

**MILITARY AFFAIRS IN RUSSIA'S GREAT WAR AND  
REVOLUTION, 1914–1922**

**BOOK 5: THE WIDER WAR, STRATEGY, PLANNING AND  
LEADERSHIP, 1914–22**

EDITED BY

JOHN W. STEINBERG

MARIA CARLSON

ANTHONY J. HEYWOOD

ALEX MARSHALL

DAVID MACLAREN McDONALD

**Bloomington, Indiana, 2024**

---



## The Russian Army and the Suppression of the Central Asian Revolt, 1916–17

Andrei V. Ganin

On 25 June 1916, Emperor Nicholas II signed a decree authorizing the conscription of non-Russian males between the ages of 19 and 43 and residing within the Russian Empire to work on the system of defensive fortifications and military communications in the active duty army's frontline areas. As documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicate, rumors that the authorities were preparing to mobilize indigenous peoples—not for labor, but for military service at the front—had begun circulating mysteriously among the population in early June.<sup>1</sup> Now the decree confirmed that, with some exceptions, the indigenous male populations of Siberia, the Steppe Region (Kazakhstan), Turkestan, and the Caucasus were subject to mobilization for war work in the rear: the first wave of mobilization would include men between the ages of 19 and 31.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the implementation of this measure began immediately. For example, on that same day, 25 June, the military governor of Russian Turkestan held a meeting of his Special Council to initiate the process of local labor mobilization, and the formal order was issued across Turkestan on 8 July. By February 1917 some 123,000 individuals had been sent off to provide war labor in the rear.

The emperor's decree came as a shock because, although the burden placed on certain non-Russian natives was relatively light compared to the demands placed on the Russian population, some indigenous populations had previously been exempted from every form of national service, including mobilization for labor. Subsequent developments—a determined armed revolt

---

<sup>1</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA) f. 1292 (Upravlenie po delam konskoi povinnosti MVD), op. 1, d. 1933, l. 1 (Manuscript draft report by the deputy minister of internal affairs, July 1916).

<sup>2</sup> I. M. Kozybaev and M. K. Kozybaev, comps., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: Khrestomatiia* (Almaty: Atamura, 1994), 36–37.

in the Steppe Region and Turkestan, and much smaller-scale unrest in other regions such as the Tomsk governorate<sup>3</sup>—revealed the error of this measure, especially at the height of summer agricultural and harvesting operations of cotton and hay. This chapter focuses on the army's role in the suppression of the revolt, looking in turn at each of the severely affected areas in Turkestan and the Steppe Region.<sup>4</sup>

By 1917 there were 542,508 Russians living in Turkestan; they formed 9.1 percent of the population and were unarmed and nonbelligerent. The indigenous population numbered some seven million, of whom 3,332,200 were male. The authorities intended to conscript 8 percent of these. The originally announced quotas of conscripts in Turkestan differed from those that would be stipulated later. Specifically, the authorities decided to curtail the number of conscripts in Fergana region (*oblast'*) so that enough workers would be available to bring in the cotton harvest. Since the overall number of those to be mobilized was not curtailed, heavier quotas were imposed on the other regions. Given the force of the local population's protests in those areas, the authorities were subsequently forced to reduce the number of conscripts in nearly all provinces.<sup>5</sup>

The central authorities originally planned to conscript 230,000 men in the Steppe Region and 250,000 in Turkestan. However, the local Russian administrations understood that the unexpected conscription would place moral and practical burdens on the native population. On 2 July the council of the governor-general of Turkestan requested that the region's chief commander, Infantry General M. R. Erofeev (1857–1941), reduce the number of conscripts from 250,000 to 200,000. An initial decision was made to reduce the number to 220,000, and the number was finally reduced to 200,000 in August. But there was no similar reduction in the Steppe Region.

From the beginning, the categories of persons exempted from the draft were fairly extensive. Excluded were gentry, representatives of the native (non-Russian) administration, clergy, teachers and students in secondary and higher institutions of learning, paramedics, translators, vaccinators, clerks, elected officials, civil servants, and herders and drovers of livestock con-

<sup>3</sup> N. E. Bekmakhanova, comp., *Kazach'i voiska Aziatskoi Rossii v XVIII–nachale XX veka (Astrakhanskoe, Orenburgskoe, Sibirskoe, Semirechenskoe, Ural'skoe): Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2000), 397.

<sup>4</sup> About the revolt generally, see A. V. Piaskovskii et al., eds., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1960); Khabib Tursunov, *Vosstanie 1916 g. v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> T. R. Ryskulov and L. V. Lesnaia, eds., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kirgizstane: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Sotsekgiz, 1937), 19–20; Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda*, 50.

scripted for military service.<sup>6</sup> Deferments from conscription were granted as necessary. The labor that the native population provided would be paid for from public funds: conscripted workers would receive wages of 1 ruble per diem as well as state-supplied rations. Individuals who could not be deployed for work in their native clothing and footwear were to receive an allowance of up to 30 rubles to obtain appropriate apparel.

The native population's attitude toward service in the Russian army and conscription for labor in the rear was not uniformly negative. For example, the Tekin Horse Regiment, recruited from the Turkmen tribesmen of the Trans-Caspian province, distinguished itself in battles on the Southwestern Front. The Tekin (Teke) tribes, unlike the Turkmen Iomuds (Yomuds, Yomuts), unquestioningly obeyed the order to mobilize workers. Some indigenous populations of Semirech'ie province had even voluntarily expressed a desire to go to the front in 1914–15.<sup>7</sup> In Aulie-Ata county (*uezd*) (Syr-Dar'ia province), the military-engineering organization had recruited some 10,000 men for labor in the rear even before mobilization was announced in summer 1916.<sup>8</sup>

As soon as the mobilization order was announced, rumors began to fly—native peoples were being conscripted to fight at the front, they would be forced to dig trenches between two warring armies, everyone would be killed. The local authorities showed their worst side in implementing the order. Age records were compiled arbitrarily, an undifferentiated approach to the call-up failed to take into consideration the distance recruits had to travel to the collection point; the provisions of the decree were not made clear to the population. The rumor spread that the decree had actually been invented by local officials, while half-literate translators mistakenly led people to believe that the order was in preparation for mobilization to fight at the front.<sup>9</sup> Soon young men of conscription age began to gather together in bands of deserters.

Because of the difficulties involved in the mobilization effort, the deadline was moved to 15 September. Moreover, the emperor himself now considered that the measure he had earlier approved regarding the conscription

---

<sup>6</sup> Piaskovskii et al., eds., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 28–29.

