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COSSACKS AND THE RED ARMY'S MARCH ON POLAND IN 1920

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to show the way the Cossacks, being the main source of manpower of anti-Bolshevik troops in southern Russia during the civil war, have turned out to be the striking force of the Bolsheviks in the Soviet-Polish war. Another aspect is how the participation of the Cossacks in the Red army's march on Poland in 1920 affected its results. The work applied statistical, comparative and anthropological methods and studied the plans of the Bolshevik leadership, the public sentiments of the Cossacks, their commanders and the population of the terrains of attack. The study showed that the aggravation of Soviet-Polish relations coincided with the surrender of many Cossacks to the Bolsheviks, who enlisted them in the Red army and sent them to fight with the Poles. The Cossacks made the red cavalry the shock force of the army, but their behavior turned the population of Galicia and Poland against the Bolsheviks. The Cossacks did not want to cross the border and never shared the ideas of the world revolution.

The reasons for the defeat of the Red Army in 1920, in addition to the known reluctance of a significant part of the red cavalry to cross the border, was also in the negative attitude of the local population to the 'Cossack invasion'.

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet-Polish war was an important case in both Russian and European history. During this war, another attempt of the Bolsheviks to thrust forward the revolution in Europe to make it truly worldwide was scuttled. V.I. Lenin considered Russia to be the stepping stone to thrusting the revolution in developed industrial states while he was leaving for Russia from Switzerland in spring 1917: 'The Russian proletariat alone and itself cannot victoriously complete the socialist revolution. However, it can give the Russian revolution a scope that would create the best conditions for it, begin it in a way. It can facilitate the situation for entering into decisive battles of its chief, most reliable colleague: European and American socialist proletariat'.

When the revolution in Germany began in 1918, the Red army could not reach the borders of this country: it was stopped by the Poles near Vilno. In summer 1919, the Red army troops stopped in 100 km to the troops of revolutionary Hungary: they could not overcome the resistance of Ukrainian nationalists-Petliurists.

Another attempt to thrust forward the revolution in Europe was the Red army's march on Poland in 1920. The Red army included numerous prisoners from among the former White Guardsmen, including the Cossacks, who had significantly replenished the red cavalry.

The aim of this work is to show the way the Cossacks, being the main source of manpower of anti-Bolshevik troops in southern Russia during the civil war, have turned out to be the striking force of the Bolsheviks in the Soviet-Polish war. Another aspect is how the participation of the Cossacks in the Red army's march on Poland in 1920 affected its results.

This work has set a number of tasks: 1) to find out how many Cossacks and under what circumstances found themselves in the Red army in 1920; 2) how their presence affected the quality of the red cavalry; 3) whether these forces were reliable; 4) how the traditional Cossack methods of warfare affected the population of the terrain of attack.

Materials and methods.

There is a bulk of materials on the studied issues. These are statistical materials published in collected documents regarding the civil war. They are articles from specialized military historical journals of the 1920s; archives from central and local repositories; some information is found in the memoirs and diary entries of direct participants in the events (V. Vinnichenko, G. Gay, I. Babel').

Based on the principle of historicism, the work mainly involves statistical, comparative and anthropological methods, since the subject of the study (the Cossacks) has a special anthropological specificity.

Results

Until the end of 1919, most Cossacks fought against the Bolsheviks. A few Cossacks-volunteers served the Red army. Attempts to attract Cossacks in Red army's mobilization, including sending them in the lines against the Poles, failed: the Cossacks defected or 'slept with enemies'.

From the end of 1919, it became clear that the war against the Bolsheviks was lost, and the Cossack lands were devastated. Then the Cossacks began to join the Red army. The turning point was the surrender of thousands of Cossacks abandoned by the White command on the Black Sea coast.

The Bolsheviks used the surrendered Cossacks in the Red cavalry and sent to the front against the Poles.

The general attitude of the Red army marching on Poland was defensive for a number of reasons: the peasant composition of the army, the reluctance to fight for the world revolution (the Cossacks shared this reluctance), and the hesitation of the Bolshevik leadership. All this did not contribute to the success of the campaign.

