

The Cossacks

Text by ALBERT SEATON

Colour plates by MICHAEL YOUENS



MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

EDITOR: PHILIP WARNER

The Cossacks

Text by ALBERT SEATON

Colour plates by MICHAEL YOUENS



OSPREY PUBLISHING LIMITED

Published in 1972 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd, P.O. Box 25,
707 Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire
© Copyright 1972 Osprey Publishing Ltd

This book is copyrighted under the Berne Convention. All rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, 1956, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be addressed to the Publishers.

The preparation of the colour plates in this book would have been impossible without reference to the nineteen-volume Russian work *Istoricheskoe Opisanie odezhdy i vooruzheniya Rossiiskikh voisk* edited by Viskovatov and published in St Petersburg 1841–8, and to *L'Armée Russe d'après photographies instantanées*, by René Camena d'Almeida and Francis de Jonghe, published in Paris in 1895. Reference has also been made to *Europa in Waffen* published in Stuttgart, 1873. There is, as far as is known, no work in English covering the Cossacks as soldiers. Further reading can, however, be found in *The Cossacks* by Philip Longworth (Constable, London, 1969), covering the history and development of the Cossack peoples. Although it has not been used in the preparation of this text it is a well-informed and documented work intended for the general reader.

SBN 85045 116 71

Printed in Great Britain by
Jarrold & Sons Ltd, Norwich

Introduction

To most west Europeans the word 'Cossack' conjures up a Russian horseman from the Don. Usually they know little about him except that he harried Napoleon's retreating columns from Moscow to the Berezina, cutting off and butchering stragglers. They have probably heard, too, that the Cossack acquired notoriety for his free use of horse and cutting *nagaika* in dispersing demonstrations and putting down riots in the times of the Tsars. This, as far as it goes, is true.

But the Cossack was far more than that. Yet the subject is such a vast one that the descriptions given here are confined in the main to the principal Cossack hosts who kept their unbroken lineage over 300 years. There were others. And there was a large variety of cavalry and mounted *gendarmerie* Cossack regiments of Russian, Ukrainian and Asiatic nationalities which came and went, owning no particular affiliation except to a town or a tribal people.

The Early Russian Peoples

Even before the birth of Christ the Slav peoples had been long settled in the broad belt of lands which stretch across central and eastern Europe, from the Carpathians in the south to the Dvina River in the north and from the area between the Oder and the Vistula in the west to the Dnieper in the east. The many Slav tribes and communities had no national or real racial unity, but spoke numerous closely kindred languages.

Some time in the eighth century Varangian Vikings, sailing up the Gulf of Finland, entered

the mouth of the River Neva close to where Leningrad now stands and rowed upstream, first to Lake Ladoga and then up the Rivers Volkhov and Lovat to its source. Only a few leagues of forest then separated them from the upper Dnieper, down which they made the 1,200-mile journey to the Black Sea and Constantinople. These Vikings, known as 'Rus' from the Finnish word for an oarsman, were pirates, traders and colonizers, and they settled along the basins of the Volkhov, Lovat, upper Volga and Dnieper, subjugating the Slav inhabitants and demanding tribute in goods and slaves. This Norse aristocracy, rapidly expanding from the original settlements in Kiev, Novgorod and Staraya Russa, acquired a



An early engraving showing unidentified Cossacks raiding farmsteads. (Hulton)



vast Slav empire, from the banks of what is now the Polish Bug in the west to the upper Don and upper Volga in the east, and from the Black Sea to the Gulf of Finland. These Viking rulers were eventually assimilated by their Slavonic subjects, losing their Scandinavian tongue. They and their peoples became Christian, taking their religion from the Greek Orthodox Church at Constantinople.

This early Viking or Kievan Empire and the religion which the princes imposed on their subjects effectively cut off the mass of the eastern Slavs, who had already taken the name of 'Rus', from their Slav cousins in central Europe and the Balkans. The 'Rus' were to become the Russian peoples.

The early Russian principalities were united only inasmuch as their princes were allied by Norse blood and close family ties. But they were soon seriously weakened by fratricidal and internecine wars, so that they became unable to resist the repeated invasions of the fierce nomadic peoples, Magyars, Pechenegs and Polovtsi, who came out

of the east, wave after wave rolling over the vast endless steppe which stretched from distant Asia across the south of Russia into central Europe. The Russians in the plain were massacred, carried off to slavery or scattered and driven north into the great forest belt beyond Kiev where the nomad horsemen rarely chose to follow. Many Russians made their way north-eastwards for safety, setting up new communities in the security of the wooded swampland amid the alien Finnish tribes whom they soon absorbed. From such settlers the township and tiny principality of Moscow was born.

Kiev was one of the earliest (AD 879) and most important of the Russian principalities; it retained its prosperity and a vestige of authority since it was the last fortified city on the southern edge of the forest belt before the Dnieper opened up across the broad barbarian-ridden steppe. Convoys of boats from all the Russian states, laden with merchandise, used to collect annually at Kiev, preparatory to making the dangerous journey down to the Black Sea. But eventually even these excursions were halted by the fierce Polovtsi who

had taken to permanent grazing along the banks of the lower river. Russia had become isolated from the Black Sea and Byzantium. Kiev, which had never really exercised any control over the other principalities, declined further in importance.

In the thirteenth century a new and yet more terrible invader appeared from the east. For Jenghis Khan, proclaimed Mongol ruler in 1204, rapidly overcame and united the Mongol, Tartar and other Turkic tribes and, eleven years later, overthrew the Chinese Empire and entered Peking. In 1223 a Tartar army of horsemen crossed the steppe and, coming out of Asia, encamped on the Black Sea littoral not far from the mouth of the Dnieper. The terrified Polovtsi appealed to their old enemies the Russian princes for aid. The joint Russian-Polovtsi forces went into battle against Subbotai's Tartars, but were almost completely destroyed near the River Kalka. The Tartars then moved on northwards up the Volga where they were themselves defeated by the Bulgars, a people who once formed part of Attila's Huns, and who had given their name both to Bulgaria and to the Volga River. Subbotai then disappeared into Asia and the Tartars were not heard of again for about thirteen years.

In 1236 they were back and their first victims were the Bulgars, whom they destroyed. The next autumn they actually undertook a winter campaign into the forest belt of Russia almost as far north as Novgorod, moving up the snow-covered frozen rivers. Moscow, Murom-Ryazan, Vladimir-Suzdal, Tver, Smolensk, Chernigov and Novgorod-Severski were soon overrun, the countryside laid waste and the inhabitants butchered. The approach of the thaw brought an end to the terror, for the Tartars had to get back to the steppe before the ice melted. They then set up permanent tented camps between the lower Don and the mouth of the Volga from which in the following years they raided south-west Russia, sacking Kiev in 1240 and leaving it a desolate smoking ruin, and over-running Hungary, Poland and Silesia.

The Russian rulers were brought under the Tartar yoke and henceforth their very existence was at the whim of the Grand Khan in his distant capital at Karakorum; he appointed, removed and executed. But the Khan's main interest was

in the efficient collection of tax and in the prompt receipt of the annual tribute; on this depended the safety of the Russian princes and their peoples. Failure or defiance met with swift and terrible retribution. The pagan Mongol-Tartars were content that the Russians should retain their own language, customs and religion; they were indifferent to other internal affairs. But the Russian had no redress against the capricious incursions of mounted Tartar columns leaving behind them a trail of murder and havoc.

Strong though the Mongol-Tartars were, their power was already on the wane. For in the struggles over the succession the Karakorum Grand Khanate broke up into a number of hordes, Russia remaining under the suzerainty of the Tartar Khan of the Golden Horde at Sarai on the lower Volga. But the Golden Horde was not strong enough by itself to overcome the rapidly rising military power of Lithuania which, allied to Poland by the dynastic union of 1386, began to assert its might over the west Russian principalities in the form of a protection welcomed by princes and peoples as preferable to servitude to the Tartar. Polish-Lithuanian influence spread rapidly eastwards, by marriage, political manoeuvre and conquest far beyond the middle Dnieper, taking in Volhynia, Podolia, Smolensk, Kiev and Pereyaslav. In 1569 Lithuania made over all the Russian states in the south to Poland proper.

For about 300 years Russia was split between Poles, Lithuanians and Tartars. The western Russians were much influenced by the language and culture of their foreign rulers; those under Lithuanian overlordship developed as White Russians (Belorussians); while those who were part of the Polish kingdom became known firstly as Little Russians and later as Ukrainians. The racial development of the Russians in the east under the vassalage of the Golden Horde was more influenced by the Finn than by the Tartar, and they became the Great Russians, known today simply as Russians. Little Russians and White Russians each developed their own distinctive languages unintelligible to a Russian.

The principality of Moscow did not come into being until 1147, and even a century later was so small as to measure hardly 100 miles across. The Princes of Moscow sought and eventually obtained



the office of agent and tax-collector for the Golden Horde, and from this position of privilege began rapidly to extend their domain at the expense of their Russian neighbours. By 1462 the only two great principalities remaining in eastern Russia were Novgorod and Moscow, and in 1480 Moscow successfully challenged the overlordship of the Tartars. By 1487 Novgorod had been overcome by Ivan III and this took Muscovy's borders to the Arctic Ocean and the Urals.

Tartar power continued to decline and in the final confrontation with Muscovy the Tartars had tried to enlist Lithuanian aid. The Golden Horde itself was in process of slow disintegration and its mantle eventually fell on the three separate Khanates of the Crimea, Astrakhan and Kazan. Of these the Crimean Tartars were the most powerful and their horsemen continued to raid as far north as the city of Moscow even up to the end of the sixteenth century.

At the beginning of that century Russia was split into three parts: Poland-Lithuania in the west and Muscovy in the east, while in the south the Tartar continued to control the whole of the vast steppe-land north of the Black Sea and the Caspian from the mouth of the Dnieper to the southern Urals.

The decline in the authority, firstly of the Mongol centre in Karakorum and then of the Tartar power of the Golden Horde, led to an increase in the warring factions which roamed over the Tartar steppe. Tartar fought Tartar and the Turkic tribesmen who were breaking away from Tartar domination. Nogai and Circassian horsemen began to appear on the plains together with the mounted robber bands of so-called *brodniki* (roamers), many of them Polovtsi and Russian, on the look-out for loot and slaves.

It was as the guardians of the open southern frontiers that the Cossacks first appeared in Russian history.

The Origin of the Cossacks

Philologists have attempted to trace a possible connection between a Cossack (*kazak*) and a Kazakh, or even a Kasog, a Circassian of the north Caucasus. But it is generally accepted that the name 'Cossack' was originally applied to the Tartar raiders who roamed the southern plain, the word coming from the Turko-Tartar, meaning at first 'free adventurer'. For in the fifteenth century there were Azov, Perekop and even Belgorod Cossacks, all of them Tartar. Then, by usage, the word began to mean any lightly armed horseman who owed allegiance to neither khan nor sultan, prince nor tsar. It was applied also to any mounted steppe banditry as well as to the Russian and Ukrainian frontiersmen who fought against them. The name was much used in Russian, in that Tartar irregulars were often enrolled both in Muscovy and in Poland to combat the incursions of their own Tartar kith and kin.

The word 'Cossack' is first on record in the fourteenth century as in use by Greek trading stations on the Black Sea to describe the marauders of the hinterland. In the second half of the century there are several references to Tartar Cossacks in Russian, Polish and even Lithuanian employ, and in 1444 the principality of Ryazan to the south-east of Moscow had in its service a strong force of Kazan Tartars, afterwards known as the Kasimov Cossacks from the name of their leader, the Moslem Khan Kasim. In 1468 there is a further record of Cossacks in the pay of Moscow and a description of how both the Ryazan and Moscow Cossacks were employed as border fighters, guides and escorts for ambassadors and caravans across what was known as the 'wild plain' (*dikoe pole*) towards the Don and the Volga. That same year there appeared a Cossack leader with a Russian name, Ivan Runo, and from this time onwards Russian or Ukrainian Cossacks began to outnumber those of Tartar or tribal origin.

The early Cossacks of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, were made up of two distinct

elements. There were the light irregular horse, the 'free' Cossacks, who provided the guides and escorts and steppe patrols; some of these might themselves be given to banditry or sudden changes of allegiance. Then there were the so-called 'town' Cossacks (*gorodovye kazaki*), mainly cavalry based on certain frontier towns or outposts; these were individual mercenaries recruited for full- or part-time service in exchange for pay in money or in kind. Some had even been granted plots of land, usually for life, and had set themselves up as small farmers. These town Cossacks were to be found in all frontier areas and not only on the open southern flank; they were reported to be serving as far afield as Smolensk, Pskov, Novgorod, Velikiye Luki and Vologda.

The Poles also began to raise town Cossacks on very much the same pattern as those of Muscovy, but they appear to have been used mainly on the southern frontiers of the Ukraine (which of course means 'borderland') and were eventually recruited from the Ukrainian population.

The town Cossacks had little bearing on the development of what was later to become the 'free' Cossack peoples, for they were considered to be soldiers or soldier farmers, mercenaries with no allegiance except to their local commanders or their own families. For a long time they continued to exist as 'service Cossacks', the troops of governments or noblemen, but their numbers and importance were small. Some, indeed, did migrate to join the free Cossacks, in one instance setting up their own independent free Cossack community, but for the most part, having finished their service, they reverted to the Russian or Ukrainian population. Some service Cossack regiments were eventually converted to regular cavalry of the Tsarist Army.

But it is the 'free' Cossacks with whom we are concerned, Cossacks whose way of life welded them into what was in effect a separate people. Yet even the free Cossacks were divided, not so much by race as by the tongues they spoke, into the Ukrainian and Russian Cossacks, and the foreign Cossacks. Except for a few minority Ukrainian groups, which eventually became Russian, they have kept this distinction to the present day, even though they scattered and migrated over half a continent, repeatedly changing

their territories and their Cossack designations.

The first Ukrainian Cossacks were the Zaporozhian Cossacks of the Dnieper. These were the forerunners and cousins of what became loosely known as the Ukrainian Cossacks. The Zaporozhians eventually formed the Danube Cossacks, the Azov Cossacks and the Black Sea Cossacks. Ukrainian and Black Sea Cossacks gave birth to, and injected new blood into, what were to become the Kuban Cossacks. Only the Kuban Cossacks remain today, and these still speak the Ukrainian language.