<sup>7</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (RGVIA) f. 2003 (Shtab Verkhovnogo glavnokomanduiushchego—Stavka), op. 2, d. 734, l. 12 (Note from the Department for the Organization and Service of Troops at the Main Directorate of the General Staff [GUGSh] to the duty general at Stavka, 31 March 1915).

<sup>8</sup> Ryskulov and Lesnaia, *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kirgizstane*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> "K istorii vosstaniia kirgiz v 1916 g.," with introduction by A. Chuloshnikov, *Krasnyi arkhiv* (Moscow-Leningrad), no. 3 (16) (1926): 62, <http://istmat.info/node/31114> (accessed 31 March 2020).

of native populations was ill-considered and hasty.<sup>10</sup> At a meeting on 10 July, the indigenous population of the Dzarkent district (Semirech'e province) decided they would disobey the order. On 13 July, Dungans who were subject to conscription began an exodus into western China. The fugitives threatened remaining fellow-tribesmen in an attempt to bring them to their side. Violent unrest was also observed in Syr-Dar'ia province, where local residents campaigned against conscription.

Several different factors contributed to the local population's discontent in the various parts of Turkestan and the Steppe Region. In Semirech'e, which had been aggressively settled by Russian immigrants, hatred of the Russians was the most pronounced factor, particularly in connection with the land question. In the Steppe Region, where there were very few Russians outside urban areas, the anti-Russian nature of the revolt was less pronounced. A second factor was the small number of Russian administrators, troops, and police personnel serving in the area. The enormous Turgai province, for example, had only 13 police officers per district—in spite of the large number of administrative exiles and prisoners of war quartered there. Other factors included the perpetration of abusive acts and the resettlement of refugees from the western borderlands, most in wretched circumstances, in Turkestan. Undoubtedly, elements of chance and mob psychology also played a role in the initial stages of the revolt.

The indigenous population gradually shifted from passive to active protest. Initially they expressed demands that the administration hand over the family lists or made an effort to destroy them.<sup>11</sup> Throngs of local residents participated in these disturbances. Few in number, the Russian authorities could not effectively deal with the mob violence that was occurring across the vast territory.

On 17 July the Turkestan military district was placed under martial law. Adjutant General A. N. Kuropatkin (1848–1925), then commander of the Northern Front, would duly be named governor-general of Turkestan on 22 July; he was a brilliant expert on the region and a veteran of the Russian conquest of Turkestan. By 21 July, even before Kuropatkin's appointment, the authorities

---

<sup>10</sup> Piaskovskii et al., eds., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> "Family lists" (*posemeinye spiski*) were documents kept on extended families by local and regional authorities. They served as a combination of genealogy and census as new information was added to family lists over the course of decades. Tracking primarily the males in the family, the lists recorded births, deaths, marriages, relationships, service, migration, place of residence, employment, and other information. Family lists were kept for peasant, merchant, artisan, and non-Russian (i.e., Jewish, Muslim, indigenous) populations. Such lists would contain the birth dates of all the men in the family and could be used to identify those eligible to be mobilized.

had adopted a plan to reinforce the garrisons located at collection points. Because the local forces were inadequate to deal with the unrest that had already begun, the minister of war ordered the dispatch to Turkestan of 14.5 infantry battalions, 33 Cossack *sotni* (sotnias), 42 pieces of artillery, and 69 machine guns. In the event of active and armed resistance, heads of detachments were given permission to use any and all measures, up to and including executions and the destruction of resisting *auls* (Central Asian villages).

The disturbances bore a distinctly religious character in Samarkand and Fergana provinces, where Muslim “fanaticism” had put down deep roots. In the region of Dzhizak (Jizzakh; Samarkand province), insurgents destroyed the railroad, burned bridges in the sector between the towns of Dzhizak and Obruchevo, and cut the telegraph wires. On 13 July, revolt began in Dzhizak. Colonel B. N. Rukin, district chief, and Staff-Captain P. D. Zotoglov, its police chief, were killed as they attempted to subdue the crowd. The disturbances in Dzhizak were led by representatives of both clerical and secular hereditary elites—the sectarian leaders Nazyr Khodzha Ishan, who was proclaimed a bey (chieftain), Mukhtar Khodzha Ishan, and the prominent landowner Abdurakhman Abdudzhabarov Dzhevachi.

The insurgency was, therefore, not directed at restructuring or destroying the existing hierarchy; on the contrary, the uprising bore an ethnoconfessional character with separatist aims. The conspirators asserted that “the Germans have trounced the Russians, and so they don’t have an army to come to the rescue.”<sup>12</sup> One of the slogans used by the insurgents expressed the idea of *gazavata*, or “holy war” against the infidels, which was expressed in practice in an attempt to exterminate the Russians. The religious nature of the insurgency and the exceptional cruelty of the insurgents were a distinctive feature of the upheaval in Samarkand province. In Dzhizak district a total of 76 Russians were killed (other sources place the death toll at 88), among them women and children. As Kuropatkin would write to the minister of war, Infantry General D. S. Shuvaev (1854–1937), on 4 January 1917, “the wild mob, run amok, felt itself to be in no danger, and only the arrival of a punitive detachment put an end to this bloody violence against completely innocent Russians.”<sup>13</sup>

On 14 July 1916 two batteries and a detachment under Col. Vladislavlev (consisting of two companies of the 732nd Saratov Police Corps State Militia, four artillery pieces from the 32nd Light Artillery Battery under Lieutenant Colonel Kvashin, and a platoon of sappers) arrived in Samarkand. The detachment was sent on to Dzhizak. On the same day, a sotnia from the 4th Orenburg Cossack Regiment moved from Kerki to Dzhizak via Samarkand.

<sup>12</sup> Piaskovskii et al., eds., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 128.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

On 15 July a half-sotnia of Orenburg Cossacks and three reserve companies (210 men) arrived in Samarkand. On 16 July a punitive detachment (infantry company) arrived in Dzhizak from Tashkent, led by Lieutenant Colonel P. P. Ivanov, whom the opposition press would nickname "Ivanov of Dzhizak" for his resoluteness in putting down the revolt.<sup>14</sup>

Before long the Dzhizak detachment was placed under the command of Colonel Krasnoartsev, and Lieutenant Colonel Ivanov took charge of all military forces in the Dzhizak region. Lieutenant Colonel D. N. Vodop'ianov of the Heir and Tsesarevich's Tashkent Cadet Corps became the detachment's chief of staff as of 22 July. Two militia units and four Cossack sotnias were withdrawn from points on the Afghanistan border and sent to reinforce major targets. In all, twelve companies, three sotnias, and three-quarters of a company of sappers, together with six pieces of artillery, fought the insurgents and alleviated the situation of the Russian population. Government forces then began to pursue the insurgents, chasing them into the mountains. On 19 July, 12 enlisted men from a reserve regiment of the 7th Siberian Rifles (apparently led by Lieutenant Colonel Shirokov, assistant to the district chief) were attacked by 1,500 insurgents on the Great Mitan Road, leading from Kata-Kurgan to Mitan. The regiment repelled the attack and began to pursue the enemy, killing a native tribesman and a horse.

