rostov; a group commanded by Iurii Vladimirovich Sablin maneuvered further east; and units of the Bolshevized Thirty-Ninth Infantry Division joined from Kuban'. In early February, the Bolsheviks' Twenty-Seventh Don Cossack Regiment, commanded by *Voiskovoi Starshina*¹¹ Nikolai Matveevich Golubov, defeated an anti-Bolshevik detachment under Colonel Vasilii Mikhailovich Chernetsov. This defeat led to the disintegration of Kaledin's entire front. Kaledin committed suicide on 11 Feb-

¹¹ *Voiskovoi Starshina*—Cossack lieutenant colonel.

ruary 1918, and a few days later the Reds invaded the Don Region.¹² Major General Anatolii Mikhailovich Nazarov became the new ataman but proved incapable of salvaging the Cossacks' collapsing fortunes. On 23 February, Rostov-on-Don fell to the Bolsheviks, and on 25 February Red forces captured Novocherkassk, executing Ataman Nazarov on 3 March.

Expelled from the Don, the Volunteer Army launched an expedition to Kuban', an operation later called the First Kuban' Campaign. On the day Novocherkassk fell, Don Cossacks led by Campaign Ataman Major General Petr Kharitonovich Popov began a two-month Steppe Campaign in an isolated part of the eastern Don region.

In fall 1917, the Kuban' region had also rejected Soviet authority and witnessed the formation of Volunteer detachments. The Kuban', however, lay on the path home for most of the war-weary Russian soldiers returning home from the Caucasus. The few opponents of Bolshevism could do very little in the face of this mass movement of armed men. This proverbial avalanche crushed all barriers in its path, first and foremost the small Volunteer Army detachments in the area. These frontline veterans later provided the main manpower of the anarchic and undisciplined, but nevertheless powerful Soviet armed formations in the North Caucasus, military units that tied up the Volunteer Army until late fall 1918.

The first military clashes in Kuban' began in January 1918 as White forces slowly consolidated their efforts. In March 1918, anti-Bolshevik Cossacks withdrew from the town of Ekaterinodar, rallying near the village of Shendzhii. The arrival of the small Volunteer Army in Kuban' was not particularly welcomed by the local population. Nevertheless, several thousand Kuban' residents joined the Volunteer forces in March, providing a substantial boost. Most of these forces had come from a Kuban' detachment under Major General Viktor Leonidovich Pokrovskii. An agreement on cooperation was signed at the stanitsa of Novodmitrievskaia. From that point on, Kuban' Cossack formations coordinated their efforts with the Volunteer Army. Nevertheless, the Volunteers were unable to either liberate Kuban' or encourage most Cossacks to join their struggle. The entire Volunteer Army would undoubtedly have been wiped out if not for the outbreak of an anti-Bolshevik uprising in the Don, which temporarily shielded them. By the summer of 1918, however, Kuban' Cossacks had swung decisively toward the Whites as a result of both the open Bolshevik support for non-Cossack inhabitants and the looting and atrocities committed by Red Guard detachments.

In the Terek River region, the situation for the Cossacks was considerably worse. Two atamans, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Karaulov and Lev Efimovich

¹² On Kaledin, see A. S. Kruchinin, *Beloe dvizhenie: Istoricheskie portrety* (Moscow: AST, 2011), 96–139.

Medianik, were killed in rapid succession. The loss of leadership led to the establishment of Soviet power there at the end of 1917. Gangs of unruly soldiers returning from the Caucasus Front terrorized the local population.

Leaders of the Astrakhan' Cossacks also refused to recognize the Bolshevik seizure of power, but serious opposition was impossible without external assistance due to the very small size of the Astrakhan' Host, and the consequently limited ability to organize Volunteer detachments. Prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd, the Astrakhan' Host joined the South-eastern Union—a military-political rightist coalition of Cossack hosts in South Russia. Around 1,500 officers, volunteers, and Cossacks joined formations led by Ataman Major General Ivan Alekseevich Biriukov. Nevertheless, bitter fighting took place during 11–24 January 1918 between Cossacks and supporters of the local Military-Revolutionary Committee, who intended to liquidate the Astrakhan' Host. The Cossacks were defeated, their forces crushed and scattered across the Kalmyk steppes. Biriukov was captured and later executed. In February 1918, the local Red Executive Committee disbanded the host. Astrakhan' remained under Bolshevik control for the entire Civil War, and became a serious obstacle to efforts to unite the eastern and southern White centers. Red domination is not surprising: small Cossack stanitsy were scattered throughout dense populations of peasants, and were thus constantly under pressure from local non-Cossack, pro-Bolshevik inhabitants.¹³ After losing their home, Astrakhan' Cossacks who were willing to continue the struggle moved east and south to join other anti-Bolshevik formations.

The Ural Cossack Host shared a border with Astrakhan' and took a distinct position during the initial period of the Civil War by refusing to attack the Bolsheviks. Instead, this area initially developed a dual-power arrangement of both the Cossack Host administration and a local Soviet of People's Deputies in Ural'sk. By the start of 1918, however, the Whites and Cossacks had arrested local Communists, suppressed the local Soviet, and disbanded the Bolshevized garrison. On 23 March, a Red detachment from Orenburg occupied Ilek, a small town located on the border with Orenburg province, without a fight. Initially, the Reds were relatively restrained, but they then demanded recognition of Soviet power and a payment of contributions and bread levies to feed the starving population of Turkestan. Local Ural Cossacks were insulted and resistant, which provoked the Reds to increase their threats and demand that all local inhabitants turn in their firearms. The next day the Reds began to seize property and arrest officers. The situation deteriorated

¹³ On the Astrakhan' Cossacks, see O. O. Antropov, *Astrakhan'skoe kazachestvo: Na pere-lome epokh* (Moscow: Veche, 2008); and U. B. Ochirov, *Kalmykiia v period Grazhdanskoi voiny (1917–1920 gg.)* (Elista: Dzhangar, 2006).

still further after an officer attempted to flee and was summarily shot, and Red soldiers began to loot the town.

The Cossacks began an uprising, and Red forces in Ilek were crushed on 26 March. Around 100 people were killed, and prisoners were drowned in ice-fishing holes on the Ural River. On 29 March, Soviet power in Ural'sk was overthrown and its leaders executed, and on 5 April, the Host Assembly declared the mobilization of all Cossacks between the ages of 19 and 55. The Ural Cossacks operated on their host's territory from the Caspian Sea to the small town of Iletsk. While this host had poorer access to supplies than any other Cossack formation, the predominance of Old Believers, a minority branch of Orthodoxy with a long history of enduring persecution, made this force particularly hostile to the Reds. The Host Assembly proclaimed regional autonomy in spring 1918, and by summer acknowledged the authority of the members of the Samara Committee of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly (Komuch), which in turn provided weapons.¹⁴ At the beginning of September 1918, a Ural army was formed. At various periods, Don, Kuban', and separate Ural, Orenburg, and Semirechensk armies all fought, mostly drawn from Cossacks.

In the southern Urals, events followed the pattern of the Don. Bolshevik leaders quickly realized how dangerous the burgeoning uprising against them by Orenburg Cossacks under Ataman Dutov's leadership could be, given that the territory was crisscrossed by strategically important routes linking European Russia to Siberia and Central Asia. The first attempts by Red Guard detachments to subdue Dutov were unsuccessful, which prompted the Reds to assemble a larger force. The Bolsheviks occupied Troitsk, the headquarters of the Third Military District of the Orenburg Host, on the night of 7 January 1918, and simultaneously launched a new offensive against Orenburg. Even mobilizing old men and boys, Dutov could assemble only 2,000 soldiers to oppose the Bolsheviks. The majority of battle-ready Cossacks had still not returned from the fronts of the First World War, and those who had come back were reluctant to fight again, particularly since the nature of Bolshevik rule was not yet clear. As a result, Orenburg fell on 31 January 1918, and Dutov's troops were disbanded and scattered. Those who intended to continue the fight retreated to Ural'sk and to Verkhneural'sk (a small town far from major roads) or hid in the stanitsy.

Dutov went to Verkhneural'sk to assemble new forces against the Bolsheviks and remain in command of the host on the host's territory. Partisan

¹⁴ On the Ural uprising, see D. Iu. Dubrovin, "Nash samodel'nyi bronepoezd: Ural'skie kazaki i nachalo bor'by s bol'shevikami," *Rodina*, no. 3 (2008): 28–32; D. Iu. Dubrovin, "Ural'skoe kazachestvo v Grazhdanskoi voine: Iletskii boi 13 (26) marta 1918 g.," *Gorynych: Kraevedcheskii sbornik* (Ural'sk), no. 1 (2007): 34–51.

detachments made up the bulk of new recruits. Dutov's forces were able to hold the Second (Verkhneural'sk) Military District until mid-April, when superior Red forces under Vasili Konstantinovich Bliukher pushed them out. With their families, they evacuated 600 km to the southeast into the Turgai Steppe. Despite their defeat, the Orenburg Cossacks maintained their leadership structure under Dutov. This core group of fervently anti-Bolshevik Cossacks later reemerged as part of a renewed struggle against the Bolsheviks.

In distant Central Asian Semirech'ë, Cossacks created a host government on 14 November 1917, which immediately declared Bolshevik authority illegitimate. The region was already strongly Bolshevized, however, while Semirech'ë was isolated by regions that had recognized Lenin's new government, impeding communications and access to supplies. Former Host Ataman Lieutenant General Andrei Ivanovich Kiiashko resigned from his post in favor of Colonel Nikolai Sergeevich Shcherbakov and was brutally murdered shortly thereafter. On 26 February, Colonel Aleksandr Mikhailovich Ionov was elected to the post of host ataman, but at the beginning of March, a local military-revolutionary committee seized power in the town of Vernyi [present-day Almaty, Kazakhstan—Eds.]. Cossack veterans returning from the First World War offered little reaction.

Siberian Cossacks took a neutral position toward the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. The host administration and officer corps were of course hostile to the Bolsheviks, but any armed opposition in the region would have been suicidal. On 8 February 1918, the Omsk Soviet of Cossack Deputies arrested the host government, despite its declaration of neutrality. This move constituted a clear acknowledgement of Bolshevik power. By the beginning of March 1918, 41 *stanitsy* recognized the Soviet of Cossack Deputies, 46 *stanitsy* were opposed, and another 41 *stanitsy* adopted a neutral position, a status that suited the Bolsheviks. The Third Host Circle, which met in late March–early April 1918, recognized Lenin's Soviet government and the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty.¹⁵ But even as Bolshevik influence in Cossack regions strengthened, anti-Bolshevik activity increased. From the end of 1917 onwards, underground organizations of officers began to operate in the host. The White underground supported the political program of General Lavr Georgievich Kornilov, himself a Siberian Cossack, and the fight against the Bolsheviks in southern Russia. In early 1918, two partisan detachments under Cossack Captain Boris Vladimirovich Annenkov and Colonel Viacheslav Ivanovich Volkov formed in Siberia. However, aside from these isolated cases, Siberian Cossacks did not participate in the anti-Bolshevik movement until the Czechoslovak Revolt in late spring and early summer 1918 overthrew Bolshevik power in Siberia.