Just as the Ukrainian Cossacks started with the Zaporozhian Cossacks, so the Don Cossacks were the fathers of many of the Russian Cossacks. For they threw off splinter groups which became the first Volga Cossacks, who in their turn became the Yaik (Ural) Cossacks, the Terek Cossacks and the Siberian Cossacks. Then there were the new Russian Cossack colonies settled by the Moscow government for the security of the continually expanding frontiers, the Grebensk Cossacks, the Astrakhan Cossacks, the new Volga Cossacks, the Orenburg Cossacks, the Transbaikals Cossacks and the Amur Cossacks. All these Cossacks were united by their common Russian tongue. All were, in various degrees, of mixed racial descent, but in all of them the Great Russian strain was predominant. In this respect they differed from the foreign Cossacks, such as the Bashkirs, the Turkomans and the Meshcheryaks, who, although regular cavalry in the Tsarist service, were in no respect Russian.

The Early Russian Cossacks

The early Russian Cossacks probably owed their origin to those bands of irregular horse who served any who would pay them, roaming to the south-east in the area of the middle Don beyond the range of the frontier town Cossacks. They first made their appearance in 1530 – only ten years before, their presence had been unknown on the Don steppe – and they grew so rapidly in strength and audacity that the Princes of Moscow and the

Nogai and the Crimean Khan all made armed forays against them.

Like the early Tartars the Cossacks were horsemen and nomads, hunting, fishing and trapping, tending their own or stolen herds, but living for the most part by plunder. There were no farmers among them; they despised all agriculturists and peasants. Their mobility put them beyond the reach of any law. Armed with sabre and lance, bow and arrows, they took their recruits and stole their women from wherever they could find them. Race was rarely a bar to acceptance in these groups which varied in size from a handful of men to bands numbered in thousands; Sari-Asman, one of the first of the Russian Cossacks' chieftains on the Don, was a Tartar.

Most of the reinforcements for the free Cossacks of the south-east came, however, from Great Russian stock. They came as individuals, women as well as men, in families or in small communities seeking sanctuary from serfdom and relief from crushing taxation, penury and starvation; many were malefactors escaping from the law. Still more were refugees from the Novgorod Republic. All were anxious to throw off the old life and seek a new, and since Cossackdom had little respect for Tsarist law and none for established custom and privilege, few were turned away. Once accepted, no Cossack would be delivered up, whatever his former crime. And so these robbers of the Don made all recruits Russian in speech, Orthodox in religion and Cossack in outlook.

The free Cossacks were a source of friction between the Crimean and Kazan Tartar Khanates, the Prince of the Nogai Horde and the Muscovite Tsar. Each blamed the other for the Cossacks' depredations. Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible), while disowning the Cossacks and publicly condemning their forays, secretly incited them to penetrate to the south-east. In 1570, when at war with the Crimean Tartars, he came out into the open, appealing to the Cossacks in the area of the Don to unite under military leaders, whom he himself subsidized, in order to fight the Tartar. The prospect of ready money and free goods acted like a magnet, and the many small Don communities began to coalesce under joint leadership. In that year, since regarded as the date of the birth of the Don Host, the Don Cossacks sent an official letter to the Tsar,



From an engraving showing a Don Cossack, c. late eighteenth century. (Hulton)

agreeing to his terms. They then moved from their temporary centre at Razdorskaya to their new capital of Cherkassk on the lower Don. Nine years later they provided the Tsar with a contingent of cavalry for his wars in Livonia.

The Crimean Tartars and their new masters, the Ottoman Turks, were under no illusions as to who was the Don Cossacks' paymaster. The Cossacks in the east and south-east became known to the Turk and Tartar as Muscovy Cossacks. Ivan IV on the other hand was punctilious in treating the free Cossacks as if they were independent of him, as of course they were, except that they took his money. When the Tartar war was over, Ivan once more publicly condemned the Cossack raids against the Tartars and Turks, while continuing behind the scenes to encourage their activity. And he rejected Tartar complaints about the presence of Cossacks on the Yaik River by simply denying that Cossacks were there at all; at

the same time he advised the Cossacks in the area to disclaim their own identity.

By this strategy of infiltration and war Ivan IV overran the Tartar territories of the south-east and east, and during his long reign pushed the borders of Muscovy across the Don steppe and down to Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea. The Nogai, the Kuban, Circassia and the Caucasus remained, however, firmly within the Ottoman Empire, as did the northern shore of the Black Sea held by the Crimean Tartars.

The Don Cossack Host

The customs and laws of the Don Cossacks became common to most of the new Russian-speaking

Cossack Hosts (*voiska*), as they came into being. Many were shared by the other great host, the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks, further to the west on the Dnieper, for the Zaporozhians and the Cossacks on the Don lived on friendly and close terms.

The Don Cossack communities, because they once had a strong Tartar element and lived and fought in Tartar fashion, assimilated into their Russian language many Tartar words, the chief becoming *ataman*, lieutenant *esaul* and tribute *yassak*. They affected Tartar dress. Like the Tartars they adopted the horse-tail standard as the symbol of authority; they were influenced by and used Tartar methods. But, nomads though they were, the Cossack families were unable to winter out on the open steppe and so began to set up fortified winter encampments along the banks of the great rivers. For in addition to being horsemen and hunters they were great fishermen and, moving their boats across the forty-mile neck of land between the Don and the Volga, they sailed down to the Caspian and made their way up the Yaik River. From fishing they turned to piracy, sacking the Tartar-Turkish settlements along the coasts of the Caspian and the Black Sea.

The collections of fortified Cossack villages near the rivers were known as *stanitsi* (herds) and the fortified permanent towns as *gorodki*. Each *stanitsa* had its own chief or *ataman* (*hetman* in the Ukraine) elected by a circle known as the *krug* (*rada* in the Ukraine). The common characteristic of these early Cossacks was that of a brotherhood in which all men were equal. Its social origin can only be guessed at. Some have said that the system of the *krug* was similar to that of the old Russia *vech* and that the communal ideas were brought in by the refugees from the old Novgorod Republic. Others that the theory and practice of egalitarianism was a reaction from Tsarist autocracy and oppression. Whatever the reason; there appears to be little doubt that in the early days the elected post of *ataman* was open to the newest and youngest recruit.

Although the *ataman* had autocratic powers in war, in peace he held his appointment for a definite period by the will of the *krug*, to whom he was answerable and by whom he could be deposed. Nor was it unknown for an unpopular

ataman to be lynched by his own Cossacks, so democratic and unruly was the administration. All Cossacks had the right to attend and speak at the *stanitsa krug*; Cossack resolutions and law once agreed upon were applied in autocratic fashion not only to Cossacks but to all inhabitants on Cossack territory, even though these were neither Cossacks nor Russians, nor represented in the *krug*.

None of the early Cossacks had any right to land as private property; all land was held in common ownership. Cossacks had equal rights to grazing and to the game and fish so plentiful on the steppe. Since the territories were rich in natural resources trade was little developed, and since grain was imported as part of the subsidy from the Tsar any form of agriculture was originally strictly forbidden on pain of severe penalties. But as they needed salt to preserve their fish, the Cossacks soon developed the salt pans on the lower Don and eventually became both farmers and exporters of salt.

According to romantic legend, the Cossacks developed as a hardened warrior people owning nothing which could not be moved. Arms, horses, saddlery and boats represented their worldly wealth as they roamed the vast steppe on the look-out for 'tongues' who could give them early intelligence of any enemy presence, this information being passed on to their brothers-in-arms by smoke signals. They lived, said the legend, one for all and all for one. And so, according to one interpretation, the Cossack has passed into history as a sort of Christian knight, a latter-day Kievan *bogatyr*, guarding the open steppe for Christendom and western civilization against the infidel Tartar and Turk. By the Turk and Muscovite on the other hand he was regarded as an unreliable, turbulent, thieving and murderous ruffian. For, although in 1614 the Don Cossacks recognized the overlordship of the Tsar, in effect this meant little in their view except that the Tsar had assumed a duty to help them out of any future difficulties. Though Russian in speech, they did not consider themselves to be Russians; they professed the Orthodox faith, but they had little respect for the Metropolitan in Moscow, later often siding with the 'old' as opposed to the 'new' believers of the reformed Church. And so they obeyed whom they pleased.

By 1630 they were so unpopular with Moscow

that the Tsar sent to them a letter of his displeasure (*opalnaya gramota*) by the hand of his ambassador, the boyar Ivan Karamyshev; for since 1623 the Tsar's business with the Don Cossacks had been handled by the Foreign Ministry (*Posolski Prikaz*). The Cossacks slew the envoy. Yet that did not inhibit them from imploring the Tsar's military aid when, in 1637, they got into difficulties in their attack on the Turkish fort of Azov.

The Golden Age of egalitarianism and communal living possibly existed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but by the eighteenth it had passed. For the Don Cossack territories eventually came to be peopled by three or more distinct classes. There were the original Cossacks, many of whom had prospered and become rich, owning spacious houses, herds of cattle and sometimes, from the late seventeenth century onwards, farming land adjoining their *khutora* or farmsteads. Then there were the newer arrivals, the poor Cossacks, who unless they moved on often proved a rebellious and lawless element within the community. The rich element, predictably, was the more conservative, more willing to come to some sort of terms with Moscow; the poorer new arrivals were bitterly opposed to Muscovy and were prepared rather to emigrate further afield both to escape the Tsarist controls and to secure their own fortunes. The third element were the non-Cossacks, a people virtually without franchise, rights or property.

By the end of the seventeenth century these distinctions had become marked. A new and rich aristocracy had come into being and the *atamans* and elders began to be selected from the influential and wealthy families rather than from the ranks of the fishermen and herdsman.

The First Volga Cossacks

Boatmen of the Don Cossacks sailed the Volga and the Caspian long before Ivan the Terrible's fleet of river craft, laden with soldiers, setting sail near Moscow, came down the mighty river to Astrakhan. When the Volga Basin passed from the

Tartars to Muscovy, the Cossacks had been long settled on the banks and islands and had already taken the name of the Volga Cossacks. It little suited them, however, to be incorporated into the rapidly growing Tsarist Empire; nor did their presence find favour with the Tsar despite the fact that they had afforded him some aid in penetrating to the Caspian. So when they attempted to continue to make a fat living by piracy, plundering the merchant vessels using the river, the Tsar ordered their dispersal or extermination.

In 1577 Muscovite troops had cleared the many islands and banks of the Volga, destroying all



Count Platov, the celebrated general and ataman of the Don Cossacks, who in 1801, at the order of the Tsar, set out on an abortive invasion of India. (Hulton)

fortifications and dwellings. The Volga Cossacks took to flight. Some went back to the Don. Others joined their compatriots already established on the Yaik (now the Ural) River to form the Yaik Cossacks. Others sailed up the Volga and its tributary the Kama to the area of the Urals and beyond, from whence, as Siberian Cossacks, they were shortly to cross the whole of Siberia from west to east. The last remnant of the Volga Cossacks, crossing the Caspian and entering the Terek River below the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, encamped on its banks, there to form the Terek Cossacks. The Yaik, Siberian and Terek Cossacks were all sons of the Don.

The Ukraine

In the west, Belorussia and the Ukraine remained as part of the dominion of Lithuania-Poland, the open steppe in the south, over which flowed the broad lower reaches of the Dnieper, the Bug and the Dniester, being the preserve of the Khan of the Crimean Tartars. From 1475 onwards the Crimean Tartars were particularly active and belligerent.

Life under the Pole was no happier for the Ukrainian than life under the Tsar was for the Russian. In some respects it was worse. The Polish government was foreign to them, and successive Polish kings and clerics sought to convert the population from its Orthodox faith to Roman Catholicism or to the Uniate Church, likewise subject to the Pope. Together with religious intolerance there was very high taxation and the introduction of the semi-feudal socage service, tying part of the peasants' labour to the landlord. The newly developed intensive cereal production was unpopular in that it further lowered the peasants' condition, while the immigration of Polish landlords and farmers and Jewish merchants and artisans into Ukrainian-speaking areas was bitterly resented.

In order to escape Polish repression, the Ukrainian population began to move, particularly from the western areas of Volhynia and Galicia, not to the Tartar steppe in the south but south-eastwards to the open uncolonized territories between the Dnieper and the Don, beyond the reach of the Polish *pan* (landowner). Tartar incursions would be less likely there than in the south. But even in that area the small farmers and peasants were not to remain entirely free, for they were often followed by the Ukrainian nobility with their strong-arm men who became self-appointed protectors and tax-gatherers. The Ukrainian nobility, in the main, were little disposed to take the part of their own countrymen against the Poles; many of them embraced the Roman Catholic faith and entered the Polish King's service. And it was largely because of this that the small landowner and peasant either joined

the Ukrainian Cossacks or looked to them for protection and leadership. In this way the Cossack became a symbol of Ukrainian nationality, a symbol with which both townsman and peasant identified himself. This situation had no parallel in Russia where the Don Cossacks were regarded almost as a race apart.

The Zaporozhian Cossacks

The earliest Ukrainian Cossacks were those of Zaporozhye, meaning 'beyond the cataracts'. For there, some time between 1530 and 1550, below the last of the Dnieper rapids the Ukrainian free Cossack bands collected on the main artery to the south beyond the reach of the Pole. They built a clearing (*sech*) in the wooded and reeded swamp-land about an old fort on one of the river islands, and there in the Zaporozhian Sech set up a home which was to expand rapidly until it took on the size and dignity of an independent state; it endured for nearly two centuries.

Except for their Ukrainian language the Zaporozhian Cossacks had an organization and characteristics close to those of Don Cossacks, with whom they lived on good terms, giving and receiving military aid in case of need. The basis of the organization was egalitarian. As horsemen they roamed the steppe, plundering and looting and fighting the Tartar, sometimes mounting great expeditions against the Crimea or into Moldavia. As fishermen and boatmen they sailed down the Dnieper to loot and burn Turkish settlements and towns on the Black Sea. They affected colourful Tartar clothes, wearing the hair of the head shaven except for a topknot and long mustachios. But there was one great distinction which set the Zaporozhians apart from all other Cossacks. Whereas the Cossacks on the Don lived as a people in great families and communities, Cossack begetting Cossack, the Zaporozhian Cossacks formed a purely military establishment, a warrior order, living in mud hut or barrack, for no women were allowed into the Sech. And so the Zaporozhian Cossacks came and went, fighting for a season or



a period of years, and then settling and often farming the near-by countryside, which recognized no law except that of the Zaporozhians.