In July the local population was forbidden to use the railways in order to prevent the insurgents from coordinating their efforts. The lack of adequate cavalry resources then available to the authorities created serious difficulties, since the deployment of cavalry was the most effective means of suppressing insurgency over an enormous territory. A mounted infantry was formed to enhance the ability to move quickly. By 25 July the revolt in Samarkand province had been suppressed. Detachments sent into the mountainous areas saved 56 women and children who had been abducted. From this point on, no further mass disturbances by the native population were recorded, and the date of 19 September was set for the departure of the first echelons of conscripted workers from the province.

On 11 July unrest began in Tashkent, Syr-dar'ia province. Local residents attacked the police headquarters in the native part of town, and the police officers repelled the attack with the aid of their revolvers. Within half an hour, a company from the Tashkent School for Warrant Officers rescued the besieged men. In the end, 11 local residents were killed. The leaders of the insurgents in Tashkent had suggested to the Afghan emir that he speak out against Russia, but the emir did not concur. At the end of July, a battalion of the 2nd Siberian

---

<sup>14</sup> After the Bolshevik Revolution Ivanov became a prominent figure in the White movement and military ataman of the Siberian Cossack Army; he is better known under the name Ivanov-Rinov.

Rifle Reserve Regiment, manned by young soldiers, arrived to suppress the revolt. A detachment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel A. I. Afanas'ev, assistant to the Tashkent district chief, produced the desired results. This success was directly attributable to the severity of its commander, who ordered that buildings belonging to the leaders of the revolt be burned down. Meanwhile, German and Turkish agents were detained in Aulie-Atinsk district. Then on 16 September a detachment of 65 men and 3 officers were met by a horde of some 3,000 Kazakhs in the Amankul Valley, 70 versts (46.4 miles) north of Aulie-Ata. The insurgents attacked the detachment three times, but each time they were repulsed by volley fire. The district was soon subdued, and the instigators of the revolt were betrayed. The first echelons of workers left Tashkent district on 18 September and Aulie-Atinsk district on 9 October.

The revolt in Fergana province was limited in scope, primarily because an adequate number of Russian troops was stationed there. The 6th Orenburg Cossack Regiment under the command of Colonel K. V. Bobrov and the 4th Ural Cossack Independent Reserve Sotnia were deployed in the province. Nonetheless, even here insurgents murdered several representatives of the native (i.e., non-Russian) administration in June 1916. The insurgents also killed their own pro-Russian fellow-tribesmen and robbed the rich without regard to nationality.

Events surrounding the revolt in Semirech'e province stood out for their particular brutality. A significant number of Russians, approximately 200,000, lived in the province; nevertheless, as in most other areas, few troops were stationed there. On the whole, general panic and self-mobilization on both sides played a major negative role in Semirech'e. In 1915 the authorities had disarmed the Russian settlers and dispatched 7,500 Berdan rifles to the active-duty army.<sup>15</sup> Hence the settlers now found themselves defenseless before the steppe-dwellers.<sup>16</sup> As early as 10 July, two days after the mobilization order arrived, the Kazakhs of Dzharkent district held a meeting at which they resolved not to obey the order. On 13 July the Dungans began an exodus to western China (Xinjiang). Attacks on representatives of local authority started at the end of July. On 2 August the authorities proposed the organization of militias for the self-defense of the Russian population in rural areas, and on

---

<sup>15</sup> The Berdan rifle was standard issue in the Russian Army between 1870 and 1891, when it was replaced by the Mosin-Nagant rifle. After 1895 it became a military reserve weapon, but continued to be used for hunting and sport.

<sup>16</sup> P. G. Galuzo, *Vooruzhenie russkikh pereselentsev v Srednei Azii (istoricheskii ocherk)* (Tashkent: Izd. Sredneaziatskogo kommunisticheskogo universiteta im. V. I. Lenina, 1926), 65.

8 August they made the formation of such militias mandatory.<sup>17</sup> A foot patrol of 300 and a mounted patrol of 100 men were formed, while 160 Semirech'ė Cossacks from the reserves, consisting of two half-sotnias, were placed under arms. The civilian population was armed with one rifle for every 8–12 homesteads.

In effect, an ethnically motivated, local domestic war had begun in Semirech'ė. The Russian residents' plight was exacerbated by the absence from the region of much of the Russian male population, which had been mobilized and sent to the front. Rumors greatly exaggerating the true scale of events became a powerful catalyst for mutual hatreds. Among the reasons for the revolt in Semirech'ė were the determination of the Kazakhs to plunder Russian holdings, disagreements about land in connection with the proactive policy of Russian resettlement in the region, the tax burden, and the mullahs' activist propaganda. The question of whether or not German officers participated in plotting the revolt also came up repeatedly. In Przheval'sk district, the nomads' religious "fanaticism" compounded the situation.

On 6 August the revolt began in Atekinsk and Batbaevsk wards (*volosti*) in Pishpek [Bishkek] district; the next day it spread to Sarybagishevsk ward and Tokmak district. By 9 August the revolt had spread to Karkechinsk, Dzhumbal'sk, Kurmanzhodzinsk, Kochkorsk, and Abeil'dinsk wards. On the same day, Kazakhs attacked, looted, and burned the Russian village of Grigor'evka, forcing its residents to flee. The telegraph was also damaged.

The leader of the disturbances in the Chui Valley was Khan M[okush] Shabdanov. Two of his brothers commanded their own detachments. As in other locations, the insurgent movement in Semirech'ė was led by native kinship group elites—khans and manaps. Local leaders such as K[anat] Abukin, B[atyrkan] Nogoev, and K[okumbai] Chinin are well known. Their revolt was relatively organized: the *askers* (soldiers) had banners and uniform metal shields; they used a signaling system to convey information about government troop movements; and they installed weapons workshops in the mountain regions. This revolt was not antifeudal—the kinship group substratum that characterized the native population was unshakable, as is eloquently attested by the fact that in all of Semirech'ė not a single ward administrator or *manap* was killed.

The insurgents were armed with a variety of weapons. Some were trophies, captured from individual Russian soldiers, others were home-made. On 6–7 August, they successfully seized a poorly guarded transport carrying weapons. This gave them possession of an estimated 170 Berdan rifles and

<sup>17</sup> Ryskulov and Lesnaia, *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kirgizstane*, 28.