¹⁵ S. M. Andreev, *Voennoe i grazhdanskoe upravlenie v Sibirskom kazach'em voiske (1808–1919)* (Omsk: Omskaia akademiia MVD, 2005), 210.

A similar situation also arose in the Amur Cossack Host. Bolshevik authorities took power on 25 February 1918, but the Amur Host leadership continued to function after moving to Chinese territory. On 1 April, a joint Fifth Cossack Assembly and Peasant Congress agreed to eliminate the title of Cossack and abolish host autonomy. After the liquidation of Bolshevik power in September 1918 in the aftermath of the Czechoslovak revolt, Ataman Ivan Mikhailovich Gamov took over military authority in the region, rescinding the resolutions of the Fifth Cossack Assembly. At this stage, therefore, the Amur Cossacks did not take an active role but instead supported whichever higher authority, Red or White, was dominant in the region. From September 1918 onward, the Amur Cossacks joined the anti-Bolshevik armed formations, operating primarily as a separate Cossack brigade and fighting against local Red partisans.

The Ussuri Cossack Host did not recognize the Bolshevik coup, proclaiming that position by a decision of the Fourth Cossack Assembly in Iman in January 1918. The Assembly also declared the autonomy of the host, but the region displayed no resistance to the establishment of Soviet authority in April 1918.

To sum up the events of late 1917 and early 1918, the Cossacks politically had no affection for the Bolsheviks. During the elections for a Constituent Assembly, intended to write a new constitution for Russia, and held immediately after the Bolshevik coup, most Cossacks voted for Cossack representatives, though elections did not take place in Kuban', and Transbaikalian Cossacks in the Transbaikalian region voted for the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Despite this, in the winter of 1917–18, the Bolsheviks were able to seize control of all Cossack lands. This was fundamentally the result of the passive and often pro-Bolshevik position of Cossack veterans returning from the front, exhausted by war, eager for the tranquility of home, and unaware of the direction of Bolshevik policy.

The Insurgent Period

The split between Cossack elders and Cossack frontline veterans prevented the atamans from waging a unified and effective struggle against the Bolsheviks, who found the Cossack armed neutrality quite helpful. Soon, though, Lenin's new government showed little regard for Cossack traditions and institutions, violated Cossack rights and privileges, and treated any resistance with merciless state terror. This approach to a militarized and once-privileged social estate led to considerable discontent and large-scale uprisings among the Cossacks, resulting in a period of insurgency in Cossack regions from the beginning of 1918 to the summer of the same year. Over that time, the ma-

majority of Cossacks came to view the struggle against the Bolsheviks as a fight for their rights and independent existence. In just a few months, the Cossack territories saw the rise of a massive anti-Bolshevik insurgent movement.¹⁶

Officers, elders, and students made up the social base for the insurgency. The Cossacks could not prevail in this fight on their own strength alone. Their victories depended on outside assistance, from the Czechoslovaks, the Volunteer Army, or the Germans, but that assistance allowed the Cossack hosts to liberate themselves from the Reds and to restore the previous order with two exceptions: the Astrakhan' Cossack Host fell under Bolshevik control in January 1918 and never escaped it; on the other hand, Kuban' Cossacks were almost entirely under the domination of the Volunteer Army, and exercised little independent authority.

In the Don River region, Bolshevik forces established a Don Soviet Republic under Fedor Grigor'evich Podtelkov. Red occupation of the Don region was accompanied by massive terror, primarily in cities and larger towns, directed against the Cossack officer corps. The stanitsy did not hand over either their officers or their weapons to the Bolsheviks, an ominous sign for the new regime. Repression also affected other social groups. Ongoing requisitions of supplies to feed the Red heartland and the decision to nationalize Cossack land produced a very negative reaction among the local population. Gradually, neutral or even pro-Bolshevik Cossack veterans adopted anti-Bolshevik positions.

On 31 March 1918, a Don Cossack rebellion began in the Suvorovskaia stanitsa, succeeding largely due to the arrival of German troops in Ukraine and the Don region under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Uprisings also began elsewhere. A surprise Cossack raid captured the Cossack capital of Novochoerkassk on 14 April. Four days later Red forces from Rostov retook the town. On 6 May, the Cossacks took Novochoerkassk back again, assisted by a detachment under Colonel Mikhail Gordeevich Drozdovskii. Two days later, German troops entered Rostov. Under their protection, a new Defense Council, later renamed the Don Provisional Government, was established in Rostov. The Don territory became a patchwork of competing authorities until the Host Circle ("Circle to Save the Don") first met at Konstantinovskaia stanitsa, then in Novochoerkassk. On 16 May it elected Major General Petr Nikolaevich Krasnov as the Don ataman. Krasnov was one of the most senior Don generals

¹⁶ On the Cossack uprisings, see "Kazachestvo Rossii v Belom dvizhenii," *Belaia gvardiia: Istoricheskii al'manakh*, no. 8 (2005); A. V. Ganin, "Kazachestvo Rossii v Grazhdanskoi voine," in *Kazachestvo velikoe, besstrashnoe*, ed. V. M. Bezotosnyi (St. Petersburg: Slaviia, 2008), 533–85; and Tabolina, *Rossiiskoe kazachestvo*.

and represented a compromise between regional factions. Under Krasnov's leadership, a new phase of the struggle began.¹⁷

A similar process took place in the Urals. In spring 1918, a massive insurgent movement began on the territory of the First Military District of the Orenburg Cossack Host. This was led by an assembly of delegates representing 25 stanitsy, operating outside of Orenburg Ataman Dutov's control. The Reds responded with harsh measures: punitive detachments that operated throughout the district, shooting anti-Bolshevik Cossacks, burning down any stanitsya that resisted (11 in the spring of 1918), and forcing Cossacks to make substantial reparation payments. By June 1918, more than 6,000 Cossacks were drawn into the stanitsa-organized insurgency in the First Military District alone. By the end of May, Cossacks from the Second and Third Military Districts joined, supported by Czechoslovak rebels.

Bolshevik state terror toward Cossacks did not always lead to their submission; instead, Bolshevik actions forced people to take up arms in order to defend themselves. By May, the Bolshevik center at Orenburg was surrounded by detachments of rebel Cossacks. Red detachments had to fight their way into and out of the town, subject to systematic raids and destruction. After receiving news of the uprising in his host, Dutov, temporarily a refugee on the Turgai Steppe, decided to return. The Reds were forced to abandon Orenburg under considerable pressure from Cossack insurgents. On 3 July 1918, insurgents took control of Orenburg; Dutov's partisan detachment entered the town only on 7 July. This created some tension between Cossacks who had begun the uprising in Dutov's absence and those who returned with Dutov himself. Dutov was able to gain the upper hand over the opposition and became the sole ruler in the southern Urals.¹⁸

Semirech'e also saw a Cossack rebellion in spring 1918, provoked by the Bolsheviks' forcible seizures of grain (*prodrazverstka*) and weapons. On 16 April, Cossacks crushed a detachment of Red Guards. Then five southern stanitsya rebelled and besieged the town of Vernyi. In addition, Cossacks raided the town, managing to free the recently elected Ataman Ionov from prison. In May, however, the Reds were able to assemble forces to break the rebellion, employing merciless terror. According to some reports, they beheaded prisoners in stanitsa squares to frighten the population. By the beginning of June, the rebellion had been crushed, and the host disbanded. Recalcitrant Cossacks nonetheless soon launched another uprising, supported by units of the Steppe Siberian Corps of the Siberian Army. The Whites were

¹⁷ S. V. Volkov, *Donskaia armiia v bor'be s bol'shevikami* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2004); A. V. Venkov, *Ataman Krasnov i Donskaia armiia: 1918 god* (Moscow: Veche, 2008).

¹⁸ A. V. Ganin, *Ataman A. I. Dutov* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2006).

able to take all of northern Semirech'ë under their control, and by the end of September 1918, a stable anti-Bolshevik front had been established across the entire Semirech'ë region.

In 1918, Pod'esaul¹⁹ Ivan Pavlovich Kalmykov took control of the Ussuri Host as acting ataman (by social background, he came from the Kharkiv petty bourgeoisie and was not a Cossack at all). In spring 1918, Kalmykov assembled a Special Ussuri Cossack Detachment made up of around 500 troops, which joined with Czechoslovaks and in the period of June–August 1918 cleared Red forces from the trans-Siberian railroad route between Nikol'sk-Ussuriisk and Khabarovsk. During this time Kalmykov's detachment increased in size by 2.5 times.²⁰

The last in the series of Cossack insurgencies in southern Russia was the Terek River uprising. Though the latest, it was still premature in that the Volunteer Army was in no position to provide assistance, allowing the Bolsheviks to defeat it with relative ease. The uprising began with sporadic actions in June 1918. Andrei Grigor'ëvich Shkuro's detachment played a key role in this process: after capturing Kislovodsk in mid-June 1918, Shkuro provoked a premature uprising in the Volga and later Mozdok military districts. Along with Prokhladnaia, the town of Mozdok was the center of the rebellion, and served as a meeting place for a 3 July Assembly of Cossacks and Peasants of the Terek Host, which elected a Cossack-Peasant Soviet led by Socialist-Revolutionary Grigorii Fedorovich Bicherakhov. The Terek insurgents lacked ammunition, their formations were a loose militia instead of an organized force, and they operated only locally. During the harvest, Cossacks left for their homes and fields despite the critical military situation.²¹ As a result, the Reds were able to crush the uprising. Some of its participants retreated through Kabardia to join the Volunteer Army; another group left for Dagestan.²² The failure of the Terek uprising illustrates the general development of the Cossack revolt: like the uprising in Semirech'ë, it clearly demonstrated that insurgent actions

¹⁹ Pod'esaul—Junior Captain.

²⁰ S. N. Savchenko, *Ussuriiskoe kazach'ë voisko v Grazhdanskoi voine na Dal'нем Vostoke (1917–1922 gg.)* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskii kraevedcheskii muzei, 2002)

²¹ F. S. Kireev, "Terskie kazach'i chasti v Belom dvizhenii," in *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii (1917–1922): Vzgliady i otsenki cherez 90 let*, no. 5 (Saratov: Akademiia voennykh nauk, Povolzhskoe otdelenie, 2007), 52–53.

²² Terskoe kazach'ë voisko [original form agrammatical], *Pamiati godovshchiny vostaniia Terskogo kazachestva: 23 iunია 1918 g.–23 iunია 1919 g.* (Piatigorsk: Tipografiia Terskogo kazach'ëgo voiska, 1919); A. G. Shkuro, "Zapiski belogo partizana," in *Dobrovol'tsy i partizany*, ed. S. V. Karpenko (Moscow: Golos, 1996); A. S. Kruchinin, "Terek i Dobrovol'cheskaia armiiia v 1918 godu," *Voennaia byl'*, no. 9 (1997): 15–22; Kireev, "Terskie kazach'i chasti."

were doomed without assistance from regular formations, like Czechoslovak, White Volunteer, or German troops.