In this way the rural population began to identify themselves with the Zaporozhians, if not as Zaporozhian Cossacks then at least as Ukrainian Cossacks. For the Ukrainian youth of the middle Dnieper was the main source of recruits for the Zaporozhians. According to the 1581 register, 83 per cent of the Zaporozhian Cossack strength was made up of Ukrainians and Belorussians; as many as 10 per cent were renegade Poles. There were very few Great Russians among them and the rest of the order (less than 7 per cent) consisted of Tartars, Moldavians, Circassians, Serbs, Livonians and Germans. By 1621 the Zaporozhians could count on a strength, augmented by local friendly Ukrainian Cossacks, of about 40,000 fighting men.

The Ukrainian Cossacks

Whereas the Zaporozhians were a close military order, the status of the early Ukrainian Cossack defies definition. The first were probably the town Cossacks employed by the Poles as military guards. Then there were the many Ukrainians who claimed to be Cossacks because of military service or association with the Zaporozhians. Others were independent fighting groups who protected the new settlers between the Dnieper and the Don from the rapacious nobility and the occasional Tartar incursion. The Poles also sought to attract Ukrainians into their regular forces as Cossack cavalry and in 1578 even appointed a Cossack *hetman*, responsible of course to themselves, in an effort to harness this restless, unruly people. A Polish register was instituted in an attempt to

record all who had Cossack status, granting them economic concessions and regalia, and so tie them to the Warsaw kingdom. Yet, knowing that the very word 'Cossack' was synonymous with rebel, the Poles tried at the same time to restrict the register to a mere fraction of those who claimed to be Ukrainian Cossacks. Many Ukrainians were resentful because they had been excluded; many others boycotted the register.

In the spring of 1648 there was a great and violent Cossack uprising against Polish rule, led by the son of a registered Cossack, a member of the Ukrainian gentry, one Bogdan Khmelnytsky, who had once served with the Zaporozhian Sech. The uprising spread into a bitter and most terrible war, a pogrom in which Gentile murdered Jew, Greek Orthodox slew Catholic, Ukrainian destroyed Pole and the poor dispossessed the rich. Khmelnytsky, who was both warrior and politician, patriot and charlatan, allied himself with Zaporozhians and the Crimean Khan against the Polish kingdom. Eventually he forced Poland to recognize the East Ukrainian provinces of Kiev, Bratslav and Chernigov as Cossack territories from which Jews, Poles and Catholics were to be excluded. The non-Cossack peasantry and the inhabitants of the other territories got nothing.

The peace was not kept and Khmelnytsky turned to Moscow for help; by the 1654 Pereyaslav Agreement, the Tsar recognized the Ukraine as an independent state, which meant in effect independent of Poland but 'under Moscow suzerainty'. War broke out between Poland and Moscow until finally, by the 1667 Truce of Andrusovo, Russia and Poland divided the Ukraine north of the area held by the Zaporozhian Cossacks into left- and right-bank Ukraine, the Dnieper River forming what was in effect a frontier between them. On the right bank the Ukrainian Cossacks continued to make trouble for the Pole. On the Russian left bank they were eventually to pass into extinction.

The Ukrainian Cossack continued his existence, however, in Tsarist military regiments until late in the nineteenth century and was even to be found in the early Red Army. But in fact, even from early times, he had no particular distinction or way of life which set him apart from the Ukrainian farmer or peasant. Nor did he form, like the Don Cossack and the Zaporozhian Cossack, a close-knit social

community. Cossackdom in the Ukraine thus tended to be artificial, united only in its determination to resist the Pole.

The Ukrainian Cossacks gave birth to a separate branch of the Cossack family, known as the Slobodsk Cossacks. From the beginning of the seventeenth century Cossacks and peasants, fleeing from the Ukraine to escape the terrible devastation of the wars, made their way due eastwards into the Muscovite borderlands along the River Donets where Belgorod, Kharkov, Sumy and Izyum now stand. Many of these were the have-nots who secured no advantage from Khmelnytsky's Pereyaslav Agreement. There they colonized a new frontier state (not far from that of the Don Cossacks) which became known as the Slobodskaya Ukraine.

Since they were settled on the territory of the Tsar, Moscow soon took a hand in organizing them for frontier defence. At first they were allowed their own form of internal government on a Cossack pattern, except that all appointments had to be confirmed by Moscow. In return they had to provide five cavalry regiments, each about 1,000 strong and based on a main town. All were in receipt of Tsarist pay.

The Slobodsk Cossacks had only minor military significance. Being Ukrainians, they suffered some oppression at Tsarist hands. The regiments were alternately cut and expanded, disarmed and formed into a labour corps, rearmed and then eventually Russianized. Taking their names from their depot towns and losing their Cossack designation, they then became regular hussars of the Imperial Russian Army, remaining in the service until 1917.

The Tsars and the Russian Cossacks

Although by the end of the seventeenth century the Zaporozhian and Ukrainian Cossacks had not yet developed into their later pattern or migrated into the areas where they would be found in the twentieth century, Russian Cossackdom was

already assuming the shape which was to endure, with only minor changes, until 1914.

The largest, most independent and most troublesome of all the hosts was that of the Don Cossacks, based on the middle and lower Don and its tributaries. Nor did this host move from its original home on the Don steppe. The Volga Cossacks had disappeared. The Yaik Cossacks, at first so dependent on their Don parents that they would refer all matters of importance to them, became an independent host in 1591, and from 1613 onwards recognized the overlordship of the Tsar in that they received from him gifts of money, powder and lead in exchange for soldiers. Their relationship with Moscow was on very much the same footing as that of the Don Cossacks and they provided Muscovy with troops who journeyed as far afield as the Terek.

The Terek Cossacks developed somewhat differently. Originally Volga Cossacks, they had set up independent colonies along the banks of the Terek River near the foothills of the Caucasus, dating from about 1577, and soon became involved in continuous frontier fighting with nomads and hillmen, Circassians, Kabardans, Chechens and Nogai. From many of these people they took recruits and women, who introduced into the host their particularly striking Caucasian costumes. But the Terek Cossacks did not remain fully independent for long; in 1586, Muscovite troops arrived at the mouth of the Terek and built a number of forts. So the Terek Cossacks became a host of fishermen, border guards and soldiers in Moscow pay, although they kept their free Cossack community organization. They received considerable reinforcement from the Grebensk Cossacks (meaning the Cossacks of the mountain ridge), a people who were once either Don Cossacks from the area between the Rivers Donets and Kalitva or, some say, town Cossacks from the old principality of Ryazan. These had settled on the right bank of the Sunzha River, near where Grozny now stands, and had intermarried with Circassians and hill folk.

The Siberian Cossacks were different yet again. Originally Volga Cossacks, they had been dispersed in 1577 and had made their way up the Kama to the area of the Urals. The discipline of the community appears to have broken down at



A trumpeter of the Caucasian (Terek/Kuban) Guard Regiment. By Cossack standards he is exceptionally well mounted. (Hulton)

an early stage, for groups of Cossacks hired themselves out to Muscovite noblemen and traders as soldiers and escorts. The Tsars encouraged these merchants to move into the territories of the Khan of the Siberian Tartars, whose capital was in Sibir (Tobolsk), promising them a tax-free leasehold of the lands they overran. Setting out from the area of Perm, the Cossacks, under a leader Yermak Timofeivich and in the pay of the merchants Stroganov, moved by river into the Siberian Khanate, ruled by Moslem Tartars but peopled by Ostyaks, Voguls and Mordvins. The area was sparsely populated and the Cossack bands were rarely more than 500 strong. Firearms, however, speedily overcame the opposition of spears, bows and arrows. Sibir was taken in 1587 and in the next sixty years, as the Cossacks moved steadily eastwards along the waterways, the whole of Siberia was overrun as far as the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

The Siberian Cossacks were soldiers and colonizers, traders and frontiersmen, bandits and the Tsar's tax-gatherers. They were free in no sense

of the word, and worked for whoever would employ them, eventually settling as frontier guards and town Cossacks. They threw off in 1639 a new Cossack community of the same type, the Transbaikal Cossacks.

Although many of these Cossacks were, indirectly, of inestimable value to the Tsar, the strong free Cossack communities and in particular the Don and the Yaik Hosts and the Zaporozhian Cossacks were regarded by Moscow with suspicion and hostility. For they harboured runaway serfs, thieves, murderers and, worst of all, any who wanted to bring down Tsardom. In 1670 the Don Cossacks, under Stenka Razin, rose in rebellion, massacring all Russians irrespective of sex or age. The Tsarist troops, after murdering their officers, joined the rebels. Eventually Razin, with a great force, moved up the Volga towards the capital and was only defeated when he reached Simbirsk. He was executed in Red Square. Thereafter, from 1671 onwards, the Don Cossacks were obliged to swear fealty to the Tsar.

The eighteenth century saw a period during which new hosts were formed, but the freedom of the existing hosts was further restricted by Moscow. The existence of any real freedom was unacceptable to the Tsarist centre. The wild frontiers were rapidly receding to the east and south-east and the growing power of the Russian standing army was capable of looking after the open borders which remained. On the other hand the Cossacks were invaluable to the Tsar as a very cheap source of frontier guards and soldiery. And so Moscow took a middle-of-the-road policy, permitting the Cossacks to retain their own military and civil organization but forbidding any further recruiting for the hosts. The central government also made great encroachments upon the independence and privilege of the Cossack communities.

It was that great Russianizer Peter the Great who first broke the military power of the Cossacks and made them hand over their standing military formations to the Russian Army. The Ukrainian Cossacks under their *hetman* Ivan Mazepa, in league with the Zaporozhian Cossacks, made their last great bid for independence when they took the field at Poltava as allies of the King of Sweden. After that fatal battle the Ukraine reverted to the name of Little Russia, as if to emphasize that the

Ukrainians were ethnologically Russians. The office of *hetman* was left vacant and Ukrainian regiments were sent as far afield as Persia or, as a labour force, to build the Ladoga Canal. What remained of the Ukrainian Cossacks continued to lead a chequered career throughout the eighteenth century as repression was intensified or slackened. In 1750 the office of *hetman* was revived, only to be abolished fourteen years later by Catherine the Great. In 1781 the Ukraine was incorporated in the Russian Empire. The Ukrainian Host had ceased to exist and the remaining Cossack regiments were re-formed as carabiniers. The Slobodsk Cossacks had also been Russianized during this period.

After Poltava, Peter the Great moved against the Zaporozhian Sech and utterly destroyed it in the summer of 1709. This was the end of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Some went into hiding; some were transported; some fled down the Dnieper and set up a new *sech* near Aleshki under Tartar-Turkish protection. But this *sech* did not survive and most of its number drifted back into the Ukraine. Others fled to the Danube where they became the Danube Cossacks, a warrior host used by the Turkish Sultan in his wars against dissident Greeks and attracting to their ranks Serbs, Moldavians, Bulgarians and Turks.

Russia still required soldiers, however, and to Moscow the Zaporozhian freebooters were a lesser evil than the Ukrainian nationalists. In 1775 Catherine's favourite, Potëmkin, re-formed the Cossack remnants, who regarded themselves as first- and second-generation descendants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, into a new host which, in 1783, became known as the Black Sea Cossacks. In 1790 Potëmkin took the honorary title of Hetman of the Cossack Hosts of the Black Sea and Yekaterinoslav. Numbering in all about 10,000 souls, they were given land between the Dnieper and the Bug; then, between 1788 and 1792, they were transported to the newly colonized lands to the east of the Sea of Azov by the Taman and the Kuban. In 1794 they founded their new capital Yekaterinodar (now Krasnodar).

The Don Cossacks took part in Peter the Great's Turkish War against the fortress of Azov but they were forbidden by the Tsar henceforth to sail either the Azov or the Black Sea. When the Don



Soldiers of the Black Sea Cossack Squadron of the Guard, c. 1817. Note the variations in uniform. (Hulton)

Host rejected Peter's demand that all serfs who had fled after 1695 be returned to Russia, Prince Dolgoruki arrived on the Don to enforce it. This led to an uprising and the execution of 7,000 Don Cossacks. From 1738 the Don *ataman* was appointed from Moscow and from 1754 onwards even the elders were government-nominated. There were severe restrictions on Cossack rights and liberties and, under Catherine II, the Cossack military organization was separated from the civil administration, which in its turn was tied more closely to that of Russia. The military ranks of the host were equated with those of the Russian Army and the leading Cossack notables were confirmed in a position comparable with that of the Russian nobility. There was a spread in the private ownership of

land, and serfdom was introduced to the steppes.

Further to the east the Yaik Cossacks suffered a similar diminution of their liberties. In 1720 the Host was put under the Russian Governor of Astrakhan and in 1744 under Orenburg. In 1772, following Cossack uprisings, the office of *ataman* was abolished and the Yaik Host was ruled directly by the Tsarist military representative. Between 1773 and 1775 followed the great uprising by Pugachev, a Don Cossack of humble birth who represented himself to the Yaik Host as the Tsar Peter III. The Yaik Cossacks were joined by Kalmyks and Bashkirs and some of the Don Host and eventually controlled a great area from Tsaritsyn to Nizhni-Novgorod and from Perm to the Irgiz. With the collapse of the Pugachev revolt

whole communities were executed or transported, the name 'Yaik' was obliterated from Russian maps, the Yaik River was renamed the Ural and the Yaik Cossacks became the Ural Cossacks. All officials were named from Moscow and the Ural Host lost its artillery.

The Grebensk Cossacks in the far Caucasus had been ordered by Peter the Great to move to the left bank of the Terek and there form five *gorodki*. In the fighting in 1716 they lost 500 men, from which loss the tiny host never really recovered. In 1819 they were commanded by an officer of the regular army instead of an *ataman* and in 1832 they were finally absorbed into the newly formed Caucasian Line Cossack Host.

The Terek Cossacks were similarly ordered to move in 1722, this time to leave the Terek and go to the Sulak and Agrakhan, becoming known temporarily as the Agrakhansk Cossacks. From this forward position they were forced out by the attacks of Chechens and Daghestanis. They were then renamed the Terek-Kizlyar Cossacks until 1832, when they too were absorbed into the Caucasian Line Cossack Host. When this was broken up in 1860 they reverted once more to their historic title of Terek Cossacks.