40,000 cartridges.<sup>18</sup> Three enlisted men were killed. The fact that the rebels had captured a relatively large (by local standards) arms shipment acted as a powerful stimulus to their fight against the Russians. The majority of insurgents were armed with flintlock and even matchlock rifles, Berdans, pikes, and axes mounted on long poles. The manaps received a portion of the money from the sale of weapons, thus profiting from the revolt. On the whole, however, the rebels were unable to hold their own in encounters with regular Russian army troops, despite outnumbering them by dozens and sometimes by hundreds of men.

Initially, the insurgents killed only those who resisted them, but before long they began to kill any and all Russians. Altogether, no fewer than 1,342 Russian men and 1,300 women (primarily immigrants) died at the hands of the insurgents; 684 individuals were wounded, and no less than 1,105 remained unaccounted for or were abducted by the Kazakhs; 969 homesteads were burned down. According to the available (if incomplete) data, the victims were distributed across the districts as follows: Pishpek district: 98 dead, 65 unaccounted for; Przheval'sk district (where there were practically no Russian troops): 2,179 killed, 1,299 unaccounted for; Dzharkent district: 32 dead, 20 unaccounted for; Vernyi district: 16 dead.<sup>19</sup> Among the dead were two bureaucrats, 12 officials from various government agencies, three officers, and 53 enlisted men, while 41 were wounded; 75 enlisted men were unaccounted for. There were several cases of significant losses of soldiers and officers: a warrant officer, 9 Cossacks, and 8 soldiers were killed in Naryn district; in August 1916, 24 Cossacks from the company of the Narynkol'sko-Charynsk district commander Captain M. Kravchenko were killed in the village of Karkara in Dzharkent district; and 6 Cossacks died in the vicinity of Dzhalanash. Also among the dead were 7 monks from the Sekul'skii monastery and representatives of the rural intelligentsia. Typically, the victims of the insurgents were subjected to torture.

The revolt also undermined the economic prosperity of the region's Russian population, as some 15,000 dessiatins (40,500 acres, 16, 390 hectares) of crop land, valued at 20,724,087 rubles, were destroyed. In the area of Tokmak alone, 72 Russian settlers were killed, 12 wounded, and 65 were unaccounted for; 600 houses and 356 small villages were burned down; and 12,000 sowed dessiatins (32,400 acres, 13,112 hectares) were destroyed, for a loss of

---

<sup>18</sup> Report by Kuropatkin to Nicholas II about the revolt in Turkestan and the measures to suppress it, 22 February 1917 (RGVIA f. 400 [Glavnyi shtab], op. 1, d. 4548, l. 3); Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 89, 347.

<sup>19</sup> Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 90; D. D. Zhunushaliev, "V epitsentre vosstaniia," in *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kyrgyzstane: Sbornik materialov nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 75-letiiu vosstaniia* (Bishkek: Ilim, 1993), 46.

approximately 500,000 rubles. On 10 August a Kirgiz revolt broke out in the Belovodsk section of Pishpek district and in Dzhamansartovsk, Tleuberdinsk, Bakinsk, and Taldybulaksk wards. The next day, Dungans in the village of Mariinskoe in Przheval'sk district rebelled. On 11 August, the Dungans slaughtered the residents of the village of Ivanitskoe. The population of the village of Kol'tsovka was also slaughtered. The survivors saved themselves by fleeing to Przheval'sk. On 12 August two officers died at the hands of Kirgiz insurgents—Cossack Lieutenant Velichko and Warrant Officer Kiselev. The bodies of Lieutenant Velichko and 7 Cossacks had been mutilated.<sup>20</sup>

When General Kuropatkin arrived in Tashkent on 8 August to assume his duties, his only option was to crush the revolt decisively. He had opposed the conscription of native populations for war work in the rear, and there was a hint of sympathy in his 18 August letter to Minister of War Shuvaev: "Over a period of 40 years we still have not succeeded in bringing the hearts of these simple but still primitive people closer to us."<sup>21</sup> But in view of the prevailing circumstances, there was no looking back.

It was in this spirit that the experienced governor general endorsed the example of General G. A. Kolpakovskii (1819–96), who had contributed greatly to Russia's conquest of Semirech'ë in the 19th century. Kuropatkin requested a Cossack brigade, two machine-gun squads, and a battery of horse artillery from the active-duty army for Semirech'ë, which duly allocated the 7th Orenburg and 9th Siberian Cossack Regiments, a Cossack battery, and two machine-gun squads equipped with Colt machine guns.<sup>22</sup> In addition, three-and-a-half militia units, seven companies from reserve rifle regiments, five Cossack sotnias, and fourteen mounted guns were moved into Semirech'ë from other parts of Turkestan. Kuropatkin sent these troops in three directions: to the region between Andizhan (Andijan) and the citadel at Naryn; to Cherniaev (Shimkent) and along the Pishpek post road to Tokmak; and along the railway to Semipalatinsk and beyond that to Sergiopol', Lepsinsk, and Vernyi (Alma Ata). He divided Semirech'ë into 17 military districts, and then suppressed the insurgency within each district. As of 11 August, field courts-martial were established in the detachments and in the district towns of Semirech'ë region. On 17 August Kuropatkin also reduced by 17,000 the number of men to be mobilized in Semirech'ë for work details. Shortly there-

---

<sup>20</sup> Telegram from Kuropatkin to Minister of Internal Affairs A. A. Khvostov, 23 August 1916 (RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, l. 244).

<sup>21</sup> Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 346.

<sup>22</sup> B. S. Suleimenov and B. V. Iakovlevich, *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kazakhstane (prichiny, kharakter, dvizhushchie sily)* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1977), 90.

after the dispatch of workers began, and the families of those sent off to work were provided for by district-level committees.

In July and August 1916 the mechanism of ethnic self-mobilization also took effect in Semirech'ë. The frightened and infuriated Russian population not only organized militias for self-defense but also responded to the violence in kind. For instance, they carried out a pogrom (the principal participants in which were women) against the Kirgiz population of Przheval'sk. On 12 August Kirgiz prisoners held in the Przheval'sk jail were shot as they tried to escape. Some 80 people died. The next day the peasants from the village of Belovodskoe responded to outrages carried out by native residents (mass murders and the abduction of women<sup>23</sup>) by killing 517 arrested Kirgiz who had participated in the insurgency. And during the transfer of arrested Kirgiz insurgents from Belovodsk to Pishpek, the militia killed 138 of them as they attempted to escape. As one official reported, "Lacking weapons, they struck with sticks and stones, stabbed with pitchforks, and eviscerated with sickles and scythes."<sup>24</sup> And like the rebels, the Russian population also engaged in looting. In short, the violence of the latter's response became so significant that Kuropatkin concluded: "the Kirgiz must be severely punished, but the mob law of the Russians must also be halted, or normal life will never be restored."<sup>25</sup>

Fighting spread out across the region, and some of the Russian punitive forces even crossed the border into western China to capture insurgents. Between 20 and 29 August the revolt began to subside. As many as 60,000 Kazakhs took to the *syrts*—mountainous plateaus—from which detachments of government forces tried to dislodge them. Driven back into the mountains, the natives suffered starvation, lost their cattle, and usually surrendered. Some 3,000 natives perished during the suppression of the revolt in Pishpek and Przheval'sk districts. According to some sources, 4,000 natives were killed across the whole of Semirech'ë and another 12,000 perished while fleeing to China, including those who had drowned or were shot by Chinese border patrols. Some 164,000 individuals fled to China, and by May 1917 some 70,000 refugees still remained there.