The Transbaikal Cossack Host also saw a small Cossack uprising in August 1918. The significance of these actions should not be overestimated, as the Reds had already abandoned much of Transbaikal under pressure from advancing Czechoslovak and Siberian troops. By 26 August, Cossack rebels entered Chita. Czechoslovak and Siberian troops appeared there next day and restored the Transbaikal Cossack Host. On 30 August, these troops linked up with Semenov's troops at the Onon River, and on 14 September, Semenov arrived in Chita.²³

The Cossack insurgent movement was distinguished by its spontaneous and regional nature, along with its support from the local population. Cossacks often resorted to acts of sabotage such as disassembling rail tracks or burning bridges. The struggle at times took on a cruel and uncompromising character, but in some places there were peaceful transfers of power. The insurgent movement was typically led by little-known, low-ranking officers, particularly during its initial stages. Subsequently in the liberated Cossack regions, many of these individuals, with little political experience, lost out to senior Cossack officers who were more experienced in political maneuvering and intrigue.

Autonomous Period

With the end of the insurgent period and the liberation of Cossack territories by summer 1918, regular Cossack armed formations and organs of Cossack self-government were formed. Cossack armies appeared in certain hosts (Don, Ural, Orenburg), together with government symbols and legislative acts. This largely resulted from the absence of any higher political authority in Russia acceptable to the Cossacks. Only at the end of 1918 would Cossack governments and military formations begin to integrate their efforts with the Whites. The Cossacks and their atamans thus pursued their own goals, which did not always align with the broader anti-Bolshevik White agenda. This policy proved most destructive in regions with the weakest control from the White center: the Far East, Semirech'ye and Kuban', where Cossack autonomy descended into separatism and ataman abuse of power. These phenomena were also characteristic of the other Cossack hosts, although to a lesser extent.

The period from the summer to the end of 1918 is properly called autonomous. Proper coordination with the White movement had not yet been established, and the Cossack hosts' leaders preferred to act on their own,

²³ See Semenov, *O sebe*.

repeatedly emphasizing the autonomy and independence of their forces. During this period, for example, the Cossack Don Army conducted operations independently of the White Volunteer Army, even though the two forces had shared objectives, and instead often acted in divergent directions (the Volunteers south toward Kuban', the Don Cossacks northeast against Tsaritsyn'). Volunteer Army commander Anton Ivanovich Denikin and Don Ataman Krasnov met in the Mechetinskaia stanitsa, but this produced no alliance. The Don Cossacks aligned themselves with the Germans (at least until German defeat in November 1918), the Volunteers with the British and French.

Krasnov was able to assemble an impressive force of 50,000 armed Cossacks, in part by accepting Don residents without legal status as Cossacks into his ranks. The Young Army (of around 20,000 Cossacks) was Krasnov's pride and joy, made up of young Cossacks who had gone through a serious training program. In fall 1918, this army experienced its baptism of fire. Krasnov did all he could to revive the martial spirit of the Cossacks. During his tenure, the host revived its historical title as "the Almighty Don Host." The region also saw efforts to create a real Don Cossack state and cultivate Cossack nationalism. Despite all this, Red mobilization was more effective and achieved numerical superiority.

By the end of July 1918, the territory of the Don Host was liberated from the Reds. An expedition beyond the borders of the Don region was theoretically possible, but psychologically and politically quite difficult. A key strategic task in the struggle against the Bolsheviks was the capture of Tsaritsyn', a vital urban center and transportation node northeast of the Don territory. Several failed Cossack attempts to seize the town were hamstrung by the Cossacks' traditional unwillingness to cross over the borders of their host and fight for what they perceived as "peasant" interests. As a result, the struggle in 1918 was in practice little more than a passive defense of the host's borders. That said, the Cossacks' passive defense secured the rear of the Volunteer Army during its Second Kuban' Campaign. This allowed the Volunteers to avoid a direct confrontation with the Red center and enabled a substantial strengthening of their forces before the decisive operations in 1919 began.

In the Don region and in Kuban', Cossack regional particularism clashed with Denikin and the broader White idea of Russia "united and indivisible." Germany's defeat in November 1918 substantially weakened Ataman Krasnov and the pro-German lobby in the Don, producing a deterioration of strategic conditions in the region. As the Germans withdrew from Ukraine, the entire western border of the Don became vulnerable to Red attack. The Don Host was attempting to maintain a significant army while lacking both the requisite number of trained commanders and an industrial base. For arms and

ammunition, it depended on captured stocks as well as war materiel provided first by the Germans and later by the British.

As the Volunteer Army strengthened and the Don Cossack Army weakened, Krasnov had to make concessions to Denikin. During a joint meeting at Torgovaia on 8 January 1919, Krasnov overrode the objections of the Don Army command and agreed to accept Denikin's overall authority.²⁴ This led to the creation of the Armed Forces of Southern Russia (AFSR), comprising the Volunteer Army and military units from the Don, Kuban', and North Caucasus regions.

By January 1919, several Cossack regiments in the Upper Don district (*okrug*) refused to fight, and in February the Don Army was forced to retreat across the Don, and then across the Donets. In February, the Great Cossack Circle demanded the resignation of the Don Army command. Krasnov was also forced to resign, replaced by Lieutenant General Afrikan Petrovich Bogaevskii, a pro-Denikin ataman. At this juncture, the Don Cossacks' autonomous struggle against the Bolsheviks was over; they now fought under Denikin's unquestioned authority.

Events in Kuban' followed a somewhat different course, not determined by Cossack battlefield defeat. In November 1918, Denikin spoke at the opening of the Kuban' Rada, calling for unity in the anti-Bolshevik struggle and acknowledging the wide-ranging autonomy of Russian regions, including Cossack territory. This tactic was intended to sway the political leadership of Kuban', which among all the Cossack hosts was notable for its separatist sentiment and Russophobia (for example, one staple of Kuban' propaganda during this era was the phrase "damned Muscovites"). This attitude was affected by the internal division of the Kuban' Cossack Host into Black Sea Cossacks (Chernomortsy, descendants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks of the Dnepr [Ukr.–Dnipro] River basin in Ukraine) and Border Cossacks (Lineitsy, descendants of peasants and immigrants from the Don). The imposition of the secessionist views of the Chernomortsy intellectuals had a deeply harmful impact. The political leaders of this group—chairman of the Kuban' government Luka Lavrent'evich Bych, chairman of the legislative Rada Nikolai Stepanovich Riabovol, and the priest Aleksei Ivanovich Kylabukhov—were all strong separatists. The Lineitsy were more pro-Russian but lacked strong leaders to articulate their position.

These disagreements among political activists had a limited effect on the majority of Cossacks who joined the Volunteer Army and carried out the White command's orders, sharing its goals and missions. Ideologues from the Rada dreamed of creating a "Greater Kuban'": to accomplish this they

²⁴ Minutes of conference, 8 January 1919 (RGVA f. 39720 [Shtab Kavkazskoi dobrobol'cheskoi armii], op. 1, d. 45, l. 5ob.).

secretly negotiated with Georgian representatives, tried to organize a starvation blockade of the Black Sea district (lying along the Black Sea shore), which they planned to annex, and even spoke in favor of creating a federation with Ukraine. Local interests took precedence over those of Russia as a whole. Chauvinist attitudes began to take root throughout the Cossack ranks, often due to propaganda spread by the leadership. After liberating Kuban' from the Reds, Cossacks took vengeance on outsiders, whom they considered Bolsheviks. Overall, most struggles occurred over land. Kangaroo courts sprang up locally, and there was even a suggestion to deport the entire non-Cossack population of Kuban'; individual members of the Rada went so far as to propose a policy of extermination.

In the fall of 1918, the Volunteer Army lacked the opportunity or resources to fight against Kuban' separatism that it would have in 1919. Furthermore, the Volunteer Army depended on the Kuban' as a base of operations. In September 1918, Kuban' inhabitants made up around 89 percent of the cavalry, 44 percent of the infantry, and 33 percent of the artillery in Denikin's army. According to Denikin himself, up to 65 percent of the army was made up of Kuban' residents.²⁵ This situation required political delicacy.

Kuban' separatists demanded the creation of an independent Kuban' army. This army, were it to be formed, would act similarly to the Don Army of Krasnov's period. It would not operate beyond the borders of the host and would thus have been unavailable for larger tasks. The Volunteers would have been deprived of cavalry and part of their infantry, and Kuban' forces of experienced command staff and artillery. The bitter five-month struggle between the unified Volunteer Army and the Reds in Kuban' served as a lesson in the need for unity. A separate Kuban' army could not have sustained this kind of fighting. Ataman Aleksandr Petrovich Filimonov attempted to smooth over tensions and restrain the separatists as much as possible, but as a representative of Kuban', his efforts were necessarily limited and indecisive.

By the beginning of 1919, the question of separatism had fundamentally changed. The German departure from Ukraine, the loss of the dream of creating a federation between the Kuban' and Ukraine, the strengthening of the positions of the Entente and the Volunteer Army, and the approach of the Bolsheviks all combined to produce a unified AFSR and forced the Don and Kuban' leadership to recognize Denikin's authority.

Following the end of the Second Kuban' Campaign and the Kuban's liberation from the Reds, the Volunteer Army began a North Caucasus operation on the Terek River, capturing the territory of Chechnia, Ingushetia, Ossetia, and Dagestan in January–February 1919. Even though the opposing Vladika-

²⁵ A. I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty* (Moscow: Airis-Press, 2003), 2: 630–31.

vkaz-Groznyi Red group comprised approximately 8,000 men, the Whites were able to achieve rapid success through active reliance on highly mobile Cossack cavalry. The Volunteer Army's arrival on the Terek River allowed the local Cossacks to organize their own resistance to the Bolsheviks following the unsuccessful uprising of summer and fall 1918. Once the Third Army Corps under Lieutenant General Vladimir Platonovich Liakhov and the First Cavalry Corps under Pokrovskii moved into Terek Host territory, the Terek Cossacks were able to create two cavalry divisions and two infantry brigades (followed later by two more divisions and brigades). The Great Cossack Circle of the Terek Cossack Host elected Major General Gerasim Andreevich Vdovenko to the post of ataman. Vdovenko was completely acceptable to the leadership of the AFSR, and the host itself received considerable autonomy.

Despite this, ongoing tension between Cossacks, non-Cossack Russians, and the non-Russian populations of the foothills and mountains persisted as an important issue. Urban populations were neutral or even supportive of Soviet power. The Third Assembly of the Peoples of Terek made the decision to eliminate the "Sunzha wedge," Cossack stanitsy on former Ingush lands. Bitter conflicts also occurred in Chechnia. After its formal occupation by the Whites, the North Caucasus remained a site of constant tension, brutal fighting, and a serious drain on forces in the White rear during the decisive "Advance on Moscow" in the fall of 1919.