The New Cossack Communities

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries successive Tsarist governments created new artificial Cossack communities and hosts in order to colonize and Russianize newly conquered territories and act as a counter-weight to the indigenous populations. The new Cossack hosts were recruited from the older Cossacks, the settlers being moved either by the inducement of grants in the form of land or by the forcible transportation of families. Many of these Cossacks were former townsmen or peasants uprooted from the other side of the Empire. The transplanted Cossack hosts were often little suited to their new life and suffered great hardships.

In 1733 about 500 Don Cossack families, together with the same number of Russian and Ukrainian peasants, were settled in the basin of

the middle Volga to the north of Tsaritsyn to form the new Volga Cossacks. They were given the usual Cossack organization and an annual subsidy of money and grain. This host did not thrive and in 1770 was split, part becoming the Volga Cossack Regiment serving to the south of Azov, while the other half moved to Mozdok in the Caucasus where it formed the Mozdok Cossack Regiment. This was kept in being by recruiting local tribesmen and seven years later it numbered no fewer than 200 Kalmyks in its ranks. The Astrakhan Cossacks were a small colony, founded in 1737, which lined the right bank of the Volga from Astrakhan to Chernyi Yar. In 1750 they became an independent host forming a single cavalry regiment of 600 men and continued to flourish by taking in the remnants left by the Volga Cossacks. By 1845 the host could put three regiments in the field.

The Orenburg Cossacks were brought into being in the middle of the eighteenth century to protect the south-east borders against the Bashkir and Kirghiz tribes, the nucleus being formed partly from Russian farmers on the banks of the Iset River and partly from town Cossacks of Samara, Alekseevsk, Sergievsk and Ufa. The official date of the founding of the host was 1755 when it provided a force of 4,500 military. In 1798 it could count on 10,000 men-at-arms and it steadily expanded by taking in discharged soldiers and their families.

Because it was impossible to find sufficient Slavs for service in Asia, large numbers of foreign non-Slav Cossacks were recruited in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Kalmyk Cossack Host was brought into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century from the Tartar-Turkoman people who lived between Azov and the Caspian. In 1836 they provided Cossack detachments, 1,500 strong, serving with the Orenburg Cossacks, but since they were regarded as politically unreliable they were disbanded six years later and were resettled on the land. The Bashkir-Meshcheryak Cossacks were also raised at the beginning of the eighteenth century for war against the Kirghiz and in 1825, although they provided only 10,000 troops on active duty, they totalled in all 345,000 souls. They outnumbered the Slav Cossacks in the area (Ural and Orenburg) by at least four to one,



A Terek cantonment, probably in the Caucasus, photographed in 1869. Note the wide variations in dress. (Hulton)

and the Tsarist authority regarded their rapid increase with apprehension. An attempt to restrict the numbers under arms caused resentment and mutinies, this leading to the final disbandment of the force in 1845.

The most successful resettling of Cossack population came, however, in the new territories in the Caucasus won from Turkey. The Black Sea Cossacks, indirectly descended from Zaporozhian and Ukrainian Cossacks, had been settled in the area of the Taman and Kuban at the end of the eighteenth century. The Black Sea Cossacks were rapidly and heavily reinforced by Ukrainian-speaking peoples, by Zaporozhians returned from Turkish service, by the descendants of Ukrainian Cossacks, but mainly by Ukrainian peasants. By 1801 they could provide no fewer than twenty regiments. In 1832 the original settlers, known as the East Kuban Group, together with the Terek Cossacks, formed the Caucasian Line Cossack Host, numbering in all 300,000 of both sexes. At the end of the Caucasian wars the Line Host was disbanded and the peoples reverted to their old titles of Terek Cossacks and Kuban Cossacks. The western group, the Black Sea Cossacks, were taken into the Kuban Cossack Host at about this time.

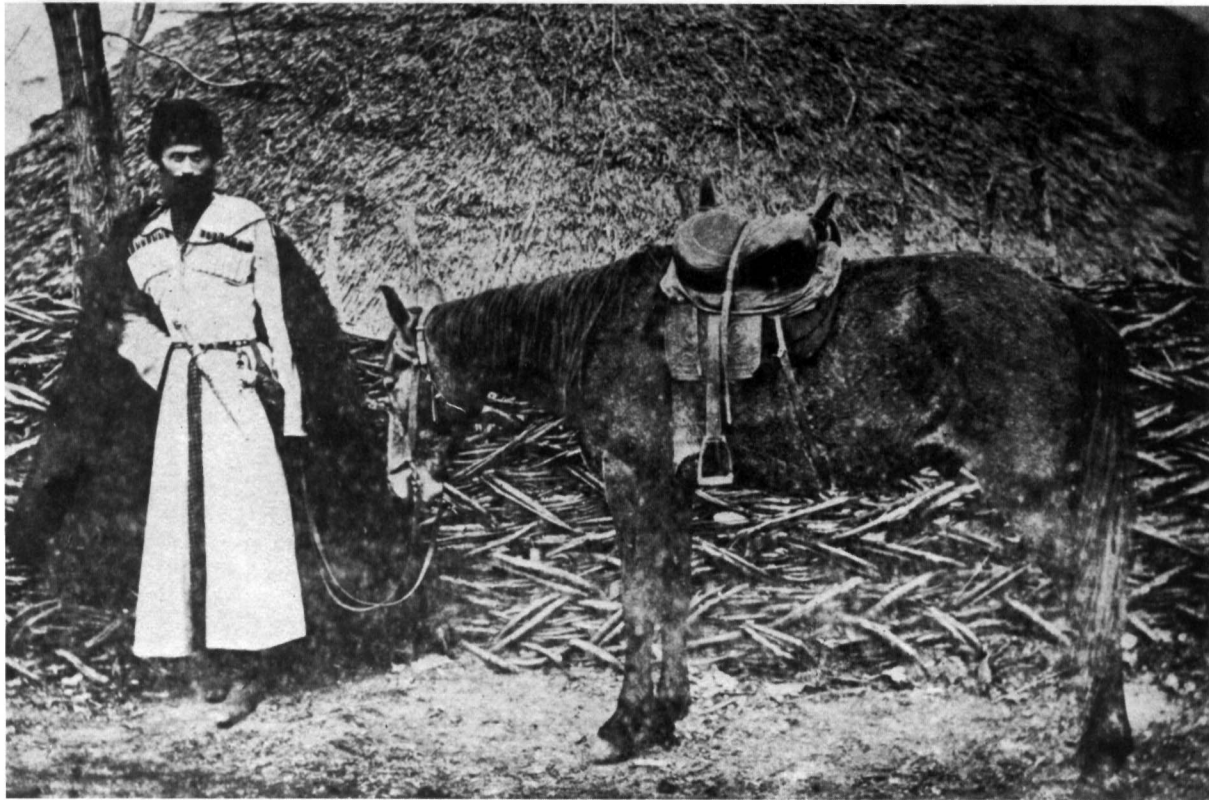
The Kuban Cossack Host entered the twentieth century as the only Ukrainian-speaking Cossack community and the largest of all the hosts except for that of the Don Cossacks. During the nine-

teenth century it had taken in the last independent remnants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, by then calling themselves the Azov Cossacks and the Danube Cossacks (also known as the New Russian Cossack Host).

In Siberia the Cossacks had stretched across the waist of the Continent to Lake Baikal and the Pacific Ocean, and the defence of the borders towards the south had been entrusted, since 1639, to the Siberian and Transbaikal Cossacks together with the non-Slav tribal Buryat and Tungus regiments organized on a Cossack pattern. In 1851 these scattered detachments were officially brought together as the Transbaikal Cossack Host. Seven years later the Amur Cossacks were thrown off from the Transbaikal Cossacks and in turn gave birth to the Ussuri Cossack Host.

The Ephemeral Ukrainian Cossack

The Cossacks served Russia well during its many wars, and no soldiers were more steadfast to the Tsar during the period of the Napoleonic wars. The Don Cossacks in particular excelled in his service. It was said, for example, that according to the official assessment they could raise only 19,000



A photograph taken in 1869 of a Terek or Kuban Cossack. His horse is typical of the poorly bred steppe pony used by all Cossacks. (Hulton)

troops in 1763. In 1802 this was raised to a maximum of 40,000. Yet during the Napoleonic wars the Don Cossacks formed eighty-six regiments totalling over 50,000 men, of which 20,000 fell in battle or died on campaign. The other Cossack hosts provided a total of twenty-five regiments for field service against Napoleon.

Other so-called Cossack regiments were to be found serving the Tsar during this period. Yet they had no host and were hardly likely to be recognized as Cossacks by the men from the Don or the Terek. Many of these were in fact regular Tsarist cavalry, given Cossack names in deference to nationalist opinion. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the Tsarist Ukrainian Cossack regiments which appeared during the Napoleonic wars. By 1816 the need had passed and the Ukrainian Cossack cavalry were converted into uhlans. In 1831 two further Ukrainian Cossack regiments came into being on the army lists, this time to deal with civil unrest in Poland, this possibly being a political manoeuvre to divert hostility from the Russian.

These two regiments were eventually moved to the Terek where they became the Vladikavka Regiment. During the nineteenth century Ukrainian Cossack regiments alternately appeared and disappeared in the Tsarist ranks.

Many of the contemporary sketches and prints of Cossack cavalry during the early nineteenth century give the impression of well-mounted, uniformly equipped and superbly turned-out Tsarist lancers rather than Cossacks.

The Cossack Hosts in the Twentieth Century

In 1855 Cossackdom in the main Cossack Hosts was still a state within a state. Once a Cossack, always a Cossack, and no man could leave or



A charge by the lancers of the Don Cossack Regiment of the Guard, c. 1817. The west European influence of St Petersburg can be clearly seen in the style of uniform. (Hulton)

woman marry outside the host without the permission of the *ataman*. Non-Cossacks living in the domain of the host originally had no fixed property rights nor were they eligible for military service. Cossack males on the other hand were exempt from many Tsarist taxes, including the poll tax, and shared free communal land, game and fishing rights in return for military service. Although Catherine II had done much to divorce the military from the civil administration within the hosts and to Russianize the Cossacks, the military still stood at the head of the Cossack people. Even in St Petersburg the responsibility for Cossack lands was that of the Minister for War and was controlled by the Main Administration of Cossack Hosts until 1910, when it was transferred to a Cossack Department of the General Staff.

Since 1827 the Tsarevich held the titular rank of Chief Ataman of All the Cossack Hosts. Within the hosts the *ataman* was usually, but not always, a Cossack appointed from the capital and of the old Russian or new Cossack nobility. Invariably he

held senior military rank. The chief judge and the head priest to the host were similarly nominated from St Petersburg. The host *ataman's* post was in some respects comparable with that of a Russian governor-general.

To assist him in his task of government the *ataman* had an executive (*pravlenie*), made up of the deputy *ataman*, the paymaster and two elected members, together with an assembly (*sbor*) consisting of elected members. This organization was common and was repeated at the various levels of administration within the host. The host itself was divided into a number of *otdely* (*okrugi* on the Don) which in their turn consisted of *stanitsi* made up of one or more *khutora* or *poseloki*. The primary organization was sometimes called the *yurta*.

At the level of host *ataman*, most of the real power rested in the hands of the deputy *ataman*, a St Petersburg official who was rarely a Cossack. In the Don Host this deputy filled all permanent appointments in the administration with Russians and so the Russianizing influence steadily

increased in its momentum. Some measures were repressive in that they favoured the Russian centre; others were liberalizing in that they eliminated old abuses. Whichever they were, the Cossack was usually the loser. In 1866 all Cossacks were brought under Russian administration, law and police control, and three years later a law was introduced to enable individual Cossacks to renounce at will their Cossack status and for non-Cossacks to enjoy full property rights in Cossack lands. By 1870 all Cossack officials everywhere were either appointed or confirmed from St Petersburg, and only the *stanitsa* and *khutor* remained with its own elected administration.

The Cossack communities were never really rich although in comparison with the Russian peasant the Cossack farmer was prosperous. Originally hunters, fishermen and salt exporters, they turned their hands firstly to horse-, steer- and sheep-raising and then to the growing of grain, tobacco and grapes. Because of the burden of long military service, trade and manufacturing tended to be in the hands of the non-Cossack, particularly the Russian, the Armenian and the Jew. Cossack land was divided under three heads – communal land allotted and administered by the host; communal land allotted and administered by the local rural authority, the *stanitsa*; and land privately owned. Some of the common land had in fact been made over to the private use of the nobility, particularly

by the early nineteenth century, but thereafter this tendency was reversed. In 1882, for example, as much as 20 per cent of the land was privately owned as opposed to 64 per cent owned by the *stanitsa* and 16 per cent by the host. In 1909 only 10 per cent was privately owned, but the share of the *stanitsi* had dropped to 50 per cent. Everywhere there was land-hunger. Agricultural methods were inefficient and the individual Cossack could rarely get enough for his needs. The landless *inogorodniki*, the non-Cossack Russian and Ukrainian population inside the host, who by 1914 outnumbered the Cossacks, demanded land as their right.

In racial composition the Don Cossacks were almost entirely Great Russian. The Kuban Cossacks on the other hand were Ukrainian. The Terek Cossacks were Great Russian with some Ukrainian admixture, but both Kuban and Terek Cossacks were strongly influenced by the Caucasian peoples and in particular by the Circassians, whose dress, accoutrements and horses they had taken into use. The Ural Cossacks were reckoned to be 93 per cent Great Russian, 5 per cent Tartar and 2 per cent Kalmyk. The further east one went, the less Great Russian blood was to be found in the Cossacks of Siberia and the Far East. Nearly all the Asiatic Cossacks spoke Russian, however, and regarded themselves primarily as Russians.



French stragglers during the retreat from Moscow, 1812, being butchered by Cossack lancers. From a painting by Doré. (Hulton)

Cossack Military Service under the Tsar

Although the St Petersburg government robbed the Cossacks of their privileges there was no thought of lightening any of their military burdens. Originally, in return for the grant of common lands, the Cossack adult male had been at the disposal of the Tsar for as long as he could sit a horse. Not until 1835 was liability for service limited to thirty years from the recruit's nineteenth year. Even so, up to 1863 as much as 10 per cent of the male population were continually away from home and under arms. There was some reduction in the period of active service promulgated in the 1874 Army Reforms; in 1897 the whole period of service was limited to twenty years, and in 1909 to eighteen years.