Some Cossacks, who were forced to surrender earlier, in the onset of hostilities defected to the Poles.

The inclusion of Cossacks in Red cavalry dramatically increased its combat capability. The Soviet leadership, opposed to military science, made it a striking force of the march.

Coming to the former border of Russia with Austria-Hungary, the Cossacks refused to go further. The information that changed their attitude was about the situation in their homeland, in the Cossack regions.

The way the Cossacks treated the locals was one of the reasons for the rejection of the Bolsheviks by a large part of the population of Poland and Galicia.

DISCUSSION

The reason for the action of the overwhelming majority of Cossacks against the Bolsheviks needs a separate consideration. The only proved information is about the number of red and white Cossacks in 1918. The Soviet commissar for cossack affairs M. Makarov recognized that 'in the first year of the October revolution, four red Cossack regiments were formed from Don Cossacks, three - from Orenburg dwellers, three - from the Kuban dwellers and two hundred Uralians'. These red Cossack regiments consisted of volunteers.

As for the white Cossacks, by this time, according to the calculations, there were 97 regiments and 41 batteries formed in the Don army. In 1918, Kuban gave 22 regiments to the white volunteer army, the Orenburg and Ural division had almost the same ration of the Reds and Whites.

The Bolsheviks' attempts to mobilize the Cossacks in the territories controlled by the Soviet authorities led to the fact that some of these Cossacks sent to in the lines against the Poles switched sides. The rest voluntarily left for the Don, causing alarm of the Bolshevik leadership. This case was called Mironovsky mutiny after the commander of the forming cavalry Cossack regiment)].

At the end of 1919, the situation gradually changed. The coming of the armies of A. I. Denikin on Moscow failed. One of the reasons was the temporary cessation of Poles' hostilities; Denikin (himself being half-Pole) hoped for them to become his allies. 'From the Russian national point of view, the act of the head of Poland, General Pilsudski, cannot but cause the deepest indignation', wrote A. I. Denikin. The Cossacks also had huge losses. In their villages (especially in the North of the Don region) the hostilities occurred 6-8 times. The fighting was accompanied by massive repression (including the 'decossackization') and epidemic diseases, and it caused mass death of the population. In order to avoid the complete ruin, the Cossacks began to defect to the Bolsheviks to finish the war at least. 'When the peasantry has come to Soviet power through the positive acquisitions that it has received from the October revolution, the labor Cossacks come to Soviet power through the losses that it suffer in the civil war,' wrote Izvestia VTSIK.

Cossacks joined the Red army that were previously formed from non-Cossacks. In October 1919, the cavalry brigade of the 36th rifle division (Kamyshinsky,

Saratovsky and Zaamursky horse regiments) consisted of 'volunteers from Kuban, Don, who arrived on their own horses'.

The prisoners and defectors were also accepted in the Red army. They agreed, because merging into starving central Russia for correctional labor was not the best solution for them. Thus, out of 1041 prisoners and defectors registered at the headquarters of the 8th Red army from 1 to 14 December 1919, 763 joined the Red army and only 272 went for correctional labor.

From 1 November 1919 to 15 February 1920 the number of cavalry in the 1 Cavalry army and 8, 9, 10 armies increased from 12029 to 19299 sabres.

In Kuban, fighting against the Bolsheviks the most important event was the conflict between the Cossacks, who sought the ethnocentric establishment of the Kuban Cossacks (which led to the emergence of the Cossack national construction movement in the Kuban), and Denikin command, who fought for a 'united and indivisible' Russia.

The turning point was the mass surrender of the Cossacks in Novorossiysk in March 1920. Most Cossacks were intentionally left by the white command on the coast so that they moved to the guerrilla. Don Cossacks in emigration wrote that Novorossiysk gathered about 50 thousand of combat-ready Cossacks and about 50 thousand of Don refugees. However, the Cossacks did not start a guerrilla war. Kuban dwellers openly changed sides for the Bolsheviks. On 14 (27) March the Reds broke into Novorossiysk and surrendered 22 thousand people.