The Astrakhan' Host lost its territory at the very beginning of the Civil War, and was the only host whose lands remained firmly under Red control until the end of the conflict. The settled population of the Astrakhan' Cossacks accepted the situation, and there were no uprisings on the Red-occupied territories in 1918. But even here, as in every host, there were opponents of Bolshevik power. With the creation of a large anti-Bolshevik site on the Don in the spring of 1918, a group of Astrakhan' officers and bureaucrats led by Prince Danzan Tserenovitch (Dmitry Davidovich) Tundutov arrived at the Don. Tundutov, temporarily acting as host ataman, was a Kalmyk nationalist and supporter of a pro-German orientation. In an effort to resurrect the Astrakhan' Host, Tundutov created a new government and organized an Astrakhan' army, commanded by Lieutenant General Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Pavlov. In the summer of 1918, he managed to form two brigades, and in the fall of 1918, the overall size of Astrakhan' units rose to 2,000 troops. These suffered a crushing defeat near Tsaritsyn' at the hands of a division commanded by Dmitrii Petrovich Zhloba. The Astrakhan' infantry was almost entirely destroyed, and prisoners were subjected to brutal execution.

By November 1918, following an agreement between the Astrakhan' Host and Ataman Krasnov, the Astrakhan' Corps joined the Don Army. It was composed of Kalmyks, non-Cossack inhabitants of the Don region, and prisoners

of war. Astrakhan' Cossacks made up not more than 12 percent of the corps. In early March 1919, the remainder of the corps was transformed into a primarily Kalmyk cavalry brigade. In February 1919, Prince Tundutov stepped down from his post as ataman and was replaced by Nikolai Vasil'evich Liakhov, a pro-Denikin officer.

At the same time, Astrakhan' Cossack forces also fought against the Bolsheviks on the territory of the Ural Host, where they had retreated following the Bolshevik defeat of the Astrakhan' uprising in January 1918. Nikolai Konstantinovich Serezhnikov directed the actions of this group. In fall 1918, an Astrakhan' Cossack squadron and infantry battalion, numbering around 600 troops, formed in Gur'ev (now Atyrau, Kazakhstan), on the northern shore of the Caspian Sea). These units operated as part of the Ural Army and defended Gur'ev as the main rear base of the Urals forces. In spring 1919, part of the Astrakhan' forces created a Liberation Detachment led by Colonel Serezhnikov (2,000 troops and 8 artillery pieces); this unit was charged with the task of liberating the territory of the Astrakhan' Host and conducting active operations against Astrakhan'.

The Ural Cossack Host Assembly led its fight against the Bolsheviks and had already proclaimed the autonomy of the oblast' in spring 1918. By summer, it acknowledged the authority of the Samara Committee of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly (Komuch), which supplied weapons. As suggested above, the Ural Host faced particularly severe supply constraints. The Ural Army conducted an operation on the host territory stretching from the Caspian Sea to the small town of Iletsk. The size of the army fluctuated between 12,000 and 25,000 troops. After October 1918, the Ural troops fought as part of the Southwestern Army commanded by Lieutenant General Dutov, while retaining some operational independence. The Ural force had recognized Admiral Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak's rise to power and recognized his status as supreme ruler of Russia.

In fall 1918, the Reds attempted to capture Ural'sk, and formations under the command of the legendary Bolshevik hero Vasili Ivanovich Chapaev participated in the battles. After White units withdrew from the Lower Volga region, the Reds gained an opportunity to launch a strike directly against the Ural Host. Ural'sk fell on 24 January 1919 after a series of brutal battles. The Ural force's position was quite challenging geographically; it had only the waterless steppes and the Caspian Sea at its rear, and lacking an easy retreat in case of an unsuccessful operation, it faced the prospect of perishing either at the hands of the Reds or in the fierce climactic conditions; indeed, that is what happened in the winter of 1919–20.²⁶

²⁶ N. I. Fokin, *Final tragedii: Ural'skie kazaki v XX veke* (Moscow: Akim, 1996).

In the second half of 1918, the Orenburg Host's territory was liberated from the Bolsheviks. In the south, insurgent detachments of Orenburg Cossacks attacked, and in the north, Cossacks alongside soldiers of the Czechoslovak Legion. After returning to Orenburg, Ataman Dutov recognized the Komuch and visited its capital Samara, but then headed for Omsk to meet the rival Provisional Siberian Government. This produced an intense conflict between Dutov and the Komuch, whose members saw his visit to Omsk as an almost hostile move, and consequently attempted to deprive him of powers he had previously been granted. Meanwhile, the Orenburg ataman continued to follow his own political program, kept a close eye on the political forces in his region, and played multiple factions against each other to seek maximum advantage for his military force. The paltry material resources of his region forced Dutov to vacillate and seek help from all sides; to complicate matters, the territory of the Orenburg Host was divided between the Samara and Omsk provisional governments in summer 1918. On 12 August, in the wake of a deepening rift with the Komuch, Dutov took an unprecedented step: he declared the host's autonomy, which substantially strengthened his position as ataman. He also announced a special Orenburg Host Region, intended to become part of a future Russian Federal Republic.²⁷ While a declaration of host autonomy formally constituted separatism, Dutov himself was by no means a separatist. At that point, Russia did not have an authoritative national government acceptable to the Cossacks, and for this reason, the 12 August declaration was an understandable effort by Cossack leaders to protect their hosts from outside threats and thoughtless decisions of the provisional governments, whether in Samara or Omsk. The declaration of autonomy granted Dutov more independence from the Komuch, and allowed him to conduct negotiations with Samara as an equal.

On 17 October 1918, the Orenburg and Ural Cossack units joined to form a Southwestern Army, commanded by Dutov himself, now promoted to lieutenant general. In the fall of 1918, after liberating the territory of the host, the majority of Cossacks considered that their principal goals had been accomplished and sought to return to their stanitsy and households. This, of course, proved tremendously beneficial to the Bolsheviks.

Following the Omsk coup of 18 November 1918, which put Kolchak into power in Siberia as supreme ruler and supreme commander in chief, Ataman Dutov was one of the first to recognize Kolchak's authority, and shared his political position. Dutov's Orenburg Host, however, suffered the worst consequences of this coup. In Orenburg, a wide array of those opposing Dutov

²⁷ Decree of the Orenburg Cossack Government no. 568, 12 August 1918 (RGVA f. 40327 [Shtab Orenburgskogo voennogo okruga na teatre voennykh deistvii i Voiskovoi shtab Orenburgskogo kazach'ego voiska], op. 1, d. 16, ll. 51–51ob.).

and Kolchak alike plotted a coup. This informal coalition included Socialist-Revolutionary Party activists, socialist-leaning leaders of national minorities, and representatives of the Orenburg Cossack democratic opposition, including General Staff officer Colonel Fedor Evdokimovich Makhin, commander of the Tashkent army group, and Ataman Kirill Leont'evich Kargin, leader of the First Military District of the Orenburg Host. The anti-Dutov conspiracy had deep potential consequences, including the reconstitution of the already liquidated Komuch and a split in anti-Bolshevik forces. The plot was uncovered by accident, and an armed coup was averted.²⁸ As a consequence, however, Bashkir units influenced by Bashkir leader Akhmed-Zaki Validov, one of the participants in the plot, went over to the Red side, weakening the front of the Orenburg Host.

The Siberian Host's territory was liberated by the combined efforts of the Czechoslovaks, members of underground organizations, and volunteers (including Cossacks in their ranks). By all accounts, independent Cossack formations played only a secondary role in this process. In several centers, such as Pavlodar and Ust'-Kamenogorsk, the Cossacks joined with members of the underground to overthrow Bolshevik power. Militias formed in stanitsy, and a portion of these forces were sent into cities. Of course, these units aimed at self-defense, lacked discipline or coordination, and did not plan to fight the Bolsheviks beyond the borders of their home districts, much less outside the borders of the host. After liberating their home districts, these units disbanded and went home. At times, host leadership was able to use militiamen as territorial units, but these forces were virtually useless for the broader anti-Bolshevik struggle.

In addition to militias, hosts often had partisan detachments. The most famous of these were led by Annenkov and Esaul Ivan Nikolaevich Krasil'nikov, each of whom had several hundred fighters. These detachments lacked standard military equipment, but the two popular atamans attracted both Cossacks and non-Cossacks, and noncommissioned officers and officers, as well as students. Krasil'nikov's detachment was active in western and eastern Siberia, while Annenkov's detachment operated in western Siberia, the Urals, and later also Semirech'ie.²⁹ More formal Cossack units were also created, which by the end of 1918 were consolidated into a separate Siberian Cossack Brigade under Colonel Aleksandr Ivanovich Belov. There was not an active front near

²⁸ Ganin, *Dutov*, 268–91; A. V. Ganin, "Admiral A. V. Kolchak i partiia sotsialistov-revoliutsionerov: Voенно-politicheskoe protivoborstvo v noiabre–dekabre 1918 g.," *Voennyi kommentator* 8, 1 (2009): 21–37.

²⁹ V. A. Shuldiakov, *Gibel' Sibirskogo kazach'ego voiska, 1917–1920* (Moscow: Tsentro-poligraf, 2004), vol. 1.

the territory of the host, however, so the mobilizational efforts of Siberian Cossacks in 1918 and early 1919 were relatively insignificant.

In contrast to their military work, the political activities of the Siberian Host were quite impressive. The host capital, Omsk, became the capital of White Siberia, creating a certain elevated status for the Siberian Host administration and officer corps. In July 1918, the Fourth Host Assembly elected Major General Pavel Pavlovich Ivan-Rinov as host ataman. Siberian Cossack officers, including Colonel Viacheslav Ivanovich Volkov and Lieutenant Colonels Apollon Vsevolodovich Katanaev and I. N. Krasil'nikov constituted the group which brought Admiral Kolchak to power in the November 1918 coup. Siberian Cossacks were thus an important foundational force for Kolchak's regime.

Like other forces, the Semirech'e Host confronted a profound dearth of officers. In December 1918, units of Annenkov's partisan detachment (1,800 infantry, 1,770 cavalry, 6 field guns) arrived from the Semipalatinsk area of Semirech'e to liquidate a Red insurgent center in the White rear. This Red center near the village of Cherkassk was intended as a preliminary step toward a further offensive against Vernyi, but Annenkov's forces became embroiled in a lengthy struggle and were not able to put down the Cherkassk insurgency until fall 1919.

Semirech'e Ataman A. M. Ionov hoped to increase the Cossack presence in his region, which had included a large number of settlers transplanted under the policies of prewar chief minister Petr Arkad'evich Stolypin and a considerable Kyrgyz population. Long-term residents were enrolled in the host, while recently arrived peasant migrants were not. Contrary to Ionov's expectations, his measures did not strengthen the host, but rather exacerbated already existing tensions in the region. Moreover, considerable antagonism developed between Ionov and Annenkov, which finally led Kolchak to recall Ionov from Semirech'e.

Enisei Cossacks also actively participated in the Civil War. In June 1918, they rebelled against the Bolsheviks in southern Enisei province, in protest against forced requisitions of food. In 1918, two cavalry regiments and a battery formed in Krasnoiarsk and took part in battles on the Ural River and against rebels in Siberia. The Minusinsk uprising began in fall 1918 and was suppressed by small Cossack detachments (in total, around 600 fighters), who on occasion clashed with 10,000-strong peasant mobs. In addition, an Altai Cossack Host was created in 1919 on the initiative of Staff Captain Aleksandr Petrovich Kaigorodov; the partisan detachment of Captain Dmitrii Vladimirovich Satunin formed the core of this unit. The Whites were able to hold onto this isolated region until spring 1921.