These eighteen years were divided into one year of induction and preparatory training, twelve years of active service, and five years in the reserve. But of the twelve years' active part of the service only the first four were with the colours; for the remaining two four-year periods the soldier returned home, being called up and under arms for only seasonal refresher training. In peacetime, therefore, service with the colours was probably restricted to about five years. Even so, more than 60 per cent of the Cossack male population served, compared with an average of 31 per cent of the rest of the Tsar's subjects.

The main burden of military service was financial, for the Cossack had to provide at his own expense his horse, saddlery, uniform and equipment. Only the rifle was found for him by the government and half the cost of that was charged to the host. In 1910 it cost 250 roubles to fit out a Don Cossack, and for a Kuban Cossack as much as 300 roubles (or £30 at 1910 English value), no small amount to a father who had to equip four or more sons. Although this arrangement was satisfactory to the Russian treasury, since in wartime the Cossacks provided over 70 per cent of the Russian cavalry, it resulted in too many Cossacks reporting for service poorly mounted, even by the

very indifferent standard of the steppe horse, and with shoddy and worn-out equipment. For in the nineteenth century the Cossack called to active service hoped to make good his equipment and his poor pay, which in 1886 was less than 10 roubles (£1) a year, by looting.

The basic military unit, as with Jenghis Khan's Mongol-Tartar hordes, was the *sotnya*, the 100 men who formed the cavalry squadron and the infantry company. Six squadrons formed a cavalry regiment, though many of the squadrons furnished to the Imperial Army in war remained independent outside the regimental structure. In 1893 the peacetime strength of the Cossacks under arms was put at 65,000 men made up of 314 cavalry squadrons (51 regiments), 20 horse batteries and 54 infantry companies, to be increased on mobilization to 180,000 men, 890 cavalry squadrons (144 regiments), 40 horse batteries and 108 infantry companies. This figure of 180,000 could be further increased to 350,000 trained cavalry.

In fact when war did come in 1914, the Cossacks raised for the field force alone 939 cavalry squadrons, of which 360 came from the Don, 202 from the Kuban, 107 from the Orenburg, 66 from the Terek, and 54 each from the Siberian and Transbaikalian Cossacks. The Astrakhan, Semirychie, Amur and Ussuri Cossacks each provided less than 14 squadrons.

In peacetime all the Cossack hosts furnished squadrons or detachments, even though these were as small as one-quarter of a squadron, for the Emperor's Cossack Guard. The Don Cossacks, however, recruited and maintained two complete cavalry regiments of the Guard. Whereas part of the Guard squadrons might be mounted on the larger west European horses, the line Cossacks used the horse of the open steppe, a small rough and ugly pony, probably of Mongolian origin and often of the unmistakable 'tarpan' type, dun in colour with erect mane, big and long asinine head, and without a trace of hot blood in them. They lacked strength and weight but were hardy, had great endurance and were handy under the saddle, sometimes being capable of bursts of great speed over short distances. In 1883 there was a total of 1,300,000 Cossack horses broken to saddle or shaft, and a further 1,200,000 feral horses in the Cossack steppe herds.



An artist's impression of the *djigitovka*, the daring feats of horsemanship which the Terek Cossacks learned from the early Circassian horsemen. (Hulton)

Cossacks rode their horses freely and with great agility and skill. From the Circassians they had learned the *djigitovka*, the circus showmanship and equestrian tricks. But horse-schooling or military dressage in the west European sense was largely unknown to them. Except in the Guards regiments, spurs were never worn in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Cossacks in the Tsarist forces, reliance being placed on a heavy whip (*nagaika*) which was part of every Cossack's military equipment. In consequence horses were rarely, if ever, ridden 'on the bit'. Nor did the Cossack horse, outside the guard, ever feel a curb, for the regulation bridle was a simple single-reined snaffle.

In addition to their own military structure the Cossacks had their own rank titles from the simple *kazak*, *prikazni* (corporal), *uryadnik* (sergeant), *vakhmistr* (common for all Russian cavalry sergeant-majors), *khорunji* (cornet), *sotnik* (lieutenant), *pod-esaul* (captain), *esaul* (major) and *starshina* (lieu-

tenant-colonel). Thereafter they used Russian rank titles.

The Cossack's equipment consisted of a *papakha*, a busby usually of lamb's wool, a hood (*bashlik*), tunic, breeches, leather knee-boots, a forage cap and cover, an infantry-pattern greatcoat and a fur coat or pelisse. The Terek and Kuban Cossacks in addition wore the *cherkesska*, a long Circassian tunic with cartridge pockets sewn on either side of the breast, a *beshmet* or close-fitting Tartar waistcoat worn under the *cherkesska*, and a *burka* or black sleeveless felt coat. A proportion of the Don, Ural and Astrakhan Cossacks carried a cavalry-pattern lance without a pennon, for the front rank only, a Berdan rifle and a curved dragoon-type sword, except that the sword-guard was never fitted to the hilt. Unlike the cavalry of the line no bayonet was carried, nor a bayonet scabbard fitted to the sword-scabbard. The Transbaikalian Cossacks and the Amur Cossacks, who were more likely to be engaged in small wars and policing, carried the

- 1 Tobolsk Town Cossack, c. 1784
2 Ukrainian Cossack, c. 1710
3 Zaporozhian Cossack, c. 1700



Don Cossack of the Guard, 1776-90



- 1 Ural Cossack of the Guard, 1798–1801
2 Cossack of the Imperial Guard, 1812–14
3 Cossack Artilleryman of the Caucasian
Line Host, c. 1840





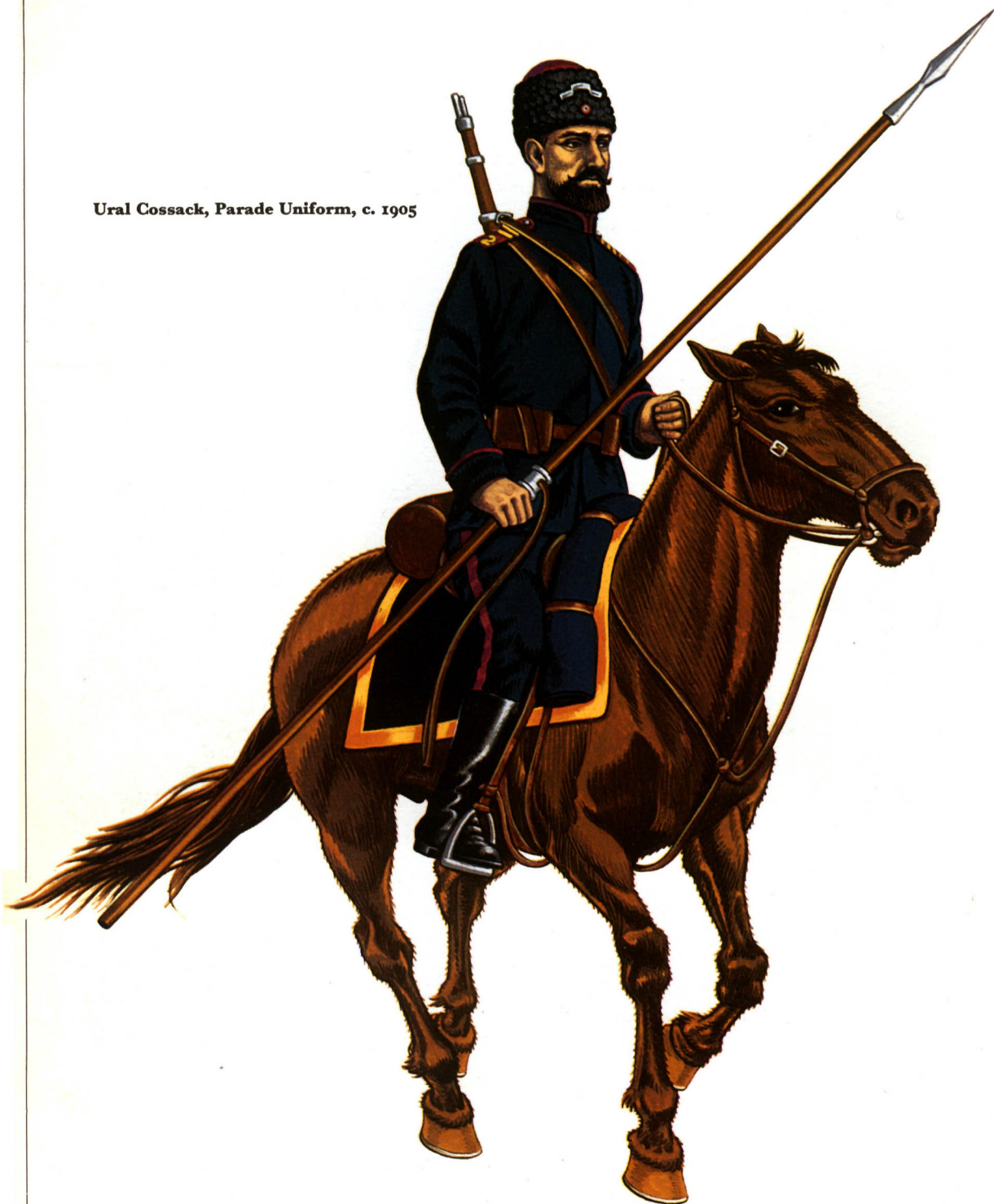
- 1 Kalmyk Cossack, c. 1840
 2 Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard of the Emperor's Personal Escort, Ceremonial Dress, c. 1880
 3 Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard of the Emperor's Personal Escort, Undress, c. 1880



- 1 Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard, Trumpeter of the Emperor's Personal Escort, Ceremonial Dress, c. 1880
- 2 Don Cossack *Ataman* Guard Officer, Undress, c. 1890
- 3 Ural Cossack of the Guard, Field Service Uniform, c. 1890



Ural Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1905





1



2



3

- 1 Orenburg Cossack, Undress Uniform, c. 1905
 2 Don Cossack, Field Service Uniform, c. 1914
 3 Ural Cossack, Field Service Uniform, c. 1914



1



3



2

- 1 Kuban Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1914
- 2 Don Cossack, Field Service Summer Uniform, c. 1944
- 3 Kuban Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1945



The camera's record of the *djigitovka*. (Hulton)

obsolescent Krinka rifle, a lance and Cossack sword, but with the addition of a pistol. The Orenburg, Semirychie and Siberian Cossacks had the Berdan rifle and Cossack sword but carried no lances until shortly before the First World War. Similarly, until 1914 Kuban and Terek Cossacks were armed only with Berdan rifles, Circassian swords and a large Circassian dagger (*kinzhal*). Whereas all other Cossacks carried the sword on a sword-belt over the right shoulder, the Kuban and Terek Cossacks wore it on a waist-belt which also carried the dagger. All Cossacks carried the rifle slung across the back, the sling coming across the right shoulder, the opposite shoulder to all Tsarist cavalry of the line. Each man carried sixty rounds, thirty in a leathern pouch on the belt, the rest in a bandolier slung over the left shoulder.

On the Cossacks' value in war there are a number of contradictory opinions. The Cossack peoples themselves had a very high opinion of the military worth of their troops and there is no

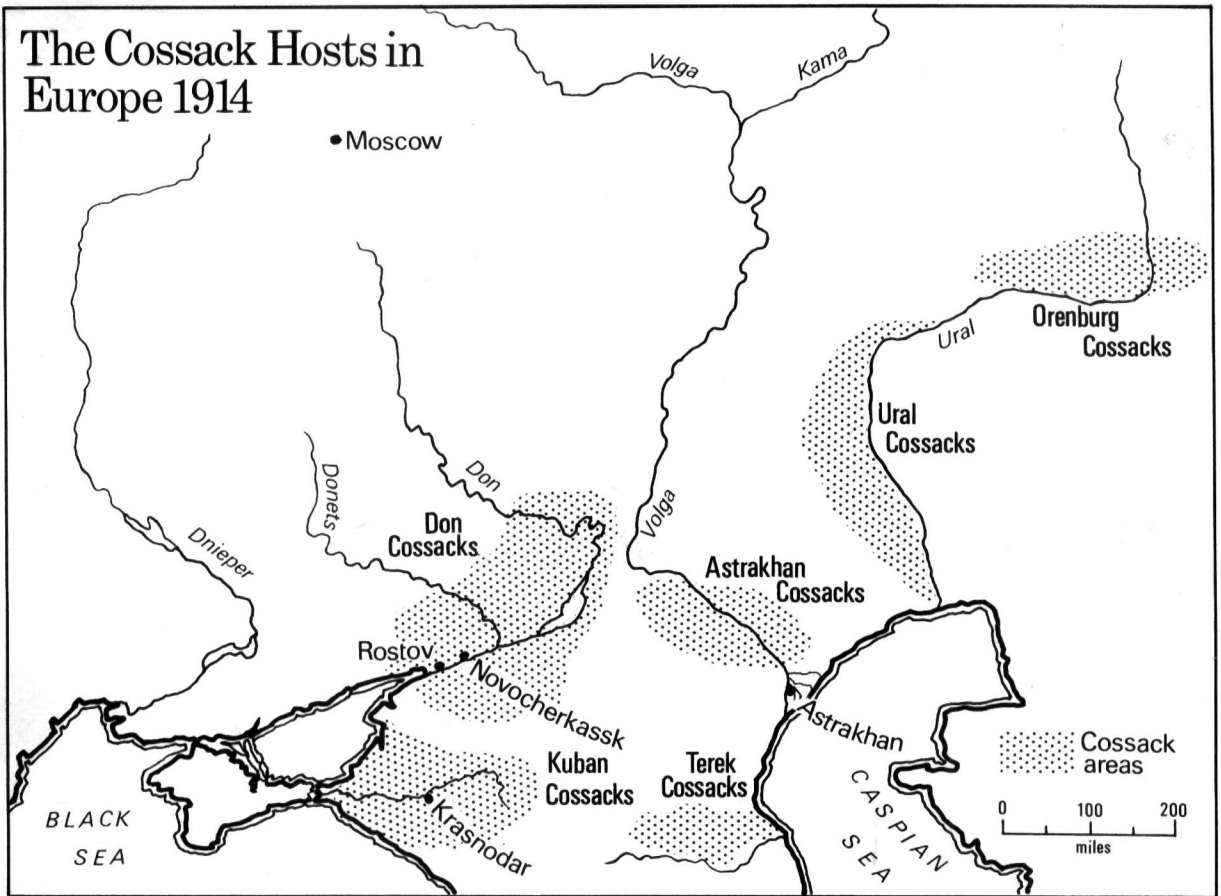
doubt that the Cossacks gained much in world-wide reputation during Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow. Inside every Russian, indeed, there was something of the Cossack, and townsmen and peasants were stirred by the romantic notion of the Cossack heritage and freedom.