On 16 October Kuropatkin convened a meeting to review the outcomes of the suppression of the revolt in Semirech'ë. His master plan was to deport the

---

<sup>23</sup> Paul Nazaroff, *Hunted Through Central Asia*, trans. Malcolm Burr (Edinburgh, 1932; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 149.

<sup>24</sup> Ryskulov and Lesnaia, *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Kirgizstane*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> "Vosstanie 1916 g. v Srednei Azii," with lengthy introduction by P. Galuzo, *Krasnyi arkhiv: Istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow–Leningrad), no. 3 (34) (1929): 60 (includes part of "Iz dnevnika A. N. Kuropatkina), <http://istmat.info/node/35263> (accessed 31 March 2020).

indigenous populations from those territories where Russian blood had been shed. Thus, in particular, the meeting decided to deport the Kirgiz population from Pishpek and Przheval'sk districts, where the Russian inhabitants had suffered most, and for that purpose to create Naryn district. Ironically, several years later, during the Russian Civil War in Semirech'e, the former settlers generally supported the Reds; the Cossacks and nomads took the side of the Whites.

The situation in Trans-Caspian province in 1916 exhibited a number of distinctive features. The general attitude of the local Tekins was monarchistic, and they wholly supported the Russians. Russian-Tekin relations were based on mutual trust. The Russian relationship with the more warlike tribe of Turkmen Iomuds, however, was of a different character. Armed with Berdan and Mosin rifles, and led by Djunaid Khan (1857–1938), who would later gain fame as the leader of the Basmachi Movement, the Iomuds had rebelled against the Russian authorities at the start of 1916. And because the Iomuds paid tribute to both the Russian and Persian governments, any complications involving the Iomuds took on international significance. Indeed, according to some sources, the Ottoman intelligence organization *Teskilat-i Mahsusa* was present in the region;<sup>26</sup> eyewitnesses also noted activity by Turkish agents.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, other clans of Turkmen nomads—the Jafar Bai and the Ata Bai—joined the Iomuds.

To fight this rebellion the Russian authorities formed the Khivinskii detachment, consisting of three militia units and four light batteries. The struggle against the Iomuds continued over the entire course of 1916, with varying degrees of success. For instance, in July 1916 there was considerable unrest in the region. Generally, the disorders took on the character of brigand-style attacks on Russian settlements in the area of the Dzhurdzhan (Gorgan) River. For example, in early autumn 1916, four settlements were completely destroyed; others were badly damaged. The Russian population was placed under the Cossacks' protection. Worse still, one of the smaller columns of Russian troops had been forced to retreat. Reports noted the Turkmens' use of exploding bullets.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Kirill Kozubskii, "Pod kopytom," *Stanitsa: Gazeta Soiuza kazach'ikh voisk Rossii*, no. 2 (26) (1998): 24.

<sup>27</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. R-5881 (Kolleksiia ot-del'nykh dokumentov i memuarov emigrantov), op. 2, d. 227, l. 5 (P. I. Anoshkin, "Vosstanie sartov v Turkestane" [n. d.]).

<sup>28</sup> Assistant Governor General of Turkestan M. R. Erofeev to acting Minister of Internal Affairs A. D. Protopopov, 28 September 1916 (RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, l. 336).

Between mid-August and late September 1916 the nomadic Iomud tribes crossed into Persia. The Russian administration decided to use their exodus as a pretext to take over the fertile Astrabad (Esterabad) province in the neighboring state. In actual fact, a significant portion of Astrabad province was not populated by Persians, but served as a more or less neutral territory roamed by Turkmen nomads. A Russian commissariat had existed in the area since 1898, and the Russian settlers who had settled in this region complied with its authority. By November 1916 an increase in Iomud activism had become apparent in the area. They seized control of the Caspian coast, and the more powerful of their factions grew under the command of Baba-Klych, Shikhr-Khan Divedzhi, and Essen Khan. An Austrian spy, the Hungarian G. Szabo, was detained in the Atrek region with documents and a map in his possession.<sup>29</sup>

The Dzhurzhan expeditionary detachment formed for the subjugation of the refractory tribes was not formed until late October and November 1916. A sizeable formation in the regional context, by 24 November this expeditionary force consisted of 8,162 men and 3,937 horses under the command of Major General A. S. Madritov (1868–195?) of the General Staff, the military governor of Syr-Dar'ia province and a hero of the Russo-Japanese War. Actual combat operations took place on Persian territory. The plan of action expected that detachments would move simultaneously from three sides to surround the core of the Iomuds' nomadic encampment between the Atrek and Dzhurdzhan rivers to the north and south and the Chikinshliar–Astrabad road and the Kara-Kyr Range to the west and east. After the insurgency was suppressed, the plan was to use this armed force to reinforce the Caucasus Army, which was in a highly precarious situation. Once the Turkmen tribes had been subdued by late March 1917, Madritov turned the command of the detachment over to Brigadier General M. K. Marganiia (1859–?) and the withdrawal of troops began.

The events of February 1917 brought amnesty to the insurgents, and Madritov's expedition eventually came to be regarded as an act of brigandage. In August–September 1917 Djunaid Khan returned to Russia from Afghanistan with a transport of weapons. He declared a struggle for the "liberation of the Turkmen." Against the backdrop of the demoralized Russian army's reduction in strength, Turkestan once again became an arena of armed conflict, as the participants in the revolt of 1916–17 joined the Basmachi movement.

In the period between 18 September and 18 December 1916, 92,423 workers were dispatched from Turkestan to the military front zone; an additional 9,500 men were assigned directly to works in Central Asia. Thus some 123,000 workers were eventually mobilized—about half the number originally projected.

<sup>29</sup> Kuropatkin to Protopopov, 16 November 1916 (RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, l. 393).