After eastern Siberia, Transbaikal, and the Far East were liberated from the Reds, the Irkutsk, Transbaikal, Amur, and Ussuri Cossack Hosts were revived. In the summer of 1918, the Cossack population of Irkutsk province was conscripted. The main objective of Cossack forces in the Far East was combatting the Red partisan movement in the White rear, but available manpower was limited. The Irkutsk Host, one of the smallest, could only assemble a regiment, the Transbaikal Host a division, and the Amur and Ussuri a brigade each. On 14 November 1918, a separate Eastern Cossack Corps was created, and on 8 December, Semenov proclaimed himself commander of the Separate Eastern Siberian Army, which integrated formations of Transbaikal, Amur, and Ussuri Cossacks. In November 1919, the Far East Cossack Hosts signed an agreement and elected Semenov as their campaign ataman. Semenov was closely linked to Japan, which sought to prevent the reemergence of strong centralized government in Russia. With Japanese support, the Far East atamans embraced an openly separatist political platform, later termed *atamanshchina*.

Ataman Semenov was one of the last to recognize Kolchak's rise to power. On 23 November 1918, he had refused to recognize Kolchak as Supreme Ruler and suggested Denikin, Dutov, or Dmitrii Leonidovich Khorvat as alternative candidates for the post. Kolchak's attempt to force Semenov to accept his authority encountered strong resistance from the Japanese. Semenov moderated his position by May 1919. Semenov's troops fought against Red partisans in the Amur, Primor'e, and Irkutsk regions, and he directed surplus officers to Omsk to assist Kolchak. Thus, despite his conflict with Kolchak, Semenov did try to assist the White center in some way. At the same time, neither he, Ivan Mikhailovich Gamov, nor Ivan Pavlovich Kalmykov, the atamans of the neighboring Amur and Ussuri hosts, dispatched a single unit to the vital eastern front, despite their promises to do so.³⁰ This gives credence to the accusation of separatism and *atamanshchina*, though some authors see this as the fruit born of Kolchak's ambitions.

Period of Integration with White Armies and Fronts

The end of the autonomous period of the Cossack struggle came in the winter of 1918–19. The first year of the war showed that it was not possible to liberate the country from the Bolsheviks by relying solely on the Cossacks, who moreover did not want to take on this role. Unlike the localist and particularist Cossack atamans, the leaders of the White armies focused on the national struggle against the Bolsheviks, and over the course of 1918 sub-

³⁰ V. I. Vasil'evskii, ed., *Ataman Semenov: Voprosy gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Chita: Poisk, 2002), 19.

stantially strengthened their positions by rallying a variety of forces to their side. Finally, in the first half of 1919, the Whites achieved a unified command. Under these conditions, the Cossacks could no longer remain apart from the all-Russian movement. Nevertheless, a tendency toward autonomy verging on separatism and atamanshchina remained characteristic of the Cossacks during this key period.

The losses the Cossacks suffered in 1917–22 were substantial. In comparison with the First World War, the Civil War led to significantly greater sacrifices on the part of the Cossacks, especially since many battles took place on Cossack territory. For example, the Don stanitsa of Nagavskaia had 6 fatalities and 30 wounded during the First World War; during the Civil War, 270 were killed and 80 percent of the male population was wounded. The Don artillery lost 52 officers during the Civil War, and only 6 during the years of the First World War.³¹ During the Civil War era, 16 stanitsy were burned, looted, and demolished, and at least 4,110 homesteads were destroyed.³² The population of Orenburg province, a large part of which lived on the territory of the Orenburg Cossack Host, shrank by 32.3 percent, and 27.1 percent of peasant and Cossack homesteads disappeared.³³

The mass participation of Cossacks in the anti-Bolshevik movement led to a pitiless attitude on the part of the Bolsheviks toward the entire Cossack *soslovie*. The culmination of this sentiment from a legislative standpoint came with the notorious secret circular letter sent on 24 January 1919 by the Central Committee's *Orgbiuro* to party organizations in the Don and Urals regions, outlining a plan to "conduct a merciless mass terror against all Cossacks who participated directly or indirectly in the fight against Soviet power," and calling for the liquidation of all wealthy Cossacks. In one way or another, since nearly all Cossacks fought against Soviet power, the entire population was potentially subject to extermination. The vague wording of the document left it open to wide interpretation. An additional suggestion was to give Cossacks and recent immigrants to Cossack territory equal status and arrange for the mass resettlement of poor peasants on Cossack land. This letter was distributed widely and became one of the main pieces of evidence confirming the

³¹ S. V. Volkov, *Tragediia russkogo ofitserstva* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2001), 197.

³² Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Orenburgskoi oblasti (GAOO) f. R-1912 (Shtab Orenburgskogo voennogo okruga), op. 2, d. 23, l. 353 (information about Bolshevik damage to the stanitsy of the Orenburg Cossack Host); *Orskii vestnik*, 8 November 1918, 2.

³³ M. S. Bernshtam, ed., *Ural i Prikam'e (noiabr' 1917–ianvar' 1919): Dokumenty i materialy* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1982), 230.

Bolshevik regime's violent anti-Cossack measures.³⁴ The Whites intercepted this document soon after it was sent out, and published it on 17 April 1919 as part of the supreme commander in chief's Order no. 334. It frequently appeared thereafter in White propaganda, contributing to efforts to discredit the Soviets and mobilize Cossacks.³⁵

When operating in various Cossack regions, the Bolsheviks created revolutionary tribunals, took hostages, and conducted mass repression of civilians in response to denunciations, often without any investigation or trial. In the Khoperskii region, up to 60 were executed each day. The lawless environment led not only to mass executions, but a complete lack of restraint in all other areas, aided and abetted by higher authorities. Commissars openly stole from inhabitants of the stanitsy and engaged in drunkenness and rape. In certain areas it was forbidden even to use the word "Cossack." Following requests by recently arrived non-Cossack residents, stanitsy and khutory were renamed *volosti* and villages (*derevni*). Arguably, between 1917 and the first half of the 1930s, Soviet Russia witnessed a conscious policy aimed at destroying the Cossack population physically and spiritually through a variety of anti-Cossack and antikulak actions. As a result, Cossacks virtually ceased to exist. The Bolshevik rationale for this policy is clear: the Cossacks were the only large and organized social group in the country whose representatives were fervently anti-Bolshevik, had military experience, and possessed a highly functional internal organization.

On 5 June 1919, during a meeting of the Bolshevik Party's Orenburg Provincial Committee, the question arose of executing all Cossacks who were "older than 45 years, had no sons in the Red Army, and did not stand on the side of Soviet power." The majority of the committee voted "in favor." No data are available regarding the actual application of this measure, but the fact that it was proposed in the first place is illustrative of the Bolshevik attitude toward the Cossacks. But that same year the Bolsheviks realized the infeasibility of a policy of merciless terror toward the Cossacks, and instead embarked on a policy of sowing discord among them.

Even during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks realized that it was not possible to subdue the Cossacks through exclusive reliance on methods of violence. In April 1919, when White forces liberated the territory of the First Military District of the Orenburg Cossack Host after its occupation by the Reds in January 1919, they discovered that the Bolsheviks had shot practically no Cossacks,

³⁴ Teodor Shanin and V. P. Danilov, eds., *Filipp Mironov: Tikhii Don v 1917–1921 gg.* (Moscow: Demokratiia, 1997), 137–38.

³⁵ See "Krovohadnyi prikaz bol'shevikov," *Orenburgskii kazachii vestnik*, 29 April 1919, 1–2; "Bol'shevistskii sekretnyi prikaz," *Kurganskaia svobodnaia mysl'*, 4 May 1919, 2; "Krovohadnyi prikaz bol'shevikov," *Utro Sibiri*, 7 May 1919, 3.

and “did not commit any notable outrages,” with the result that the Cossacks became more loyal to the Reds and less likely to support the Whites.³⁶ In his report to the commander of the army on 25 April 1919, Major General Ivan Grigor’evich Akulinin, commander of the Second Orenburg Cossack Corps, noted that “arriving Cossack forces did not encounter a particularly heartfelt welcome from ‘native *stanitsa* residents.”³⁷

It seemed that a slight softening of Bolshevik policy toward the Cossacks might occur after the Veshenskoe uprising, which began in the rear of the Eighth and Ninth Red armies on 11 March 1919. It followed particularly brutal anti-Cossack reprisals undertaken by Bolshevik forces in the Upper Don region. By 16 March, following a decision by the Bolshevik Central Committee, the measures described in the January 1919 circular letter were officially halted.³⁸ By early April, these orders were relayed from the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Southern Front to the armies operating in the Don region. However, this March document was soon replaced by a resolution of the Bolshevik Party’s Donbiuro. It described the complete elimination of the Cossacks as a vital task, suggesting that all Cossack officials and officers be physically exterminated. The mass of rank-and-file soldiers were to be disarmed and scattered. It also demanded a mass population transfer from northern and central Russian regions to the Don. The resettlement of Cossacks in the Russian interior was also broached.³⁹ The change in Bolshevik policy toward the Cossacks only occurred at the beginning of fall 1919, in part as a result of the government’s analysis of the Veshensk uprising. But this was primarily a tactical ploy by the Bolsheviks in the wake of the threatening success of the White armies.

The improved coordination between the Volunteer Army and Don Cossacks began to yield positive results. By March 1919, Don troops, assisted by Kuban’ units sent by Denikin, were able to repel Red offensives against Novocherkassk. In May, they defeated an offensive against Rostov. During this same time, the Caucasus Army commanded by Petr Nikolaevich Vrangeli’ began its offensive against Tsaritsyn’. The objective of the Don units was to link up with anti-Bolshevik Upper Don insurgents, who were forced to fight in very difficult conditions. On 7 June, cavalry units led by Major General Aleksandr Stepanovich Sekretev broke through and linked up with the Upper Don forces. At the same time, Lieutenant General Konstantin Konstanti-

³⁶ *Grazhdanskaia voina v Orenburzh’e 1917–1919 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* (Orenburg: Orenburgskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1958), 303, 307.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 308.

³⁸ Mironov, *Tikhii Don*, 164.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 184–86.

novich Mamontov's cavalry cleared Red forces from the right bank of the Don River. The Don army quickly advanced northward, while the Caucasus and Volunteer armies advanced on its right and left flanks. Finally, by 30 June, the Reds had been expelled from the entire Don region and even the southern part of Voronezh province. On 1 July, Tsaritsyn' was captured, and the Caucasus was cut off from the Red center. The Don forces had an opportunity to push on against Tambov.