Yet in the First World War the Cossack was not particularly highly regarded as a cavalryman by his foes, although he was certainly a match for the Austro-Hungarian. German cavalry was better trained, much better disciplined and incomparably better mounted. And although the strength of the Imperial Russian cavalry arm far exceeded that of the Central Powers and, on paper at least, was truly formidable, it was unsuited to the demands of modern war.

Nor was the Cossack better regarded by the Tsarist cavalry of the line. His shaggy and often diminutive mount put him at a great disadvantage. The Cossack's turn-out and his general military bearing were poor by hussar standards, nor did he easily conform to the harsh code of discipline. Apart from his being a hardened and very capable rough-rider, he had no special military aptitude; yet on balance he was probably somewhat more intelligent and, if he came from the Don, better educated than the average Russian recruit. He was certainly capable of showing more initiative. His other qualities he shared with the Russian – patience, hardiness and great stamina.

Although he provided his own light field artillery and an infantry component, the Cossack was of course primarily a horseman. He loved the spectacular and was encouraged by the Tsarist authorities to put on displays, often devoid of any military application, to impress foreign war correspondents. Sketches, photographs and extravagant reports flooded the British and French press in 1914; one such depicted the horses of Cossack regiments swimming rivers while their riders, with ankles hardly awash and with a toe-hold on crossed stirrups, balanced precariously standing upright on the saddles with handfuls of reins, lances and other accoutrements. Another display pictured in the London press at the time showed each mounted Cossack horseman carrying two Cossack infantrymen, one standing on each

The Cossack Hosts in Europe 1914

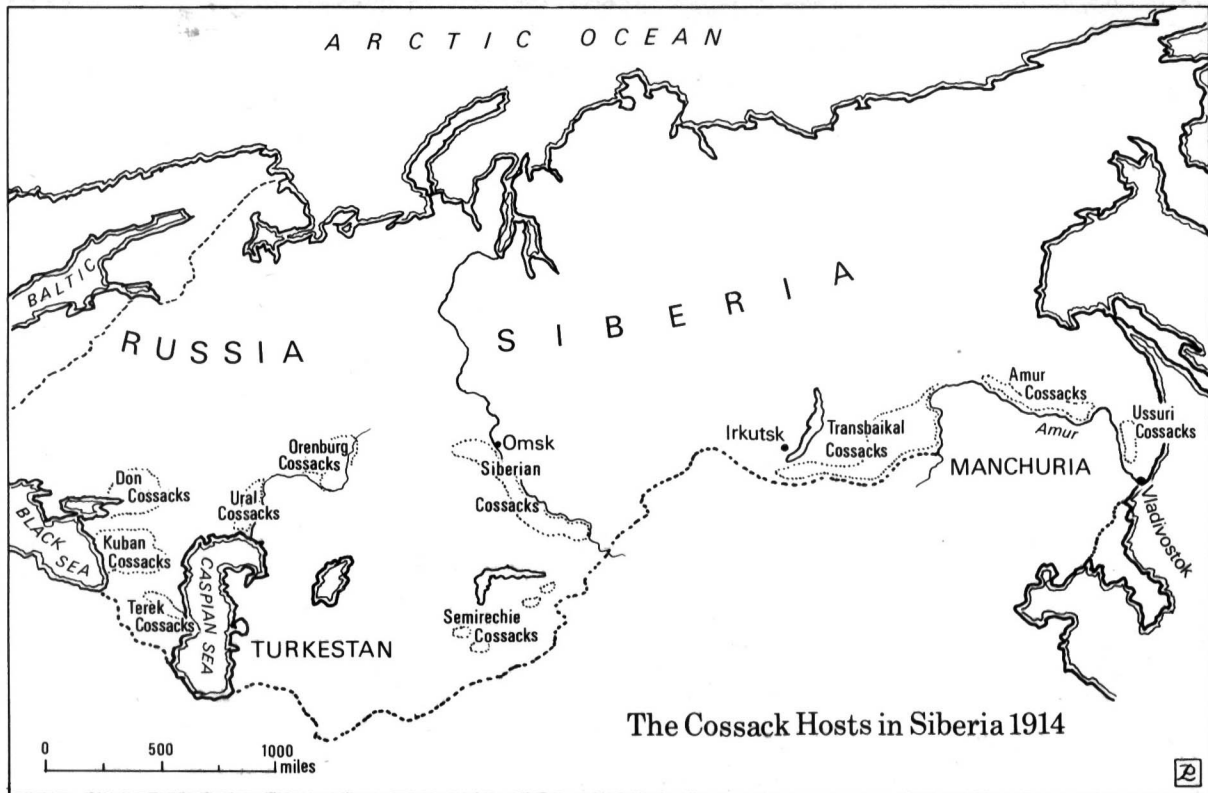


stirrup-iron. A moment's reflection on the part of both reporter and reader must have persuaded them that this exercise would, at a walk, have been unnecessary since a man can march as fast as a horse, and at a trot, impossible; while at a canter over any distance it would have resulted in the foundering of the horse.

Cossacks served, often with distinction, as regular cavalry divisions, of which eleven were formed at the outbreak of war. Most of the Cossack cavalry regiments, however, joined Russian cavalry divisions as the fourth regiment. There the Russian generals rarely had a high opinion of the ability or intelligence of the Cossack officers or their troops; the unit was often split down to fatigue detachments. They provided all escorts in the field, including that for the divisional commander himself. If cavalry had to be detached at the orders of corps headquarters, then a Cossack squadron or troop was sent. They commonly provided the reconnaissance elements, a role in which they often excelled; they found the gallopers

and messengers and sometimes organized the postal service. It was they who formed the pickets and the military police; it was they who were ordered to carry out all the more distasteful duties and chores, from the flogging of sentenced soldiers in arrest to the provision of labour. Many of the commanders of Cossack regiments incorporated into Russian divisions saw their units almost completely wasted away by these detachments and fatigues.

Yet the Cossack had already, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, proved himself loyal to the Tsar and excellent for small colonial-type wars and punitive expeditions. He was also used increasingly in support of the Russian police against dissident and riotous minorities, Russian industrial strikers and peasant mobs. For he had little sympathy with Pole, Jew or Russian worker or peasant, and could usually be relied upon to set to work with a will with his flailing *nagaika*, a whip which, loaded with a lead weight, could cut like a knife.



The Cossack Hosts in Siberia 1914

The Revolution and Civil War

Circumstances being what they were, the Russian Revolution must have come at some time. But the weakening of the rigid ties of Cossack loyalty to the Tsar Nicolas II was partly responsible for the success of the Revolution when it did come.

In March 1917 there were strikes and demonstrations in St Petersburg against food shortages by a war-weary people. These might have been dispersed or suppressed except that the Cossacks, who had been detailed to support the police, declined to intervene. A training detachment of Guards infantry fired on the crowd, but mutinied the next day. The Cossacks once more declined to move against the mutineers on the pretext that insufficient infantry were available to support them. Don Cossack Regiments 1, 4 and 14 and the *Konvoi*, the Guard Cossacks, went over to the

mutineers. This led to the downfall and abdication of the Tsar.

In the following July the St Petersburg Cossacks answered an appeal by Kerensky's provisional government and suppressed an armed demonstration by troops and sailors, probably forestalling an anarchist and left-wing Bolshevik *coup*. But when General Kornilov, himself a Cossack of Tartar-Turkoman origin, led a Cossack corps in a counter-revolutionary *putsch* against both Kerensky and the Petrograd Soviet, his troops, on coming into contact with the mutineers, were won over to the revolutionary cause and simply melted away. By November 1917, when the Bolsheviks ousted Kerensky by armed force, the Cossacks were, for the time being, no longer a force to be reckoned with.

In the period between March and November 1917 the Cossacks, tired of the war and of the internal dissension of the Russian Empire, hoped for the complete autonomy of the Cossack peoples, free from Russian domination. But the Bolsheviks, when they seized power, soon showed themselves to be bitterly opposed to the Cossack aristocratic



Officers of the Kuban Cossacks, wearing the *cherkesska*, or long Circassian tunic, with cartridge pockets sewn on either side of the breast. Note the officer on the far right, who holds a *nagaika* (whip), from which the lethal lead

weight can be seen hanging. The figure at the rear is an official, probably the doctor or veterinary surgeon. (Hulton)

ruling classes and to the Cossacks as a community. For an independent Cossackdom was anathema to the new regime since it represented a conservative military organization in which they believed they saw a threat to Bolshevism. Moreover a secession of Cossack territories would cut off from the centre the richest mineral and agricultural areas of the old Empire. These were the principal reasons which caused them to support the industrial urban populations and the peasant *inogorodniki* against the Cossack hosts.

Between November 1917 and February 1918 the rulers of the Cossack hosts still hoped to live at peace with the Bolsheviks, even if in a state of armed neutrality. Many of the Cossack formations were still away on the Western Front and others, returning home from garrison areas, were already infected with communism. The unfriendly presence of the *inogorodniki* also presented a danger. Yet the

atamans of the Don and Kuban Cossacks were content for the moment to await the developments in St Petersburg. Meanwhile army officers, *junkers* and military cadets, together with other loyalists, were making their way to the security of the Don territories, there to form a counter-revolutionary Volunteer Army, about 3,000 men strong, the majority of the rank and file being made up of former officers. The presence of this force was at first an embarrassment to the Don *ataman*.

The Bolsheviks, however, soon showed their hand. At the end of November a Socialist Don Republic was set up in the area of the Donets, and the mutineers of the Black Sea Fleet presented an ultimatum to General Kaledin, the *ataman* of the Don Cossacks. There was a bloody Red uprising in Rostov and, as Cossack troops refused to quell it, Kaledin was forced, much against his will, to call on the Volunteer Army. Kaledin persisted in

trying to come to some settlement with the Bolsheviks and finally in desperation urged his Don Cossacks to unite against the invader. His exhortations fell on deaf ears since most of the *stanitsi* regarded the Bolsheviks as no danger to their property or way of life. In February Kaledin shot himself, and the Reds rapidly overran much of the Don area. General Nasarov, the new *ataman*, together with the principal officials of the host, were murdered in Novocherkassk.

This was the fate also of Karaulov, the *ataman* of the Terek host. The Kuban was split and all the main cities and towns went to the Reds. Orenburg and Astrakhan were lost.

Cossack fortunes were to change for the better, temporarily at least, in the spring. By the Russo-German Peace of Brest Litovsk, in March 1918, the Ukraine, part of the Donets Basin and Rostov were occupied by German and Austrian troops. This cleared the Bolshevik from the area east of the Don. The Don Cossacks under Red occupation had meanwhile been suffering atrocity and deprivation. So when General Krasnov, the new Don *ataman*, started to raise fresh military forces he had no lack of recruits. About 11,000 captured Russian rifles, 14,000,000 rounds of small arms, 100,000 shells and cartridges, and 25 guns were made over to him by the German occupation forces, to be paid for in wheat and wool. But Krasnov's initiative in seeking German military support and his political manœuvres to form a South-East Federation of Cossacks and Caucasians without consulting the members, estranged him from the Volunteer Army, the other Cossack hosts and the Western Allies.

Those Kuban Cossacks who had not gone over to the Bolsheviks centred their resistance round the Volunteer Army which they also provided with numerous recruits. Politically, however, even the counter-revolutionary element among the Kuban Cossacks was split. Many of them wanted the Kuban to become part of an independent Ukraine. Others, particularly the Russian-speaking element descended from transplanted Don and Terek Cossacks, favoured an independent Kuban, or one in a Cossack federation.

Many of the Orenburg and Siberian Cossacks joined with the forces of Admiral Kolchak the counter-revolutionary dictator of the east.

In November 1918 the defeated Central Powers withdrew from the Ukraine, which was speedily occupied by the Reds. Two months later, according to Krasnov, the Don Cossacks had 100,000 men under arms compared with a Kuban Cossack strength of 35,000 and a Volunteer Army of only 7,500. Yet Krasnov was obliged to step down from the overall command in the south, partly because he was *persona non grata* with the Western Allies owing to his earlier association with the Germans and partly because Krasnov, as a Cossack *ataman*, was suspected of suffering from 'Cossack border sickness', a willingness to extend and round off his



An officer of the Caucasian Cossack Guard Regiment, c. 1890. The brand mark on his horse - KG (Kizlyaro-Grebensk) - indicates that he is from the Terek Squadron. (Hulton)

own Cossack territories coupled with a reluctance to engage the enemy beyond his own frontiers. This malaise was endemic in all the Cossack hosts. Krasnov resigned as *ataman* in favour of Bogaevsky, and the overall command of all the counter-revolutionary forces in the south passed to General Denikin, the former commander of the Volunteer Army.

The Cossacks already controlled the whole of Caucasia and part of the Don territories inside the Don bend, and there they exacted a terrible vengeance for the fearful atrocities committed by Reds and *inogorodniki*. Reprisals of almost indescribable barbarity begat reprisals in their turn.



Don Cossacks off duty in the Carpathian foothills, 1942. (Novosti)

Looting was widespread; not just to eat, but to get rich. This affected White morale, and rich territories were reduced to starvation.

Denikin's great offensive in the south, almost the last made by the White Guards, failed after coming very near to success. He tried to do too much with only limited forces – advance up the Volga, take Moscow and occupy the whole of the Ukraine. Furthermore, he failed to make use of his early victories, and when the Soviet counter-attacks came he was too dispersed to hold them. The White Guards were stricken with internal dissension. The generals, the Russians and the Volunteer Army wanted a restoration of an indivisible Russian Empire; but for the Cossacks any idea of freeing Russia had no meaning. There was disagreement between the Cossack federalists and centralists, between the Terek Cossacks and the Kuban Cossacks, between the Kuban and the Don Cossacks. The Cossack could not agree with the Caucasian, who was himself at loggerheads with the Russian.