The first people entering the city were Kuban Cossacks defected to the Soviets of the 1 Kuban division. Commander I. Uborevich reported: 'The city was captured by a dashing raid of Ekimov's cavalry division. About 9 a.m. five divisions 8 and 9 armies entered the city. Chief cavalry division commander Ekimov was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for personal feat'.

2 May 1920 near Sochi, the parts of three Kuban and two Don corps - 1 409 officers and officials, 10 099 uрядniks and 28 906 common soldiers with 146 machine guns and 25 weapons surrendered to Bolsheviks. They surrendered on the condition of granting freedom to all Cossacks except criminals. Even the initiators and leaders of the uprisings 'as special mercy' were allowed to join the Red army.

At the negotiations on 1 May 1920 a member of the Soviet delegation Sutin said to the Cossacks: 'All your patriotic feeling you will show on the Polish battle front'.

Indeed, in April 1920, Polish troops opened an attack and occupied Kiev.

This fact jogged patriotic feelings in the people. 'The capture of Kiev by the Poles, being deprived of any military meaning, served us a great service: the country agitated' Trotsky recalled. There was a certain smoothing of class contradictions, which, however, did not play a decisive role. 'All the speakers were sincere, even former white officers', division commander Kuttyakov recalled how his division ('Chapaevskaya') rallied before being sent 'to the Poles'. There was a favorable fusion of patriotic and class sentiments.

The captured Cossacks were involved in fighting against the Poles and Wrangel, who had consolidated his positions in the Crimea with the remnants of the white troops of Southern Russia. Lenin urged to do it 'arch-energetically'.

In May 1920, the captured working Cossacks were announced amnesty. They were dismissed to their homes, but people younger than 35 years after the vacation had to go to the Red army. Thus, the Cossacks formed the majority of red cavalry on Polish and Wrangel battle fronts and have served the main source of its replenishment. Don Cossacks prevailed in the Red army.

At this time, the rebirth of the Bolshevik regime took place. It was largely connected with the creation of the three million peasants Red army by the end of 1919 and the mobilization of thousands of officers of the old Russian army. Such contingent could not but influence the sentiments of the army, and the army itself, in turn, could not but influence the party and Soviet leadership. The leader of the Ukrainian socialists V. Vinnichenko described this rebirth as follows: 'In socialist Soviet Russia, the chaos displaces the idea nowadays. Everyday material interests look like hunger, cold, poverty, it is backed by old, spontaneous habits, way of thinking, which are put into the form of Russian nationalism. The Soviet power loses its principles, the idea of communism, while it is floundering in the mud of daily troubles. There is a focus on Russian patriotism'. The conclusion was: 'There is actually no Soviet power. There is power of bureaucrats, individual units, which rely predominantly on physical force of the army and administrative apparatus... There is a single indivisible Russia, which is represented by a single-indivisible Russian Communist Party'. The opinion of V. Vinnichenko was not alone in this viewpoint. Lev Karsavin wrote a little later: '...the Third International (actually, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) conducts a traditional national Russian policy'. Karsavin concluded that the Communists were 'a mouthpiece used by the spirit of Russia for its own purposes. They thought to destroy the Russian state once and for all; in fact, they saved it, as at the beginning of the revolution and still are the only real strong-willed force of Russia'. Contemporaries often thought that what was happening in Russia, 'was not a revolution, but an uprising of the wild outlaws', and these outlaws strived to create 'peasant Cossack state, aristocratic in its own way'.