The Whites enjoyed a significant superiority in cavalry, but did not use this advantage to the fullest extent possible. The famous raid by Mamontov's Fourth Don Corps into Red rear areas (Tambov-Kozlov-Elets-Voronezh) was practically the only notable episode in the history of the White cavalry. Mamontov sowed panic for an entire month, disrupted communications, and distributed weapons to the population in the Bolshevik rear. On 18 August, Tambov was taken, on 28 August Lebedian', on 1 September Elets, and on Voronezh 11 September. But due to the traditional Cossack penchant for self-supply by means of plunder, Mamontov was unable to take advantage of all the opportunities presented by this raid.⁴⁰

As the AFSR expanded the territory under its control, the significance of Cossacks in its ranks began to decline. By 3 October 1919, when Denikin's army had begun its offensive toward Moscow, Soviet intelligence reports noted that his force had 183,000 men, of whom 48.5 percent were volunteers (88,750 rank-and-file soldiers and officers), 33.5 percent were Don Cossacks (61,300), and 18 percent were residents of Kuban' or the Caucasus (32,950).⁴¹ Compared to 1918, the Cossacks were no longer a majority of White forces, though their overall percentage in the army made up a little more than half of Denikin's troops. Later, when the Whites were forced to retreat back to Cossack regions, the percentage of Cossacks in the ranks again began to increase.

In September 1919, the forces of the 2nd Don Corps stopped a Red counterattack against the Don, which had begun in August. In October, the Don Army under Denikin's overarching authority gathered all its forces and began a general offensive on Moscow. By the end of the month, though, their enemy had seized the initiative. Trotskii had a keen understanding of the particularities of Cossack psychology and thus proposed a Red offensive through Voronezh to Kharkiv and the Donbass, which would have allowed Red forces to reach the Northern Caucasus through peasant regions, avoiding Cossack territory. The Red commander in chief, Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, advised instead an offensive from the Volga toward Tsaritsyn' and then on to Kuban',

⁴⁰ See Volkov, *Donskaia armii v bor'be s bol'shevikami*.

⁴¹ Chart of the organization of the Armed Forces of South Russia, 3 October 1919 (RGVA f. 11 [Vserossiiskii glavnyi shtab], op. 5, d. 590, l. 1).

that is, through Cossack lands. Kamenev's plan would give Denikin and the Cossacks a common cause, whereas Trotskii's plan would divide them, and in the case of success would split the Don and Caucasus armies from the Volunteer Army.

The switch to Trotskii's plan brought the Reds success. On 20 October, Orel, south of Moscow, was retaken from the Whites. On 29 October the Reds entered Voronezh and on 17 November Kursk. On 12 December White-held Kharkiv fell to the Bolsheviks. Denikin's front was split into two parts: one held by the Cossacks, the other by the Volunteer Army. In order successfully to combat the Cossack cavalry, the Reds created their own strategic cavalry units in the second half of 1919, and in mid-December, Boris Mokeevich Dumenko's cavalry broke through White lines near Boguchar, and the Don Army was forced to withdraw behind the Donets River.

In the beginning of 1920, the Whites retreated to the Lower Don. Occasional successes by White forces in January–February 1920, such as the destruction of Semen Mikhailovich Budennyi's and Dymenko's cavalry units near Rostov and on the Manych, as well as the brief occupation of Rostov on 21–23 February 1920, did not change the overall situation. By March 1920, the Whites had retreated to Novorossiisk and were pinned against the Black Sea. The poorly organized Novorossiisk evacuation, which was supposed to pull White troops out to temporary safety in Crimea, became one of the most tragic pages in the history of the White movement. Don Cossack units were unable to evacuate from Novorossiisk and some were taken prisoner, while the rest retreated along the Black Sea coast to Sochi and in May 1920 were transferred from there to Crimea as a newly created Don Corps.

The Kuban' Cossack leadership was more opposed to Denikin's command of the AFSR than the other Cossack hosts. On 27 June 1919, Nikolai Stepanovich Riabovol, one of its separatist leaders and chairman of the Kuban' Rada, was assassinated in Rostov-on-Don. Kuban' politicians used this incident in an anti-White propaganda campaign, blaming members of the Volunteer Army for Riabovol's death. The situation was paradoxical due to the fact that the Whites did not have an apparatus of internal affairs or a well-functioning system of state propaganda, which allowed Kuban' separatists to control all regional government organs and use them to further their own interest. In this manner, Denikin became a hostage of his own deficient political system, which, despite wartime conditions, allowed his opposition to have a political platform and control over administrative resources.

It was an open secret that Kuban' politicians played a double game with the White command, conducting negotiations with Georgia, Ukraine, and representatives of the Don and Terek Cossacks. Ataman Filimonov vacillated between several positions, but this policy could not continue indefinitely.

Nevertheless, Vrangeli's Caucasus Army, a force primarily made up of Kuban' troops, was quite successful during the summer of 1919. The Cossacks took Tsaritsyn' and Kamyshin with heavy losses, and by September some cavalry regiments had only 70 men left, but nevertheless the army maintained its discipline and martial spirit.

In October 1919, Denikin embarked on an armed solution to his conflict with the Kuban' Rada, and sent forces under Vrangeli' and Pokrovskii to Ekaterinodar to arrest the most odious members of the Rada's separatist faction. One member of the Rada, the priest Aleksei Ivanovich Kulabukhov, was convicted of separatism by court martial and hanged, while 11 other Rada members were arrested and deported. In this period, the Bolsheviks were planning, and possibly had already started, negotiations with Kuban' representatives. In Paris, French socialist Ferdinand Loriot helped Kuban' representatives establish contact with the Soviet government and propose a peace treaty.

Under these circumstances, Ataman Filimonov was relieved of his duties and replaced by General Staff Major General Nikolai Mitrofanovich Uspenskii, a more pro-Denikin officer. Shortly thereafter Uspenskii died of typhus, and Major General Nikolai Adrianovich Bukretov became the new ataman. Bukretov was a strong opponent of transferring Kuban' forces to Crimea and, as a result, a significant portion of Kuban' units surrendered to the Reds on the Black Sea coast rather than evacuate to Crimea with the rest of the AFSR. Bukretov may have been elected specifically due to his anti-Denikin views. The few Kuban' Cossacks who did make it to Crimea formed a new Cossack division.

The Terek River Cossacks were more loyal to the Whites, particularly because they would have simply been exterminated by neighboring urban populations without outside support (which did indeed happen eventually). Due to their ongoing struggles against the Chechens and Ingush, the Terek Cossacks constantly endeavored to increase the size of the Cossack population. In particular the host welcomed members of the Nogai ethnic group into their ranks, and suggested inviting Ossetians and Kabardians as well, given that both groups had pro-Russian sentiments. Terek units were a part of the AFSR and participated in operations across a wide geographic area, fighting in Ukraine, the Don, the Volga River basin, and throughout the Caucasus. After the Whites withdrew, the deportation and extermination of Terek Cossacks began.⁴² One-third of Terek Cossacks may have been killed after the Civil War.

At the beginning of 1920, the Supreme Circles of the Don, Kuban', and Terek Cossacks gathered in Ekaterinodar with the goal of creating a unified

⁴² E. F. Zhupikova, "K voprosu o deportatsii terskogo kazachestva v 1918–1920 gg.," *Belaia gvardiia: Istoricheskii al'manakh*, no. 8 (2005): 130–48.

Cossack government in southern Russia. The percentage of Cossacks in the AFSR was increasing as Denikin's troops retreated south from the Russian heartland into Cossack regions. Denikin was forced to make concessions to the Cossacks, including inviting the Don ataman General Bogaevskii to join his government. In addition, a separate Kuban' Army was created and placed under the command of the popular Kuban' general, Shkuro.

These transformations did not really change the overall situation. The Cossacks who evacuated to Crimea rather than staying behind in the Don or the North Caucasus, far from their native stanitsy, were forced to accept the authority of Vrangel', Denikin's replacement as commander in chief. Vrangel' crushed Cossack opposition and organized a court martial against generals Vladimir Il'ich Sidorin and Anatolii Kiprianovich Kelchevskii, both of whom were sympathetic to the separatists. Both were sent abroad. Lieutenant General Fedor Fedorovich Abramov now led the Don Corps. The leadership of the Cossack hosts found itself both financially and politically dependent on Vrangel'.

Vrangel' did not abandon the notion that the Cossacks could still be a reliable pillar of support for the White movement. The "Army of Russian Rebirth," commanded by Major General Mikhail Arkhipovich Fostikov, made up of Kuban' troops unable to evacuate to Crimea, fought successfully in the mountains of Kuban'.⁴³ Fostikov's request for assistance may have prompted Vrangel' to launch an amphibious assault from Crimea to Kuban' to transform this region into a bridgehead for future operations. Nevertheless, only around 10,000 Cossacks joined Vrangel''s forces in Kuban'.

Fostikov's Cossacks retreated to Georgia and were evacuated to Crimea in fall 1920. After this, the formation of a Kuban' Corps in Crimea became possible, and Fostikov led this new force. After the failure of the amphibious assaults, however, it became clear that further fighting was pointless. Nevertheless, White Crimea held out until November 1920. The Cossacks evacuated from Feodosiia and Kerch' to Turkey as part of the general White exodus. This evacuation was so well organized that practically everyone who wanted to leave could do so. Around 52,000 Cossacks departed Crimea. After landing in Constantinople, the Kuban' Cossacks were sent to Lemnos Island in the Aegean, while the Don Cossacks went to Chataldja, around 100 km from Constantinople. The Cossacks began an era of forced exile from their native land, which they had spent so much time and effort defending.

The Cossacks' fate in eastern Russia was equally tragic. Perhaps the most disastrous incident was the anabasis of the Separate Ural Army in late 1919–early 1920. On 28 December 1918, the Southwestern Army was divided into

⁴³ For Fostikov's diary, see *Dnevniky kazach'ikh ofitserov* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2004), 15–178.

the Separate Ural and Separate Orenburg armies. On 24 January 1919, Ural'sk fell to the Reds. The Ural troops made several unsuccessful efforts to take back their capital. Soon after, the Bolsheviks took control over the entire northern territory of the host. Several thousand Cossacks surrendered. The circumstances faced by the Ural forces were quite difficult, and the situation became even more desperate in March 1919, when they were confronted with the possibility of losing the entire territory of the host. It was at this moment that the Ural Host Assembly transferred all military authority to Colonel Vladimir Sergeevich Tolstov.

The army suffered serious losses from typhus in the fall of 1919, and began a retreat to Gur'ev as a result of this significant decrease in numbers. After the fall of Gur'ev to the Soviet 4th Army on 5 January 1920, the Separate Ural Army found itself pinned against the frozen Caspian Sea. In order to avoid encirclement and destruction, Ataman Tolstov led his troops (around 15,000) around the desolate eastern shore of the Caspian Sea to the south. In April 1920, a significant portion of the retreating force surrendered at Fort Aleksandrovskii.

The Separate Orenburg Army (18,863 men with 23 field guns and 309 machine guns) was rapidly affected by White failures on the Volga during the fall of 1918.⁴⁴ A combined offensive by units of the First Soviet and Turkestan armies (total size: 23,500 soldiers with 76 field guns and 254 machine guns) forced the Cossacks to withdraw from Orenburg by 22 January 1919. The Reds planned to occupy the southern part of the Urals and then launch an offensive east against Cheliabinsk. The Separate Orenburg Army was forced to retreat to the east, and lost contact with the Urals forces.