The Soviet counter-offensive, when it came, was based on Trotsky's belief that the Don Cossacks, the strongest single element in the White force, would not be willing to leave their own northern territories to come to the assistance of the heavily pressed Volunteer Army. So it turned out. Wrangel took over the command of the Volunteer Army together with two corps of Don and Kuban Cossacks detailed to strike the advancing Bolsheviks

in the flank. Dissatisfied with the cavalry group, he replaced its commander, Mamontov, a Don Cossack, by a Kuban Cossack, General Ulagai. Mamontov went home in disgust and many of his Cossacks followed him. He was returned to his former post at the insistence of the Don *ataman* and this caused dismay among the Kuban Cossacks, many of whom had already become the victim of the propaganda of enemy agitators. In the Kuban itself the Kuban *ataman* and *rada* had been removed by a *coup d'état* engineered by Russian members of the Volunteer Army. Disillusioned, the Kuban Cossacks left for home, their morale and discipline destroyed.

When the Bolsheviks occupied Caucasia, many of the Cossacks, together with their families, took to flight; the fortunate reached Turkey. Others went to the Crimea, there in the early months of 1920 to make a last stand.

The Revolution and the Civil War were the death-knell of the old order of Cossacks.

The Cossacks under Soviet Rule

The fame, and indeed the achievements, of the Cossacks were out of proportion to their numbers. In the 1884 census the total male population on the Don numbered only 425,000; that of the Kuban, 281,000; of the Orenburg, 155,000; of the Transbaikai, 76,000; of the Terek, 70,000. The total population of all the hosts did not amount to 1,200,000 men.

The early Bolshevik rulers were determined to destroy all trace of the Cossack communities. The hosts, the land rights, the *stanitsi* and the *gorodki* all disappeared. A large part of the Cossack population was liquidated or deported. The singing of Cossack songs and the wearing of Cossack dress were strictly prohibited, and Cossacks, as counter-revolutionaries, were banned from enlistment into the Red Army. Instead they were called up into labour battalions, almost penal in character. Some of the Cossack population merged in the mass of *inogorodniki*, peasants and workers. Yet for many their trials were not yet over, for they suffered yet

again as victims of the collectivization of agriculture. Those who remained as small farmers in possession of land were dispossessed and transported, not this time as Cossacks but as *kulaks*, the name given not to the employer of farm labour but to any peasant who resisted the collectivization of his humble property.

There was, it is true, a Ukrainian Red Cossack cavalry corps serving as part of the Red Army in the early 1920s. But this existed merely to placate Ukrainian opinion. It was little more than a name given to a body of cavalry. Even the Ukrainian element was often in a minority to the Russian. Long before the Second World War the Ukrainian Cossack had disappeared.

On 17 March 1936 Marshal of the Soviet Union Budenny, a former senior non-commissioned officer of Tsarist cavalry, described in the press as 'a true son of the Don' because he once belonged to 48 Cossack Regiment, reviewed a parade of mounted men in Rostov. These were said to be Cossacks of the old *sotnyas* signifying their readiness to serve their country once more, this time in the ranks of the Red Army. This Soviet stage-managed demonstration was to prepare public opinion for the introduction of Cossack designations into the Red Army. The reasons for doing so are not entirely clear. It is possible that this was an attempt to strengthen the ties of patriotism by the romantic appeal of old Cossackdom; or, since war was already threatening in the west, it may have been designed to make use of the riding skills of former Cossacks and their sons. Whatever the reasons, on 20 April 1936 former Cossacks and the sons of Cossacks were no longer debarred from bearing arms in the Red Army.

That year five existing Red Army cavalry divisions had been renamed Cossack divisions, two as Don Cossack, one as Kuban Cossack, one as Kuban-Terek Cossack and the last as Terek-Stavropol Cossack. According to the official announcement signed by Marshal Voroshilov, the Commissar for Defence, recruits for these divisions were henceforth to come from the population of the Don, the Terek, the Kuban and Stavropol without distinction of origin or class, except that the mountain tribes would not be eligible. And so the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks were officially but only militarily reborn.

It was against Soviet interest and practice to raise purely national or regional formations, and Moscow often overcame the difficulty by merely using national and regional titles and designations for many of its troops. What percentage of men from the Kuban were to be found in the re-embodyed Kuban Cossacks can be only a matter of conjecture. They may well have been outnumbered by Russians.

But whatever their origin, a number of cavalry regiments had by 1939 been given the newly designed Cossack uniform. The Don Cossacks appeared in a blue-topped forage-cap with a red band and red piping, a khaki or blue tunic piped with red, khaki or dark-blue breeches with the old Don Cossack broad red stripe down the outer seam. The usual knee-boots and khaki greatcoat completed the equipment. For ceremonial occasions the black fur hat was taken into use once more with a red top trimmed with two rows of fine black braid (gold for officers) sewn on to form a cross.

The Terek and Kuban Cossacks now wore a khaki forage-cap with a blue cap band; black piping for the Terek Cossacks, red piping for those of the Kuban. The breeches of the Kuban Cossacks



Kuban Cossacks in the Red Army, 1942. They retain their traditional dress. (Hulton)

were piped with red while the Terek Cossacks retained their traditional light-blue piping. In addition to their khaki uniforms the Terek and Kuban Cossacks were given a new ceremonial uniform very similar to that of the Guard *sotnyas* of Tsarist times: the *kubanka*, a squat round fur hat broader at the crown than at the rim, with a red top for the Kuban and a light-blue top for the Terek Cossacks, with the same braid pattern as that of the Don Cossacks; the coloured hood with long ends; a long grey waisted *cherkesska* tunic adorned with the stitched cartridge pockets with a light-blue lining for the Terek and a dark-blue *cherkesska* lined with red for the Kuban Cossack. Both Terek and Kuban Cossacks wore the heavy circular black riding cloaks.



Don Cossacks in the area of Rostov-on-Don, probably about 1942. Unfortunately, all arms and badges of rank seem to have been removed, but it is interesting to note the variations in uniform: breeches, slacks, tunics and blouses. (Novosti)

In 1941 the Soviet cavalry arm was the largest in the world, yet it was small by Tsarist standards. The Cossack horse was still a wiry pony, but the soldier was generally better mounted than in the First World War. The bridle was still a jointed snaffle, but the leatherwork was superior to the old and was fitted with buckles and D-pieces. Officers' chargers had double bridles of jointed snaffle and curb bar and chain. Lances were no longer carried, the personal arms consisting of a 24/27 carbine, the universal cavalry-pattern 27 sabre with wooden scabbard covered with leather or canvas, or, more usually, the 1914-pattern Cossack sword without the hilt. The old Kuban and Terek swords and daggers were still worn with the ceremonial dress.

There can be no doubt that the new Cossack formations and units existed and took their share in the fighting in the Second World War; they were, indeed, well publicized for the benefit of the foreign press. Yet in Soviet accounts they received relatively small mention. Two Kuban Cossack and one Don Cossack cavalry corps are said to have been in existence in 1942 and 1943. As the war progressed, the cavalry element with the Red Army was of course reduced, but eventually the Cossack corps passed into oblivion. And comparatively rare is the mention of any Cossack division or regiment after the period 1941–3 in which the U.S.S.R. was in danger of defeat.

Many of the Cossack prisoners of war in German hands and many of the embittered descendants of Cossacks were eventually recruited by the *Wehrmacht* into a Cossack force for use against either the Red Army or the partisans in the Balkans. Once again they adopted traditional Tsarist Cossack dress on which they mounted the Nazi German eagle; even the *nagaika* reappeared. Some of the intake were Russian cavalry with a grievance; others joined to escape the fearful conditions in the German prisoner-of-war camps; others, again, were genuine Cossacks who had no reason to love the Bolshevik regime and were deluded by the former Don *ataman* General Krasnov, then a guest of Germany, who promised them a free and independent Cossackdom. Yet, all in all, the record of the renegade Cossack, right or wrong, depending on whether this is viewed by the standard of Moscow or Novocherkassk, was neither better nor worse than the conduct of the Great Russian in captivity. For many of these also entered the German service.

The military Cossack still remains, however, in the post-war Soviet Army. The horses have mostly gone and the cavalry formations have been converted to mechanized and armoured troops. But the mounted Cossack continues to appear on ceremonial occasions, wearing a uniform little removed from that of the Imperial Guard of the Tsar Nicolas II. The wheel has turned full circle.



A Cossack cavalry patrol on the southern front, February 1942. (Novosti)

Cossack Uniforms

Because the Cossack had to provide uniform and horse at his own expense, there was no accepted pattern or insistence on any uniformity of detail in his saddlery, his equipment or indeed in the colour or design of his uniform. Many Cossacks, officers as well as men, wore more or less what they pleased, and this appears to have been acceptable to the Tsarist military authorities. Some of the nineteenth-century plates depicting Cossacks were engraved in St Petersburg for Russian military magazines, and these tend to show the Cossack in a false light since he is usually portrayed as well-mounted, adequately accoutred, and superbly turned out. These artistic plates differ very much from the photographs taken at the end of the century, where the peacetime squadrons of the Cossacks, even of the Imperial Guard, are revealed riding poor-quality, shaggy and unkempt ponies with knotted bridlery, the

troops themselves presenting, when judged by contemporary western standards, a wild, slovenly and unsoldierly appearance.

Even Viskovatov, the Russian authority on uniforms, is sometimes at a loss when called upon to describe Cossack equipment and dress, because of this lack of uniformity within regiments and squadrons. When describing the nineteenth-century uniform of the *élite* Don Cossack *Ataman* (the Tsarevich's) Guard Regiment, he says: 'All ranks were ordered to wear a belt, of no particular design or colour. But, in so far as it was possible, officers in a squadron and even in the regiment did try to wear one particular colour since it usually helped to establish identity. For the type of Cossack sabre in the Ataman Regiment there was no specially ordered pattern.'

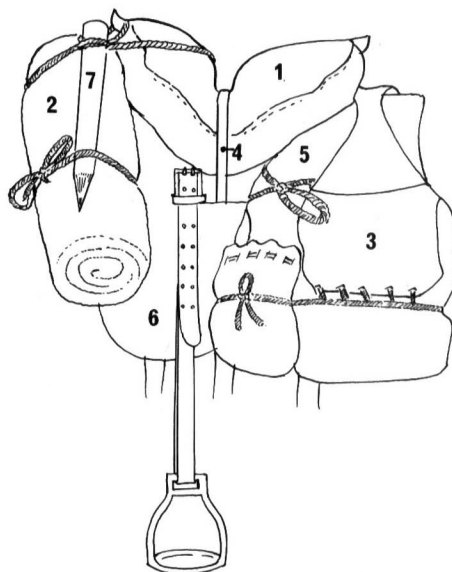
There was, however, a general style of uniform and accoutrements which developed over three centuries and still existed in the regiments resuscitated by the Red Army. From the Zaporozhian Cossacks with their Tartar affectation and Turkish leanings, came the high conical fur hat with coloured crown or flowing bag together with the

caftan coat, often with slit sleeves to permit freer use of the arm. These were perpetuated in the dress of the Don Cossacks and, for a time, in that of the Ukrainian Cossacks, the *caftan* becoming the long *chekmen* coat and the tall Turkish hat the *papakha*. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century (1803–60) there was a Tsarist attempt to Europeanize the Cossack dress and make it conform more closely to that of the Imperial cavalry of the line; in some respects this was achieved since the remaining Ukrainian and the Don Cossack regiments began to take on a rough Tsarist pattern.

The Ural and the Siberian Cossacks and their offspring, the Transbaikal, the Amur, the Ussuri Cossacks and to a much lesser extent the Orenburg Cossacks, formed, however, another group. All except the Orenburg were much influenced by the recruitment of, and marriage with, the Siberian tribal peoples and in this respect they were less ready to conform to St Petersburg standards. The bitterness of the Siberian climate also had its effect, in that custom and clothing were developed according to need. Horses were never clipped. Coats were heavier; the great fur or sheep's-wool head-dress looked like a bearskin rather than a Turkish fez. These Cossacks have now disappeared from Russian military history.

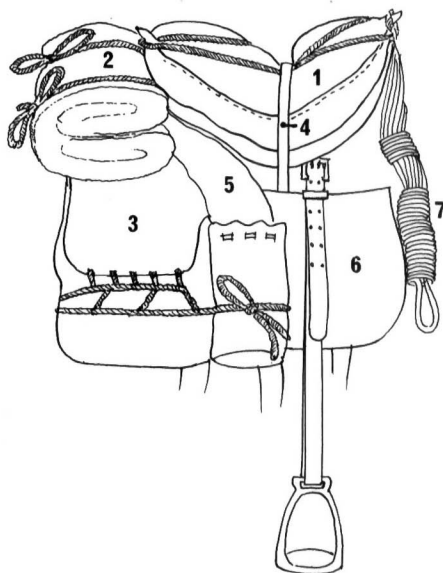
Apart from these two main groups of Cossacks, the European and the Siberian, there remains the third family distinctive also in the pattern of its dress, the Caucasian, made up of the Terek and the Kuban Cossacks. Although the Terek Cossacks were the Great Russian descendants of an offshoot of the Don Cossacks, they have been in Caucasia now for over three centuries and have absorbed Caucasian tribal blood, customs and dress, the cartridge-bedecked *cherkesska* and Circassian accoutrements and weapons. The Kuban Cossacks, although of Ukrainian stock and descendants of both Ukrainian and Zaporozhian Cossacks, have been in the Kuban for over a century and a half. These too have taken over Circassian dress and habits.

The dress and military uniforms of the Circassian and Caucasian Tsarist regiments, though outside the scope of this booklet, show a very marked similarity to those of the Cossacks, particularly to the uniform of the infantry and artillery of the Caucasian Line Cossack Hosts.



Cossack saddle

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 saddle-pad | 4 surcingle |
| 2 greatcoat | 5 bat-bag |
| 3 saddle-bag | 6 removable flaps |
| | 7 tethering picket |



Terek/Kuban Cossack saddle

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 saddle-pad | 4 surcingle |
| 2 greatcoat (<i>burka</i>) | 5 bat-bag |
| 3 saddle-bag | 6 removable flap |
| | 7 tethering line |

The Plates

A1 *Tobolsk Town Cossack, c. 1784*

This Tobolsk Town Cossack belonged to a cavalry regiment based on the old Siberian Tartar capital of Sibir; the Tartar influence is shown in the buttonless *caftan*, sash and baggy trousers and in the high lamb's-wool cap. This Cossack belonged to no host and may have come from an offshoot of the Siberian Cossacks or, more likely, was a local recruit to a Tsarist-raised regiment based on the garrison town. For though the soldier received pay, uniform and horse from the military authorities, yet he conforms to the Cossack pattern of the time in that he was a lancer, carrying an eight-foot lance with a toe- or stirrup-sling – but no shoulder-sling – and wearing a sword which was the forerunner of the common Cossack sabre, without a guard and with virtually no crosspiece and carried in its scabbard with the cutting edge to the rear. Like all Cossacks at this time, he still wore spurs.