**Table 1.** Total Casualties among Army and Police Personnel in Turkestan

Regions ( <i>oblasti</i> ) (of Turkestan)	Killed	Wounded	Unaccounted for
Fergana	—	1*; 6	—
Syr-Dar'ia	1	1	—
Samarkand	2*; 3	2	—
Semirech'e	4*; 52	41	75
Trans-Caspia	6	5	—
Astrabad province	1*; 17	2*; 9	2
Total	7*; 79	3*; 64	77

\* asterisks indicate officers

As for casualties, the total losses among the native population are unknown, but must have numbered many thousands. By contrast, the total number of Russian fatalities in Turkestan was around 4,000. The military losses incurred by 1 January 1917 consisted of 7 officers and 79 enlisted men killed, 3 officers and 64 enlisted men wounded, and 77 men missing. By 25 January, when the combat operations ended, the total losses were 97 dead, 86 wounded, and 76 unaccounted for.<sup>30</sup> These low figures reflect the insurgents' difficulty in resisting regular military forces. As a point of comparison, during the conquest of Turkestan in the second half of the 19th century the Russian army lost 105 men in Semirech'e region, 744 men in Syr-Dar'ia province (to include the Amu-Dar'ia section), 134 men in Fergana province, 811 men in Samarkand province, and 1,582 men in the Trans-Caspia province—3,376 men in all.

**Table 2.** Casualties among Russian and Native Administrative Officials in Turkestan

Region ( <i>oblast'</i> )	Russian officials killed	Native officials killed
Fergana	1	34
Syr-Dar'ia	1	7
Samarkand	3	—
Semirech'e	14	12
Trans-Caspia	1	—
Total	20	53

<sup>30</sup> Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 97.

**Table 3.** Casualties among the Russian population in Turkestan

Region ( <i>oblast'</i> )	Killed	Wounded
Fergana	1	2
Syr-Dar'ia	45	1
Samarkand	73	—
Semirech'ë	2,325 (or 2,642, depending on sources) killed; 1,384 unaccounted for	1,105
Trans-Caspia	?	?
Total	3,828 (or 4145)	1,111

The Russian civilian population suffered most in Semirech'ë, where the fewest Russian troops were posted beforehand. It suffered least where the fewest number of Russians lived—in the Steppe Region. This pattern encouraged Soviet historians to call the movement in the Steppe Region progressive and the disturbances in the other parts of Central Asia reactionary, when in fact the anti-Russian nature of the revolt was identical in both areas. In some regions the religious “fanaticism” of the Muslim population also formed part of this equation. That said, it transpired that the indigenous population did not know that their conscripted labor was to be remunerated. Once they had been informed of this fact, many changed their attitude toward mobilization.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of the insurgency in Turkestan, more than 9,000 farmsteads were ruined and several churches and hospitals destroyed. In all, 14.5 battalions, 33 Cossack sotnias, 42 pieces of artillery, and 69 machine guns were used to suppress the insurgents in Turkestan. By 20 December 1916, 201 individuals had been sentenced to death by military tribunals for having taken part in the insurgency on the territory of Turkestan, and this figure rose to 347 by 1 February 1917. Most of these sentences were subsequently mitigated, such that only 51 men were actually executed by February 1917. In a letter to Emperor Nicholas II on 22 February 1917, Kuropatkin explained: “Given that the main perpetrators were chieftains and natives whose direct involvement in the murders of Russians has been proven, I deemed it possible to commute the punishment for the ignorant masses among the guilty.”<sup>32</sup>

In the Steppe Region's Akmolinsk region, special mounted units were formed in all Siberian Cossack *stanitsas* (villages) that bordered the steppes. They consisted primarily of Cossacks who were retired, unfit for active duty, or under the age of 20. By 20 July these Cossack units had also been assigned

<sup>31</sup> Kuropatkin to Khvostov, 4 September 1916 (RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, l. 271).

<sup>32</sup> Piaskovskii et al., *Vosstanie 1916 goda v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, 98.

to the mission of suppressing the insurgency. Altogether, the authorities in Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk provinces dispatched six Cossack sotnias, seven half-sotnias, eight and a half infantry companies, and two local military units for counterinsurgency operations. They ensured that Akmolinsk province was largely subdued by January 1917. Thus, whereas the province had dispatched 12,500 men for defense work by 1 November, an official source indicates that by 10 January 1917, of 45,000 Kazakhs, 43,098 were taken for service in various capacities. Of these, 8,570 were found to be unqualified, 10,241 were assigned to defense, 16,314 were organized into crews for transporting grain to the army, and 7,973 were accepted for work and turned over to the War Department.<sup>33</sup>

Practically no serious events occurred in Ural province and the governorate of Astrakhan'. By 15 December Ural province was able to conscript and send 20,072 workers. A total of 20,463 men had presented themselves at collection points, 15,332 short of the expected number. In Astrakhan', the conscription moved along as planned. As a precautionary measure, its governor summoned three platoons from the 3rd Astrakhan' Cossack Regiment, should they be needed. In July, a sotnia from the regiment was used to fight the insurgency. A half-company from the Tsaritsyn garrison was stationed within the governorate itself. Ultimately, the contingent of conscripts numbered 22,000 (20,875 men as of 20 December), so only 3,500 more workers needed to be conscripted. Even here, however, the governor requested that conscription be suspended in order to avoid disturbances.

Of all the regions gripped by the insurgency, Turgai province experienced the longest duration (because of the nature of the area and its being winter) and most extensive fighting. News of the conscription of native peoples had come as a sudden surprise to the entire local administration, including the governor, let alone the population. By July 1916, just as in other regions, native representatives of the administration were being murdered and attempts made to destroy the lists of those mobilized. According to Soviet historians, Amangel'dy Imanov (1873–1919) led the insurgent activity in that area. In point of fact, the insurgency in Turgai province, as in other areas, was not led by popular leaders from the lower classes but by hereditary or clerical elites—wealthy landowners, livestock owners, and khans. Thus, the revolt in Turgai province was led not by Imanov, but by livestock owner Khan Abdulgafar Zhanbosynov (1870–1919). The insurgents needed wealthy organizers and military commanders, and it was to this latter category that Imanov belonged. A local Bolshevik, Alibi Dzhangil'din (1884–1953), also played an important organizational role in the insurgency, while local mullahs acted as the orga-

<sup>33</sup> Akmolinsk Governor V. A. Kolobov to Director of the Department of Police A. T. Vasil'ev, 11 January 1917 (RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, ll. 445–445ob.).

nizers in Kustanai (Kostanai) district. The total number of insurgents, who called themselves *sarbazы* (warriors), in the area was estimated at 50,000 men. In contrast to Semirech'e, where local khans carried out a general mobilization (which was not even part of the emperor's decree), in Turgai province the insurgents were volunteers.