The main task of these armies was to prevent the Reds from establishing a railroad link with Red-controlled Turkestan, and hence they were forced to fight for literally every scrap of railroad track. The desperate fighting and chronic shortages of supplies wore away at morale, leading many soldiers to desert and leave for home or join the Red side. In order to maintain the spirit of the units under his command, Ataman Dutov was forced to inaugurate some significant reforms within his ranks—disbanding unreliable units, strengthening discipline—which yielded positive results. In mid-March the army launched a counteroffensive that achieved temporary success. Within just a month, areas that had been abandoned were recovered, including the towns of Omsk and Aktiubinsk [present-day Aktobe, Kazakhstan—Eds.] (the

⁴⁴ Battle formation (*boevoi sostav*) of units of the Separate Orenburg Army at 18 January 1919 (RGVA f. 39514, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 20–21ob.). See also "Boevye raspisaniia Iugo-zapadnoi i Otdel'noi Orenburgskoi armii," *Belaiia gvardiia: Istoricheskii al'manakh*, no. 8 (2005): 216–18.

latter had not been under Cossack control). From April to August 1919, the Cossacks besieged their own former capital of Orenburg.

But Red advantages in numbers and materiel began to tell. On 10 April 1919, the Reds combined their First, Fourth, Fifth, and Turkestan armies into the Southern Group of the Eastern Front under the command of Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze. Frunze concentrated his forces between Samara and Orenburg and ordered a major counteroffensive for 28 April. On 13 May, the Reds captured Buguruslan and on 9 June the important town of Ufa. The offensive continued east from Ufa toward Cheliabinsk, and on 24 July it too fell to the Reds. By August 1919, military operations on this sector of the front moved primarily to the rest of the Urals region.

On 23 May 1919, the Whites' Separate Orenburg Army, the Orenburg Military District, and the Southern Group of the Western Army were consolidated into a single force, the Southern Army. This new organization was unable to achieve any significant objectives and suffered defeat. By August–September 1919, some 57,000 surrendered to the Reds around Orenburg—primarily soldiers of the Southern Army. Some were also Orenburg Cossacks, not wishing to leave the host's territory. The remnants of the army withdrew to attempt to link up with the Ural Cossacks or Kolchak's armies. On 13 September 1919, troops of the First Soviet Army linked up with Red Turkestan units from the Aktiubinsk front near Mugodzharskaia. After crushing the Orenburg Cossacks, the Reds began active operations against the Ural Cossacks.

On 18 September 1919, the remnants of the Southern Army were converted into the Orenburg Army, with General Dutov once again in command.⁴⁵ The troops, many sick with typhus, were forced to retreat to Turgai across a desolate, uninhabited steppe. By mid-October, no more than 50 percent of the original force remained. The army still had to travel more than 400 km across the inhospitable steppe to reach the closest inhabited areas of the Akmolinsk region. By October, they were camped out near the cities of Atbasar and Kokchetav, from which they planned to launch an attack on the Red flank near Petropavlovsk. In mid-November, they were forced once again to retreat, this time to Karkaralinsk and Semipalatinsk. In an operation later called the Hunger Expedition, the winter temperatures dropped to -30°C , the troops lacked cold-weather kit, and the exhausted troops starved.⁴⁶ In terms of difficulty

⁴⁵ Order of the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander in Chief and the Commander in Chief of the Armies of the Eastern Front no. 1074, 18 September 1919 (RGVA f. 39499 [Shtab Verkhovnogo glavnokomanduiushchego], op. 1, d. 19, l. 98).

⁴⁶ I. Elovskii, *Golodnyi pokhod Orenburgskoi armii (Iz vospominanii uchastnika pokhoda)* (Peking: Tipografiia Uspenskogo monastyrja pri Russkoi dukhovnoi missii, 1921) (GARF f. R-5873 [I. I. Serebrennikov], op. 1, d. 8, ll. 2–2ob.). For the publication of this

and casualties, the retreat of the Orenburg and Ural Cossacks from their native regions was the most costly and tragic of all the White retreats.

On 1 December, the Reds occupied Semipalatinsk while units of the Orenburg Army retreated to Sergiopol', an area controlled by units of the self-styled Ataman Annenkov. Annenkov had managed to concentrate virtually all power in the Semirech'e region by 1919.⁴⁷ Despite Kolchak's orders, Annenkov had refused to move west with his division to the key White Eastern Front during the critical moment in summer 1919, and instead continued to fight against local peasant insurgents. In October, to commemorate the victory over the Semirech'e peasantry, despite his lack of cooperation in the key 1919 battles, Kolchak presented Annenkov with the Order of St. George, Fourth Class, and promoted him to major general. After the liquidation of the Cherkassk defense, Annenkov led the fight against units of the Red Army's Semirechensk front, capturing the cities of Kopal and Dzharkent. In December 1919, the Whites formed a Separate Semirechensk Army in the region, numbering 7,200 troops and 6 field guns; many Semirechensk Cossacks joined this military force as well. While in Semirech'e, Annenkov had the status of a local prince who obeyed central authorities only if it was in his interest.

The Annenkov troops were hostile toward the retreating remnants of Dutov's Separate Orenburg Army, and shamelessly stole from these men, despite their ragged and hungry condition; there were even armed clashes between the two groups.⁴⁸ At the start of January 1920, all remaining units of the Orenburg Army were brought together into a separate "Ataman Dutov" detachment commanded by Major General Andrei Stepanovich Bakich and incorporated into the Separate Semirechensk Army.⁴⁹ But by January–March 1920, the Whites had to abandon the entire region under increasing Red pressure and crossed into western China. White Semirech'e was approaching its demise. On 27 March, the Bakich detachment crossed into Chinese territory.⁵⁰ That same day, Colonel Aleksei Aleksandrovich Asanov, director of supply for the Separate Semirechensk Army, switched to the Red side and issued a general surrender order for the entire army. This convinced many units to lay

rare text, see A. V. Ganin, *Chernogorets na russkoi sluzhbe: General Bakich* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2004), 205–26.

⁴⁷ V. A. Gol'tsev, *Ataman Annenkov* (Almaty: Globus, 2006) is an idealized biography.

⁴⁸ Arkhiv Doma russkogo zarubezh'ia im. A. I. Solzhenitsyna f. 1 (Vserossiiskaia memuarnaia biblioteka), op. 3, AV-14, l. 41 (diary of Orenburg Cossack officer A. O. Pridannikov).

⁴⁹ Order to the Separate Orenburg Army no. 3, 6 January 1920 (GARF f. R-5873, op. 1, d. 6, l. 100).

⁵⁰ Ganin, *Chernogorets na russkoi sluzhbe*.

down their arms. Continuation of the struggle in Semirech'ë became a point-less sacrifice. Altogether, an estimated 15,000 soldiers and officers from detachments commanded by Annenkov, Bakich, and Dutov, with around 5,000 civilian refugees, crossed the border of Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). Most of Annenkov's units left for China, though a portion later found itself in the Russian Far East.

The efforts of the Siberian Cossacks peaked in 1919. That spring, many joined the Combined Cossack Corps under Major General Viacheslav Ivanovich Volkov. The Siberian Cossacks successfully took part in the Tobol'sk-Petropavlovsk operations, which unfolded on host lands, but their attitude toward the wider anti-Bolshevik movement mirrored that of other Cossack forces: they did not want to fight beyond the borders of their native land. Remnants of Siberian Cossack formations took part in the Siberian Frozen Campaign, were transferred to the Transbaikal region and the Far East, and then went into emigration and exile.

The fight against Red partisans in the Far East continued with mixed success during 1919–22. Kolchak was ultimately unable to crush the separatism of local atamans. The Far East atamans did not provide a single unit to fight on the Eastern Front. All Kolchak could do was to flatter the atamans by promoting them to meaningless high ranks, and use their forces in anti-partisan operations behind the lines. In summer 1919, White forces were able to establish a stable front in the Transbaikal region, but several Cossack units nevertheless switched sides due to partisan agitation. Cossacks from two squadrons of the First Transbaikal Cossack Regiment beat their officers and joined the enemy. In response, Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov, a Cossack leader of partial Buriat ancestry, ordered execution on the spot for any of these rebellious Cossack units. In fall 1919, the Cossacks, supported by Japanese forces, launched a massive raid against the Transbaikal Red partisans. Local battlefield successes, however, did not lead to a substantive change in the overall situation. In fall 1920, the Whites retreated east from Transbaikal. Fighting against partisans in the enormous territory of the Far East was incredibly difficult for the small White forces. On taking control, the Reds experienced this same problem: White Cossack detachments managed to launch raids from Chinese territory into the Transbaikal region until the mid-1920s.

The eastern Cossack hosts tied their fate to the White armies and fought in the Civil War until the end of 1922, joining the Whites in the Siberian Frozen Campaign and the struggle for the Transbaikal and Primor'ë regions. A certain core of Cossacks was implacably opposed to the Reds (in the Orenburg Host, for example, no more than 30 percent). Those Cossacks took part in the anti-Bolshevik struggle through all its stages, fought heroically, and were ultimately forced to emigrate (to give an approximate number would

require calculating the total number of Cossacks who stayed permanently outside the borders of Soviet Russia). These individuals experienced the most difficult and tragic fate. At the same time, in the Cossack hosts of the Far East, many wished to leave the Cossack estate and adopt a peasant lifestyle, thus strengthening the pro-Bolshevik attitudes in the region. The majority of Far Eastern Cossacks took a passive stance during 1920–22, one of the leading reasons for the defeat of the White insurgents in their fight against the troops of the People's Revolutionary Army of the Far Eastern Republic. Ultimately, the leadership of the Far East region liquidated the Ussuri Cossack Host at the end of 1922.

Peasant-Cossack Insurgency after the White Defeat

In 1920–21, a massive, spontaneous peasant-Cossack uprising began in South Russia, the Urals, and Siberia. The precise Cossack share in this is very difficult to determine. The initial cause for this rebellion was dissatisfaction with the policies of War Communism, especially grain seizures (*prodrazverstka*) and, later, the food tax (*prodnalog*). The insurgency was aided by the Cossacks' centuries-long practice of rapid military self-organization and mobilization, as well as the availability of weapons in many Cossack regions. It was a desperate and doomed struggle. The officer corps of the Cossack hosts had been decimated. Its best members were dead, fighting alongside the Whites, living in emigration, or languishing in Soviet prisons and prison camps. In their absence, the stanitsy were led by petty officers or ordinary Cossacks, who lacked sufficient military experience or administrative skill to fight against a regular army.

It is important to note that the insurgency did not come to a halt after the more moderate New Economic Policy was introduced in 1921. The insurgency was therefore not simply economic but political in nature. The rebels lacked sufficient weapons and ammunition, organization, and qualified commanders. Their actions were local, without expectation of any assistance from outside. Desperate Cossacks and peasants nevertheless took up the fight.⁵¹ The famous Don and Kuban' insurgent armies, operating in the Lower Volga, the Urals, and Siberia, made up of detachments led by Kirill Trofimovich Vakulin, Aleksandr Vasil'evich Sapozhkov, Iakov Grigor'evich Lukonin, Okhrani-

⁵¹ V. P. Danilov and T. Shanin, eds., *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Povolzh'e, 1919–1922 gg: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002); V. I. Shishkin, ed., *Sibirskaiia Vandeia: Dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Demokratiia, 2000–01); A. A. Kurenyshev, *Krest'ianskie voenno-politicheskie organizatsii Rossii: Povstanchestvo, 1918–1922 gg.* (Moscow: Sputnik+, 2010); N. S. Shibanov, *Zelenaia voina: Istoricheskie ocherki* (Cheliabinsk: Mezhraionnaia tipografiia, 1997); Shuldiakov, *Gibel' Sibirskogo kazach'ego voiska*, vol. 2.

uk-Cherskii, as well as the Cossack insurgent army of Siberian esaul Dmitrii Iakovlevich Shishkin, and the People's Division led by Junior Ensign Semen Grigor'evich Tokarev and Junior Esaul Aleksandr Afanas'evich Gnoevykh.