Naturally, the rebirth of power affected the prospects of the world revolution. '...They are destroying themselves with their inveterate chaos, and with them they destroy the revolution in the West' complained V. Vinnichenko. Only a certain part of the Bolshevik military leadership saw an opportunity to bring revolution to the borders of Central and Western Europe in the war with Poland. One of them was Tukhachevsky, who gave the order on July 3, 1920: 'The fate of the world revolution is decided in the West. The way to the world fire lies through the corpse of white Poland. We will bear happiness and the world to the working mankind on our bayonets', and subsequently declared: 'In all European countries the position of capital has been shaky. The working class looked up and took up arms. There is no doubt that if we had won the battle on the Vistula, the revolution would have engulfed the whole European continent in a fiery flame'. The head of the military department of the Bolsheviks L. Trotsky had a different viewpoint. 'We wanted to avoid this war by all means,' he recalled. It was partly because in Germany at this time the 'decline of revolutionary energy' was observed, partly because Trotsky in this period had already reoriented from the West to the South and East, and just at this time the Bolsheviks established Soviet

power in Bukhara, creating a 'springboard for the October revolution among the oppressed peoples of the East'. However, even there the success of the operation 'was based.. Political support for the operation was clearly weak'. The main reason for avoiding war with Poland was that the general attitude of both the regime and the Red army was defensive, patriotic. Military experts in the red Army wrote: 'During the three years of the war, we kept stuck to defensive strategy... After seven years of war, in conditions of extreme economic and transport devastation, we have no desire to start the it again'. Neither the organization nor the combat training of the Red army corresponded to the offensive war, and in 1921 the task was to reorganize the Red army in this direction: 'Our army must be ready not only to defend, but also to attack... Preparation for revolutionary wars (semi-civilian type) - this is the main content of this plan; offensive strategy-this is the main direction of the reorganization of the Red army'.

But then, in 1920, the commander of the 3rd cavalry corps G. D. Gay (Bzhishkyan), advancing on Warsaw and even bypassing it from the North, concluded: 'For us it was a question of the end of the war and the transition to peaceful socialist construction'.

The inclusion of former captured Cossacks in the Red army contributed to the patriotic defensive sentiments, which manifested itself in the very appearance of revolutionary events. 'This is not a Marxist revolution, this is a Cossack revolt...', - noted in his diaries I. Babel'. In general, the sentiments of the Cossacks were complex and fluctuating.

They wanted to involve Cossacks in a campaign to the West to realize the idea of a world revolution. The famous proletarian poet Demyan Bedny in his poem 'Bubnov the Cossack' wrote:

'Bubnov, within a month or two
I will embrace you in Soviet Poland'.

However, after the first battles and sometimes even before the fighting began, some Cossack units began to defect to the Poles. It the stage of its formation on 25 May 1920, neat the settlement Bogushevichi, the 59 Orenburgsky regiment formed from former white Cossacks under the command of ataman Dutov left for the Poles from 3 horse corps of G. Gay led by their commander. 'As it turned out later, a part of the command of the 59 regiment had relatives and friends in Poland, and the commander's brother served in the Polish army as an officer'.

On May 31, the 3 Donskaya brigade left for the Poles in the Bila Tserkva district from the 14 Soviet cavalry division of the 1 Cavalry army. They numbered to about 800 men and 700 horses.

On July 20, the Kubansky regiment under the command of Esaul I. Ya.Lashtabega left from the same Cavalry army for the Poles. On14 August, on the request of the Cossacks, the regiment was transferred in interned corps of General M. Bredov to join troops General P. Wrangel in Crimea.

Around the same time, on August 13, a squadron of 50 horses from the 21 Soviet division moved to the side of the Polish army near Bialystok. The squadron

consisted of Cossacks. The Cossacks remaining in the Red army from this squadron recalled that the former officers fled to the Poles.

However, the defectors were not enough to create large Cossack units in the Polish army. The vast majority of former captured Cossacks remained in the Red army.

The commanders of the Reds thought that the former prisoners of the Cossacks were a 'great fighting material', but this material was rather peculiar. Describing the Kuban Cossacks, the commander of the 3 cavalry corps noted that 'according to the deeply rooted Cossack habit, the Kuban Cossacks waged war somewhat according to the precepts of the middle ages, alternating dashing blows to the enemy with an overly attentive attitude to the belongings of the local population'. The same situation prevailed in the 1st Cavalry army. Future writer I. Babel', who served there, wrote in his diary: 'What is our Cossack? Layers: hoarder, prowess, professionalism, revolutionism, extreme cruelty'. He constantly gives examples of how the Cossacks had killed the Polish prisoners. 'We went with the military Commissar on the line, we begged not to cut the prisoners'. Nevertheless, the Cossacks in the Red army became a striking force. In general, the cavalry, in which they now formed the majority, became a striking force in the ensuing battles, contrary to the canons of military science. The commander of the 3 cavalry corps constantly noted the heroism of the soldiers, 'especially its Kuban units', who resolved 'unbearable tasks for cavalry' in the conditions of wooded and swampy terrain they went to attack the Polish fortifications and cut barbed wire with cavalry swords.