Due to the acute lack of police in the region and in accordance with the "Regulations for the Conscription of Troops to Assist Civil Authorities," a decision was made to try to nip the insurgency in the bud with army assistance. Infantry General A. G. Sandetskii (1851–1918), commander of the troops in the Kazan' military district, ordered the 97th Don Cossack Special Mounted Sotnia, led by Captain Morgunov, to proceed from Cheliabinsk to Kustanai. The sotnia was weak in terms of firepower, being armed with outdated Berdan rifles and only a limited supply of ammunition.<sup>34</sup> After the governor of Turgai, M. M. Èversman (1868–1929), who was based permanently in Orenburg, sent news on 17 July that unrest was intensifying, two Orenburg Cossack reserve sotnias were also sent in.<sup>35</sup> The detachments were assembled from parts of various units and armed with whatever was available. All of this reduced the availability of reinforcements for the front.

During a period when the unrest had temporarily subsided, the Turgai province governor conducted an informational campaign targeting the local population. He organized a meeting of *aqsaqals* (elders) who supported the imperial decree; the young conscripts, however, had ceased to have much regard for the elders. Nonetheless, thanks to the loyalty of village elders in the north of the region, the authorities did succeed in mobilizing a fair number of workers in Kustanai and Aktiubinsk (Aktobe) districts. Conscription in Irgiz and Turgai districts was deferred to 15 October in the hope that these areas would be pacified by then and would follow the positive example of the northern districts. Kazakhs who were serving at the front also wrote letters saying that their situation was good.

The Kazakhs in the southern districts of Turgai province, however, opted not to comply with conscription. Massing together in armed bands, they began to wage war on the authorities.<sup>36</sup> The first confrontation occurred in Irgiz district on 19 October, when 50 Cossacks from the 1st Orenburg Cossack

<sup>34</sup> "Svedeniia o vooruzhenii Donskikh kazach'ikh soten," (n.d.) (RGVIA f. 1720 [Shtab Kazanskogo voennogo okruga], op. 2, d. 196, l. 16).

<sup>35</sup> Secret report by the head of the Kazan' Military District Infantry General A. G. Sandetskii to the head of the General Staff Infantry General N. P. Mikhnevich, 3 January 1917 (RGVIA f. 1720, op. 2, d. 194, l. 3ob.).

<sup>36</sup> Secret report by the head of the Kazan' Military District Infantry General A. G. Sandetskii to the head of the General Staff Infantry General N. P. Mikhnevich, 3 January 1917 (RGVIA f. 1720, op. 2, d. 194, l. 5ob.).

Reserve Sotnia confronted some 2,500 Kazakhs, among them 600 men armed with pikes, sabers, and rifles. After a two-hour battle, the insurgents retreated, having lost several dozen men (killed and wounded). On 21 October the 97th Don Cossack Special Sotnia was set upon as it moved toward the town of Turgai and for 21 hours resisted an attack by several thousand armed Kazakhs. After three Cossacks had been killed and three wounded, the sotnia reached Turgai. The insurgents, meanwhile, had lost nearly 400 men.

By 22 October 1916, the administrative center of Turgai region, the town of Turgai (population 2,500), was besieged by 15,000 insurgents and cut off from the outside world, leaving the population without provisions. The insurgents damaged the post road and contaminated the town's water supply from the Irgiz River with carrion, sewage, and poison pills filled with strychnine (used for the extermination of wolves). As of 26 October, only 196 Cossacks and 100 soldiers were stationed in Turgai. A military council assembled in the town: present were the town's military commander, Captain K. P. Zagainyi; the district commander; the peasant head; the commanding officer of the sotnia; and four other officers. Due to a shortage of personnel and ammunition, the council decided to conduct the defense from inside the town limits. Martial law was declared in the town of Turgai and surrounding area.

In the Turgai and Irgiz districts, the authorities had only two strongholds—the towns of Turgai and Irgiz; the remaining territory consisted of vast, sparsely populated steppe. In November 1916, when it became clear that the troops provided were insufficient, a powerful expeditionary detachment was formed to curb the growing insurgency; the minister of war himself approved the formation of this force. The detachment was to focus on the Chelkar (Shalkar) station, and the commander was Lieutenant General A. D. Lavrent'ev (1861–1940) of the General Staff, who had previously headed the 13th Infantry Reserve Brigade (Kazan'), composed of 17 companies and 19 sotnias and squadrons, with 14 artillery pieces and 17 machine guns.

The detachment's work started badly because there were too many chiefs. In addition to Lavrent'ev, these included the governor, M. M. Èversman, and the acting ataman of the Orenburg Cossack Host, Lieutenant General M. S. Tiulin (1862–1935) of the General Staff, who was temporarily in charge of the Turgai and Irgiz districts. Furthermore, the suppression of the insurgency was significantly complicated by the almost complete lack of railroads in the region. A heavy guard was put in place on the strategically important railroad that connected Orenburg with Samara and Tashkent. As of summer 1916, this route was guarded by a company of infantry. Special trains were organized for the soldiers who patrolled the railroad; they were based at the Emba and Saksaul railroad stations.

In late October and early November the insurgents launched major attacks. First, on 27 October, a native force of Kazakh *sarbazy* (warriors) approached the town of Irgiz with the goal of surrounding and destroying it, but they were unsuccessful. Then, at dawn on 6 November, an estimated 12,000 horsemen in four columns attacked the town of Turgai. Kazakhs within the town had set fire to the hay supplies the previous evening, and they burned all night. Nonetheless, and despite the absence of outside assistance, the garrison and residents successfully fended off the attack under the leadership of garrison commander Zagainyi. Nearly 100 dwellings on the margins of Turgai were burned down. Material losses were assessed at approximately one million rubles. Some of the attackers perished at the barricades, others during the attack on the bridge (the planking of which had been dismantled), and some in the course of their flight across the river. According to some sources, no less than 1,000 insurgents died. Within the town, three militia men were killed and three women and three children were unaccounted for.

In this context the deployment of Lavrent'ev's detachment became urgent. It set off on 2 November to relieve the towns of Irgiz and Turgai without waiting for all its component units to arrive. The advance guard arrived at Irgiz on 4 November, and on 16 November the force finally relieved Turgai. Throughout Turgai province the detachment occupied key locations and established strong garrisons. Further, Lavrent'ev sent out columns to various locations to clash repeatedly with substantial hordes of Kazakh warriors. These encounters resembled battle with an organized adversary. In spite of casualties from gunfire, the insurgents attacked with persistence, sometimes approaching within 100–300 paces of the infantry lines, while individual horsemen galloped right up to them. The rebels organized both security and intelligence-gathering services: they sent out reconnaissance squads that patrolled the area for up to 25 versts (16.6 miles) from their main forces, and they used a flag-signaling system. The insurgents also terrorized the Kazakh population: the leaders of the insurgency took one soldier from every nomad tent to serve not only as a fighter but also as a hostage.