At the end of 1920, more than 5,000 Cossacks were involved in the insurgent movement in the Don, and in the fall of 1921, more than 7,500 were active in Kuban'. The overall number of insurgents in the North Caucasus Military District (the Don and Kuban'-Black Sea region and Stavropol' and Terek provinces) reached 23,000 in August 1921.⁵² These movements were so popular that the Reds created false-flag detachments to combat them, though not always with the results that the Bolsheviks desired. The Bolsheviks also took hostages from the stanitsy, and undercover Cheka operatives joined Cossack detachments. According to incomplete accounts, more than 3,000 people were shot for assisting the insurgents during the brief period from late September to November 1921. Insurgent activity was seasonal, but repressions did not immediately bring an end to the rebellion. Violence continued until 1925, but by that point the insurgency was substantially smaller in scale and had transformed from an ideological struggle for rights into ordinary banditry.

During the initial stage of civil strife in 1918, when the White armies were still embryonic, the Cossacks played a colossal role, and gave the Whites significant advantages, especially in terms of providing well-prepared strategic cavalry with inestimable importance in conditions of mobile warfare. The percentage of Cossacks in the White armies of South Russia was quite high: according to P. N. Krasnov's data, the Volunteer Army had 35,500 Kuban' Cossacks and 7,500 volunteers.⁵³ The famous "colored" regiments of the Volunteer Army were 65 percent Cossack at the beginning of 1919.⁵⁴ According to documentation from October 1919, the AFSR was 32 percent Don Cossack and 12 percent Kuban' Cossack. By 5 January 1920, Cossacks made up 61 percent of army rank and file in the AFSR—49,662 of the 81,506 officers and lower ranks.⁵⁵ In comparison with all other estates, the Cossacks made up the largest share of those involved in the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

However, while the majority of Cossacks were implacable opponents of Bolshevism, they were primarily interested in defending the territory of their native hosts, as shown by the fact that during both advances and retreats they avoided military operations unrelated to this singular goal. Many rank-and-

⁵² N. V. Kratova, "Povstancheskoe dvizhenie v severo-zapadnoi chasti Kavkaza i Predkavkaz'ia (1920–1922 gg.)" (Candidate's diss., Rostovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2004).

⁵³ P. N. Krasnov, "Vsevelikoe voisko donskoe," *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii* 5 (1922): 257.

⁵⁴ R. G. Gagkuev et al., eds., *Markov i markovtsy* (Moscow: Posev, 2001), 447.

⁵⁵ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, 3: 691.

file Cossacks expressed a lack of interest in fighting for “peasant interests,” a phenomenon linked to pro-Bolshevik sentiments among neighboring peasants as well as fear for the fate of families in the stanitsy. The Cossack hosts lacked leaders able to control and direct the greater part of the population. White leaders were also unable to do this, which contributed greatly to the defeat of the White movement. The Cossacks could have been an effective force with strict adherence to directives issued by a centralized command. In reality, the Cossack hosts during the Civil War period operated as semi-independent autonomous republics, following orders only if and when they wanted to do so.

Ultimately, the Cossack alternative during the Civil War turned out to be unsustainable. The majority of the Cossack atamans who, in theory, expressed the will of the Cossack population, were unimpressive. The position of the Cossacks themselves was unenviable. Many memoirists noted that without strong control from the center, the Cossacks devolved into a lawless mob. In this instance, they resembled the Cossacks during the Time of Troubles of the 17th century.

The Red Cossack movement was relatively small. The main organ of Cossack administration under the Bolshevik Central Executive Committee was a Cossack department. Red Cossack leaders included Don Cossacks Aleksei Ivanovich Avtonomov and Filipp Kuz'mich Mironov, Kuban' Cossack Ivan Lukich Sorokin, and Orenburg officers and brothers Nikolai Dmitrievich and Ivan Dmitrievich Kashirin. Only a handful of former Cossack officers served in the Red Army. One would expect that with the defeat of White armies in Cossack regions, large numbers of Cossack officers and soldiers would have joined the Red side, at the very least in hopes of pardon for their ostensible crimes against the Bolsheviks. Captured Cossacks did substantially augment the Red cavalry during summer 1920. Unfortunately, an accurate estimate of the social composition of Soviet forces during the Civil War is not possible. Don Cossacks joined the Fourth Cavalry Division of the First Cavalry Army; the Sixth Division was drawn from Stavropol', Astrakhan', and Smolensk; captured troops of Denikin's forces and residents of Kuban' and the North Caucasus joined what later became the Fourteenth Cavalry Division, organized in Maikop and Taganrog in spring 1920.⁵⁶

Some units fought well for the Bolsheviks. In the fall of 1919, the Separate Orenburg Cossack Brigade commanded by Colonel Filipp Arkhipovich Bogdanov, with 1,500 cavalry and 80 officers, surrendered to the Reds. Later Bogdanov and others who had surrendered fought against Vrangeli's army and the Basmachi insurgents of Central Asia. Bogdanov himself was

⁵⁶ N. S. Prisiazhnyi, *Pervoia konnaia armiia na Pol'skom fronte v 1920 godu* (Rostov-na-Donu: Izdatel'stvo Rostovskogo universiteta, 1992), 20–21.

subsequently awarded the Order of the Red Banner. However, most Cossacks captured by the Reds remained anti-Bolshevik, and were prone to treason or desertion. During the Soviet-Polish War, Red Cossacks often switched to the Polish side after killing or arresting their commanders and commissars. Sometimes, entire units joined the enemy. There were two recorded instances of mass desertion by troops of the First Cavalry Army. On 31 May 1920, three squadrons from the Fourteenth Cavalry Division, a force dominated by Don Cossacks, joined the Poles, and on the night of 21 July, the Kuban' Regiment of Aleksandr Markovich Osadchii also switched to the Polish side.⁵⁷ The Sixth Cavalry Division also had almost entirely disintegrated by the end of the Polish campaign and required extreme measures to restore discipline.

The Bolsheviks sought to use the Cossacks to further their own interests. The fate of Filipp Mironov, one of the most charismatic leaders of the Red Cossacks, is instructive. Mironov was a Don Cossack officer who had been dishonorably discharged from the army for agitation against the tsarist regime during the 1905 Russian Revolution, an almost unheard-of crime within the officer corps. During the First World War, Mironov renewed his military career, rose to the rank of *starshina* (lieutenant colonel), and even received a Golden Sword of St. George for bravery in early 1917. Politically, Mironov was close to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, but after the Bolshevik coup decided to join the Reds. By May 1918, he was already fighting against Don Army units. He was awarded the Order of the Red Banner on 28 September 1918. Having a Cossack leader on their side was beneficial to the Bolsheviks, encouraging other Cossacks to join their ranks, but despite Mironov's loyal and heroic actions on behalf of the new regime, suspicion and distrust ultimately carried the day. Mironov did not always follow orders, and strongly criticized the Bolsheviks' anti-Cossack policies. Mironov commanded the Special Don Cavalry Corps from June 1919 onwards, but was arrested in September for insubordination on orders from Trotskii and sentenced to death. The Bolshevik Central Committee rescinded this sentence, and in September 1920, Mironov was placed in command of the Second Cavalry Army, which fought against the Whites in Crimea. On 25 November 1920, Mironov received an "Honorary Revolutionary Weapon," the Red Army's highest military award, and in early 1921 became the Red Army's main cavalry inspector. The Bolsheviks, however, no longer needed him. Mironov was denounced, arrested and, on 2 April 1921, shot by a guard in Moscow's Butyr'skaia prison, having exhausted

⁵⁷ Ibid., 42–43.

his usefulness to the Bolsheviks.⁵⁸ Boris Mokeevich Dumenko, another Red Cossack leader (though not born a Cossack) suffered a similar fate.

Despite the intensity of the struggle against the Bolsheviks and the courage displayed by many Cossacks in battle, the Cossack hosts lost the war. In military and economic terms, the Cossacks were handicapped by the lack of infantry, insufficient weapons and ammunition, irregular supplies, the constant superiority of the enemy in both numbers and resources, and the huge size of the theater of military operations, which greatly impeded the formation of effective masses of cavalry to launch large-scale strikes or raid the Red rear. Additional handicaps included the peripheral location of the Cossack regions, and the concomitant lack of a developed railroad system, which hindered the creation of a well-supplied base in rear areas, and adversely impacted armaments production. Mistakes by some Cossack generals also played a role.

Political and social reasons for the Cossack defeat included the lack of a broad, national political perspective among Cossack leaders during the Civil War and the Cossack leadership's efforts to remain detached from White military command; in many cases Cossack atamans opposed the Whites altogether, often with the encouragement of outside powers, including both the newly created border states and interventionist great powers. Organizationally, Cossack atamans were unable to keep mobilized or self-mobilized Cossacks at the front for as long as necessary, and could not enforce strict discipline or prevent them from deserting. Furthermore, the low level of political consciousness among most Cossacks, exhaustion from many years of war (some Cossacks had been fighting since 1914), tensions with non-Cossack inhabitants of their regions, Cossack concern for their families in the stanitsy, and their eagerness to fight the Bolsheviks only within their host borders all help to explain Cossack defeat.

The Cossacks provided only a segment of their forces in the nationwide struggle against the Reds but allowed the White movement to use their territory as a base of operations. Prior to the creation of a large Red Army, the unique features of the Cossack population gave the Whites an undeniable advantage over their enemies and became one of the main reasons for the successes of the White movement in 1919. However, unlike the Reds, the Whites could not capitalize on these advantages to the fullest extent to create mass armies, which, in the end, made their defeat inevitable.

The Cossacks were victims of their own lack of foresight. At the end of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks liquidated the Cossacks as a social group, and the leading representatives of this estate were either killed in battle or forced into

⁵⁸ On Mironov, see Shanin and Danilov, *Filipp Mironov*; E. F. Losev, *Mironov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1991); R. A. Medvedev and S. P. Starikov, *Zhizn' i gibel' Filippa Kuz'micha Mironova* (Moscow: Patriot, 1989).

exile. The legislative elimination of the Cossack estate occurred by means of a 1920 Executive Committee decree that extended the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic's laws concerning land to Cossack territories. In that same year, government organs created under the RSFSR Constitution began operating in Cossack regions. Many Cossacks who joined the Reds subsequently suffered from repressions. One of the consequences of the civilian conflict and anti-Cossack policies was thus the spiritual and physical destruction of the Cossack estate, and the assimilation of its few remaining members into other social groups.

Translated by Philip Skorokhodov