The 1 Cavalry army, augmented by captured Don and Kuban Cossacks, marched from Uman to the old Russian-Austrian border in less than two months. On May 27, the offensive began from the Uman region, and on July 18, the fighting for the border town of Brody started.

When the Poles were dislodged from the Ukrainian territory, the sentiments changed. For the 1st Cavalry army, the shock detachment of the South-Western front of the Bolsheviks, the most crucial question at this time was the question of the border: there is rising stirring that thee should not go further than the border. If the troops of the Western front were looking for the border 'somewhere beyond Warsaw', remembering the existence of the Kingdom of Poland in Russia recently, the cavalry of Budyonny immediately came to the former Austrian territory, which greatly affected the soldiers' sentiments. The corresponding mood was observed among the Poles who found themselves in the Ukrainian and Belarusian territories. 'Why have we been folded here? Let us go beyond the Bug and defend ourselves there', said the Polish soldiers.

Something similar had already taken place in 1918, when the white Cossacks, pursuing the Bolsheviks came to the border of their region. They started the 'border disease'. British representatives reported from Russia that it was impossible to expect from Cossacks that they 'would take active measures out of their land'. The Cossacks recalled that they began the uprising against the Bolsheviks under the motto 'War till the cleanup of the borders'. White prisoners in 1918 said that 'the Cossacks were reluctant to fight. It all boils down to defending their borders, and as soon as the Soviet troops leave the border of the Don Army, the Cossacks stop the pursuit. If they obey the orders...and cross the

border, they do it mainly to rob'. 'Unwillingness to cross the border sometimes resulted in armed clashes between Cossacks and officers'.

There is no information about clashes of red Cossacks with their commanders, when Soviet troops poured to the border the former Russian Empire.

The attitude of the population of Galicia and Poland to the Cossacks was of great importance. The Bolsheviks hoped that this population would support the revolutionary mottos and join the Red army. New international units were prepared to continue the war in Europe. The 3 cavalry corps, when it crossed the Vistula, created 'Magyar-German cavalry regiment'. However, the population was wary or hostile to the arriving Cossacks. The same was mentioned by I. Babel in his diary: "We are the advanced guard, but of what? The population is waiting for liberators, the Jews - of liberty, and here come the Kuban Cossacks'.

Another factor made the Reds constantly look back during the offensive. S. M. Budyonny in his book 'The Passed Way' wrote that the soldiers and commanders of the Cavalry army received many letters from their relatives from the Don, Kuban, Stavropol, and North Caucasus. In these letters, their relatives often told them that the representatives of the Soviet authorities take away their bread, cattle, fodder, and horses. Of course the soldiers were anxious about it. Budyonny explained to fighters that often the former white guards make the way and specially harm the local authorities.

By that time, Poland formed the following troops from Cossacks (according to the Polish version):

1. Separate Don Cossack brigade under the command of esaul Salnikov numbered about 900 Cossacks.
2. Separate (Kubanskaya) Cossack brigade under the command of Esaul Yakovlev had 1700-1900 Cossacks.
3. Colonel Dukhopel'nikov's Donskoy regiment had about 900 Cossacks in Balakhovich's troops.
4. Donskoy Cossack regiment numbered about 600 Cossacks, in the third Russian army.
5. Uralsky Cossack regiment in the third Russian army
6. Tersky Cossack regiment in the third Russian army.
7. Orenburgsky Cossack regiment in the third Russian army
8. Kubansky Cossack regiment belonged to the army of the Ukraine People's Republic