The detachment's actions became controversial. A group of State Duma deputies, led by A. F. Kerenskii (1881–1970), spread false information about mass repressions of the civilian population, the extermination of men and women, and the provocative behavior of the police. In actual fact, the troops acted within the framework of the law. They paid for anything they requisitioned from the local population. Officers of the expeditionary detachment strove to prevent brutal treatment of the local population. Women and children were regarded as inviolable, and no nomadic wintering quarters or villages were destroyed. The single exception to this was the burning of the village of Kyzyl-Kul' where, during the battle that took place near the village, the

insurgents had killed eight Cossacks, slashed them with lances, and mutilated their bodies beyond recognition.

By early December 1916 several thousand insurgents had been killed in Turgai province, and the remnants of their forces fled to Syr-Dar'ia province. By imperial decree, issued on 21 December 1916, the Turgai, Irgiz, and Kustanai districts were placed under martial law.<sup>37</sup> But fighting in Turgai province continued to the end of February 1917, and Lavrent'ev's detachment was not disbanded until June 1917.

**Table 4.** Conscription Statistics for Turgai region<sup>38</sup>

District ( <i>Uezd</i> )	Number of men aged 19–31 subject to conscription	Conscripted by 20 December 1916	Received deferment
Aktiubinsk	12,985	4,761	2,525
Kustanai	17,240	5,325	2,917
Irgiz	12 510	74	302
Turgai	6,754	15	128
Total	49,489 (Conscrip- tion target reduced to 36,000 in August 1916)	10,175	5,872

Without question, the insurgency badly affected the actual recruitment of workers in Turgai province. The total number of men mobilized by late 1916 was only about 20 percent of the initial target of nearly 50,000, and was still only about 28 percent of the reduced target of 36,000 that was decreed in August 1916. Even if the authorized deferments are taken into account as evidence of men engaging with the process, the proportions of the planned totals rise to only about 32 percent and 44 percent respectively. The overwhelming majority of the conscripts came from the northern parts of the province; in the south, where 19,264 workers were originally sought, only 519 men responded, and the yield by 20 December was just 89 workers—a mere 0.46 percent of the area's original plan.

<sup>37</sup> The text of the decree is at RGIA f. 1292, op. 1, d. 1933, l. 429.

<sup>38</sup> Statistical information about the call-up in Turgai province (RGVIA f. 1720, op. 2, d. 194, l. 14ob.).

## Conclusion

Ordinary people, particularly representatives of the resident Russian intelligentsia, suffered most at the hands of the insurgents. With the exception of a small number of defectors, Russians did not take part in the disturbances on the side of the insurgents, a fact that supports the contention that the insurgency itself was anti-Russian in character. The military did strive to prevent savagery on the Russian side, and the only actions that reached the level of savagery were taken by the Russian population in Semirech'ë when, in response to violence, they undertook to annihilate the native population.

The Russian army crushed the insurgency with relative ease. From the very first shots, individual Russian patrols succeeded in dispersing substantial numbers of native warriors. But the local army forces turned out to be inadequate for completing the task, and command headquarters was forced to withdraw a number of units from the front to send to Central Asia, a necessity that only served Russia's adversaries. The insurgent fighters were unable to withstand the regular army, even if the latter was, in large degree, made up of reserve soldiers. The Cossack hosts contributed greatly to the suppression of the insurgency. The Orenburg Cossack Host alone sent in five regiments, six sotnias, and two batteries. Organization and coordination were key features of the counterinsurgency operations. Control of the two railroads (Samara–Orenburg–Tashkent; Krasnovodsk–Samarkand–Tashkent) allowed the authorities to redeploy forces quickly and to supply them with all essential needs. The army's use of artillery and machine guns further demoralized the insurgents.

Existing documentation does not corroborate the proposition that German and Turkish agents masterminded and directed the insurgency. Without doubt, however, the Germans and Turks did play a role in organizing the insurgents' actions; evidence from various parts of Turkestan attests to this.<sup>39</sup> But ultimately, the revolt was led by native feudal nobility (khans, beks, and manaps) and native clerics. After 1917 many of these rebel leaders became prominent Bolshevik figures; however, some individual leaders of the insurgency also participated in the Civil War on the side of the Whites. It should also be noted that the blood spilled in 1916 in the territories of the Steppe Region and Turkestan was not forgotten during the Civil War of 1918–20. To some extent, events that occurred during the revolt of 1916 determined the subsequent power alignment in the region. In particular, these events pre-

<sup>39</sup> Stanislavskii, "Vosstanie kirgizov v 1916 g.: Vospominaniia" (1927) (GARF f. R-5881, op. 2, d. 660, ll. 7–7ob.); V. V. Riapolov, "Germano-turetskaia agentura v Srednei Azii i Afganistane v nachale XX veka," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (2007): 147–52; Iu. N. Tikhonov, *Afganskai voina Stalina: Bitva za Tsentral'nuu Aziuu* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2008), 32.

pared the ground for the emergence and broad expansion of phenomena like the Basmachi movement.

It would be naive to think that the events of 1916 constituted a revolt in the name of national liberation. The leaders of the insurgents had no program of any kind; neither did they set themselves the task of creating a state of their own. Their principal rallying points were the fight against mobilization in particular and against the Russians (infidels and colonizers) in general. The ethnic intelligentsia did nurture ideas of autonomy and even separatism, and these were realized to some extent during the Civil War period. The native intelligentsia, however, was miniscule in number and had almost no connection to the revolt's leadership.

A national liberation movement for some almost inevitably means genocide or the suppression of rights for others. The statist position, which corresponded to the interests of Russia, required that the ethnic populations of Turkestan and the Steppe Region become aware of themselves as a part of a large, integrated entity. In 1916 this mental outlook did not exist. Considerable blame for its absence lay not only with the native population but also with the Russian administration and settlers. During the Soviet period an effort was made to inculcate a more "correct" view; subsequent events, however, have once again shown that any such self-identification has never been more than superficial.

The nationality question, which is fundamentally important to the preservation of multiethnic states, has always been an extremely complex one. At all times it has evoked the sharpest controversies and often led to the spilling of blood. The resolution of interethnic conflicts must be a reciprocal process; it can never be a unilateral one. A significant role in this process is played not only by the encouraging or punishing hand of the center but also by the interests of the national groups themselves in consolidating a common state and collaborating with the center. The lessons of 1916 should not be forgotten today, all the more because what occurred then is more pertinent now than ever.

*Translated by Maria Carlson*