It is known that these units took part in the battles against the Bolsheviks in the Polish army. These facts are described in the memoirs of S. M. Budyonny. According to Soviet sources, on August 27, 1920, the 4 cavalry division of Budyonny with many Don Cossacks entered into a fierce battle with the Cossack brigade of esaul Yakovlev with 750 people. By the evening of that day, a horse

attack broke Yakovlev's brigade capturing 120 prisoners, 3 guns and 200 horses near Tyshovtsy. The Cossack brigade at the time had no guns, and the vanguard of the 13 Polish infantry division did not have time to pull up the artillery, and therefore could not resist the red cavalry. After saber fight, the Cossacks from Yakovlev's brigade under fire of machine-gun carriers of the opponent drew in behind the river Khuchva (inflow of Western Bug River).

On August 29, according to Soviet sources, the 11 cavalry division defeated the remnants of the Cossack brigade near Shcheven'. After the battle, the Cossacks captain Yakovlev on 29 August retreated to Zamosc.

The brigade was subordinated to the army group command of General Lucian Zheligovsky to assist the 10 infantry division.

On, 31 August until the evening Cossacks participated in city defense. On the approaches to the city the large masses of one of the strongest in Red cavalry, the 6 cavalry (under the command of I. R. Apanasenko) concentrated for a decisive attack. Esaul Yakovlev moved a few hundred surviving Cossacks in a cavalry formation to meet the enemy. Official historiography of the 31 infantry regiment of the Polish Army (Feliks Libert 'Zarys historii wojennej 31-go Pułku Strzelców Kaniowskich') described how his commander captain Mikolaj Boltuc told Yakovlev that there was no order for a counterattack from the 10 division headquarters. The Cossack officer replied: 'I have orders from God only, and my Cossacks get them from me!'. Having lined up the small number of Cossacks practically in a parade formation on a hill near Chesniki, Yakovlev lured the cavalry under fire of his machine guns. The advanced squadrons of the 6 cavalry division were shot from close range and were completely destroyed. Budyonny soldiers, who broke through the fire of machine guns, were met by Cossacks with cavalry swords attack and were also repulsed. The Cossacks wisely refrained from pursuit.

Here is how this battle is reflected in the diaries of the writer I. Babel'. Record dated August 31, 1920: 'Our squadron is on the attack. We ride four versts. They are waiting for us in columns on the hill. Miraculously, no one moved. Restraint, discipline. An officer with a black beard... Flight. Military Commissars turn. Nothing helps. Fortunately, they do not pursue, otherwise there would be a catastrophe'.

The population in this territory treated the white and red Cossacks the same: 'The hatred is the same, the Cossacks are the same, the cruelty is the same, the armies are different, what nonsense'.

These battles of the 1 Cavalry army belonged to the time 'when most of the armies of the Western front no longer existed'. As a result of the 'Warsaw miracle', the troops of the Western front of the Reds were defeated. Being cut off from their Cossacks, the 3rd cavalry corps to the sound of the pipes of its orchestra crossed the border of East Prussia and was interned there. They took 600 wounded, brought 2000 captured Poles and brought 11 Polish guns.

The 1 Cavalry army broke out of its prepared encirclement and was sent to the front against Wrangel. Along the way, its soldiers, passing through Jewish towns,

committed a series of pogroms, which the Jews had not seen either since tsarist times or from the Whites.

CONCLUSION.

Thus, it is impossible name the number of Cossacks in the Red army in 1920, since some of them served in regiments that were not originally Cossack. We know only the number of Cossacks who surrendered to the Red army in spring 1920, and it is believed that most of them were included in the Red cavalry.

The reasons for the defeat of the Red army in 1920 during the Soviet-Polish war are well studied. However, it is necessary to pay attention to such factors as unwillingness of the Cossacks who got in the Red army to pass the old state border of the Russian Empire, including the outstanding contradictions in the homeland of Cossacks, and the negative attitude of the population of Galicia and Poland to approach of Red army which often had shape of Cossack invasion.

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