A2 *Ukrainian Cossack, c. 1710*

The Ukrainian Cossack, like the Zaporozhian, wore exactly what he pleased but, although he may have fought as a member of the Zaporozhian

Host for one or more seasons, he was influenced less directly by Tartar or Turk than by the Russian and the Pole. For this reason he tended to be much more Europeanized in his clothing and appearance except that he commonly wore the long *caftan* and sash.

A3 *Zaporozhian Cossack, c. 1700*

There was of course no uniform for a Zaporozhian Cossack and this interpretation is in accordance with that by Viskovatov. Another, even more colourful, is that of Repin's famous nineteenth-century painting. The Zaporozhian Cossack wore Turkish or Tartar dress and used Turkish weapons, sometimes because he stripped Tartar dead and wounded and raided Turkish settlements, and sometimes because he was in the pay of the Ottoman Sultan on whom he relied for fire-arms. The only distinguishing feature about him, common to the whole Zaporozhian military order, was his shaven head, with a topknot which hung down the back like a pigtail. Although Tartars made up but few of their number, many Zaporozhians, like this one, attempted to disguise themselves as Tartars or Turks. Others wore moustaches and beards. As has been said, the distinctive hat, the *caftan* (or the half *caftan* shown here) and the slit sleeves became common to other Cossack hosts.



A charge by Cossacks of the Don Ataman Regiment of the Guard, c. 1885. (Hulton)

B *Don Cossack of the Guard, 1776–90*

Although at first glance this Don Cossack might not have appeared out of place in the armies of western Europe, certain features mark a clear distinction. His mount is small, cold-blooded and unkempt, and very undistinguished under so colourful a saddle-cloth; it is ridden on a simple jointed snaffle and not on a curb, and, as the horse is normally ridden well forward of the bit, that is to say with its nose in the air, reliance is placed on a standing martingale to keep it under control and prevent it throwing its head. The bridle has only one buckle on the right-hand side (and one on the left under the cheek – not visible) and all other joins in the bridlery and harness are knotted for strength, there being no stitching or D-pieces. The saddle, on a regimental and very ornate 'shabrack', is fastened by straps and prevented from slipping by a breastplate formed by knotting the breast straps with the lower end of the martingale and the strap running under the horse's belly from the surcingle. The stirrups are of the normal heavy and wide iron or steel type common to western Europe; the horse was usually ridden in normal cavalry fashion with long leathers. The Cossack himself wears the tall black astrakhan cap, often with a chinstrap, and the short *caftan* now known as the *chekmen* with the slashed sleeve. The sword could be carried on the saddle or on the sword-belt; spurs were still worn – and continued in use in the Guard Cossack regiments throughout the nineteenth century. The carbine was carried in a

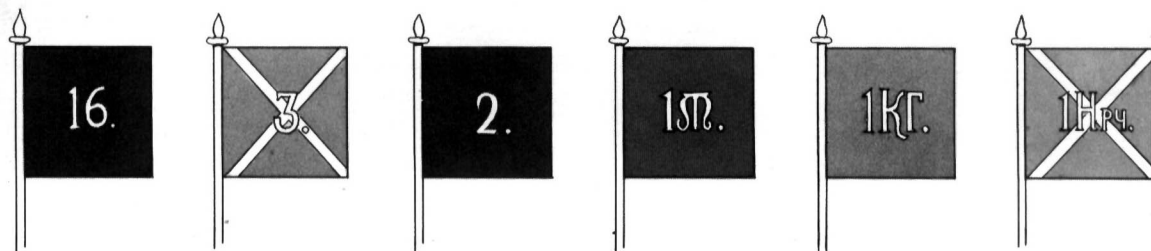
peculiarly awkward position, attached by a clip and swivel from a shoulder-belt, so that it could be fired from the shoulder without first being detached.

C1 *Ural Cossack of the Guard, 1798–1801*

The Ural Cossacks formed a squadron of the Imperial Guard. The Cossack's uniform shown here appears to have already come under the St Petersburg influence particularly in the extravagant design of hat; this was in keeping with the times, for helmets and shakos were being refashioned with high extensions. This particular type of hat appears to have been withdrawn after only a few years in service. The loose baggy trousers were now worn outside the boots but the long *caftan* remained, secured by hooks and sash. The shoulder-sash with the swivel and catch, formerly for the carbine, was still in use but a pistol has been substituted; presumably this was a handier weapon in close-quarter fighting and less awkward to carry in mounting and dismounting and at the trot and the gallop.

C2 *Cossack of the Imperial Guard, 1812–14*

This is the full-dress uniform worn, with slight variations, by all the hosts, and the colours of red tunic and blue trousers were to be a distinguishing feature of the Cossack Guard's full dress throughout most of the nineteenth century. The *caftan* and *chekmen* have disappeared and the trousers have taken on the very baggy appearance associated



Banneroles of Cossack Regiments

Left to right:

Don Regiments: dark blue with white numbers

Orenburg Regiments: pale blue with white diagonals and white figure

Ural Regiments: crimson with white figure

Kuban Regiments: scarlet with white figure and letter

Terek Regiments: pale blue with white figure and letters

Transbaikal Regiments: yellow with white diagonals and white figure and letters

The banneroles of the remaining Cossack Regiments were coloured as follows:

Siberian: scarlet with a white cross;

Semiryechie: crimson with a white cross;

Astrakhan: dark green with a yellow cross;

Ussuri: dark green

with the first two decades of the century. There is much else here which is common to the military uniforms of the European empires rather than to Cossackdom. The Cossack-type cap remains with its distinctive bag, but a plume and tassels have been added. Cavalry gauntlets and full white epaulettes have appeared and the sword is of the heavy European cavalry pattern. As yet, however, there are no tunic facings and buttons. These were to come later in the century.

C3 Cossack Artilleryman of the Caucasian Line Host, c. 1840

This particular pattern of uniform was common to both artillery and Cossack infantry and showed a similarity to that worn by the Caucasian non-Cossack line regiments. From the back the uniform looks like the Cossack *chekmen*, but in the front it is similar to the Circassian and the Kuban and Terek Cossack *cherkesska* with its stitched-in cartridge pockets. The head-dress is more like the cap worn by the early Tartars and the latter-day Caucasian hillmen than that of the Cossacks. This is probably because this distinctive uniform was designed for the Caucasian Line Cossack Host, whereas the artillerymen and infantrymen in the other hosts continued to wear a uniform close to that of their own cavalry. The Caucasian Line Host infantry had a uniform very similar to that of the artilleryman depicted here, except that he wore a short tunic with a high red collar together with knee-length boots into which the top of the trousers were tucked. He was armed with musket and bayonet (instead of the artilleryman's pistol and sabre) and on his back he carried knapsack, rolled greatcoat, mess-tin and pouch.

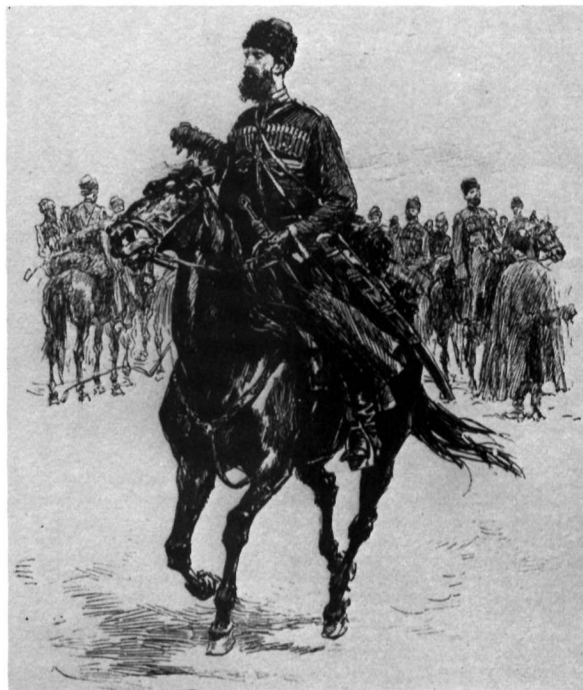
D1 Kalmyk Cossack, c. 1840

The Kalmyk Cossacks, a Turko-Tartar people served the Tsar as cavalry for a century and a quarter, at one time being linked with the Orenburg Cossacks. To what extent they were an independent host is unknown. They appear to have provided the equivalent, roughly, of a cavalry brigade and were probably in receipt of regular pay, horses and uniforms being provided by the St Petersburg government. This particular picture, portraying a Kalmyk Cossack only a few years before the regiments were disbanded, seems

to indicate that he may have been equipped with surplus stores from other line cavalry regiments, as the uhlan-type cap and heavy cavalry sword would appear to show.

D2 Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard – Emperor's Personal Escort, Ceremonial Dress, c. 1880

The Terek and Kuban Cossacks provided squadrons forming a composite Guard regiment, all wearing the same uniform except that the inset



A Cossack of the Terek Squadron of the Emperor's Escort, c. 1885 (Hulton)

crown in the hat was scarlet for the Kuban Cossacks and light-blue for the Terek. In this illustration the Cossack of the Emperor's escort is wearing full-dress ceremonial uniform with the dark-blue *cherkesska*, not that of black or variegated colour often used in the Kuban line regiments. No dagger is worn. The sword also is worn differently from the line regiment, in that it is carried on the left side suspended by an ornamental sword-belt worn over the right shoulder. Here the soldier is sitting at his ease and has unfastened the sword-belt which hangs loosely. By 1880, of course, the stitched-in cartridge compartments had only an ornamental function, and the same is true of the silver corded whip.

D3 *Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard – Emperor's Personal Escort, Undress, c. 1880*

This Cossack, forming part of the Emperor's escort, is wearing the undress uniform with the loose-fitting and plain camel-hair *cherkesska*. The ornamental Circassian dagger (*kinzhal*) is worn attached to the waist-belt, but the sword is carried on the sword-belt strapped underneath the waist-band. In his left hand the soldier holds the horse-tail Cossack standard and the heavy service leather whip (*nagaika*). This particular Guard regiment consisted of two squadrons of Terek and two of Kuban Cossacks, the only difference in the uniform being in the colour of the inside crown of the astrakhan cap and the colour of the shoulder-straps, when worn, Terek being light-blue and Kuban scarlet. The crowns of the hats were sometimes rimmed and crossed with braid in the form of a double cross over the centre, using a black braid for the rank and file, and a gold for officers.

E1 *Terek/Kuban Cossack of the Guard, Trumpeter of the Emperor's Personal Escort, Ceremonial Dress, c. 1880*

The trumpeter of the Emperor's Personal Escort probably rode near the Sovereign when the Cossack Guard was on parade and must have been one of the most colourful and magnificently attired soldiers in St Petersburg.

E2 *Don Cossack Ataman Guard Officer, Undress, c. 1890*

The Don Cossacks provided two Guard regiments, one for the sovereign and one for the *ataman*, not for the Don *ataman* but for the Tsarevich, who was the titular *Ataman* of All the Cossack Hosts. Each of the Don regiments consisted in peacetime of four squadrons and were commanded by a colonel, the regiment being divided into two 'divisions', each commanded by a lieutenant-colonel. Squadrons were commanded by captains. This particular officer is the colonel of the regiment (also A.D.C. to the Emperor) wearing undress uniform with its rather flat astrakhan wool head-dress, mounting insignia and badge. His frock-coat, plain except for the officers' silver piping and the shoulder-pieces showing his rank, is without pockets or buttons. The absence of buttons was a feature of Tsarist uniform, since the method of securing coats and tunics by hooks permitted the wearing of



A *Terek/Kuban Cossack from General Kirichenko's Guard Cavalry Corps on the southern front in 1943 (Novosti)*

heavier underclothing, even sheepskin undercoats, in the colder weather. The distinctive light-blue trousers identify the wearer as belonging to the *Ataman* Cossack Guard Regiment. The cap usually had a scarlet top.

E3 *Ural Cossack of the Guard, Field Service Uniform, c. 1890*

This Cossack is wearing the tall and heavy field-service head-dress worn by the Cossack in Siberia – this was usually devoid of badges. The very dark blue, almost mauve, trousers and thin crimson stripe were common to the Ural Cossack line regiments, but the upper buttonless tunic in medium blue has the distinctive two gold bars of the Guards on the cuffs and collar patches. No spurs were worn (although in the Guard Cossacks they might be worn on parade occasions), the rifle was slung and the heavy forty-inch-long sword was usually carried on the soldier's sword-belt and not on the saddle as was customary with the cavalry of the line. Nor, unlike the cavalry, did the Cossack carry a bayonet attached to the sword-scabbard. The steel-hafted nine-foot lance never carried a pennon but was fitted with a fixed leather toe- or stirrup-piece near the rounded butt, and a leather shoulder-sling (for fitting over the right arm), fixed at the top but on a sliding collar at the bottom. The twin leather cartridge pouches remained in general issue throughout the First World War.

F *Ural Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1905*

In the parade uniform the Ural Cossack usually wore a black lamb's-wool or astrakhan cap considerably shorter than the tall, rough, loose woollen

or fur cap used on field service in winter. The top was crimson and the cap carried tiny silvered strip insignia of the regiment, surmounting a small round or oval cockade usually in roundels of the Russian national colours of orange, black and white. The tunic was usually single-breasted but (in the Ural Cossacks only) could be of double-breasted pattern. The shoulder-straps, as well as the colour of the uniform, the piping and the trouser stripe, indicated the Cossack host, the number of the regiment and the rank of the soldier. This very dark blue, almost mauve, uniform was worn at this time by Ural, Don and Astrakhan Cossacks. The Don Cossacks differed from the Ural by wearing scarlet facings and a blue shoulder-strap. The Astrakhan Cossacks wore yellow facings. The Siberian, Semirychie, Amur, Ussuri, Transbaikal and Orenburg Cossacks all wore a greenish-khaki uniform otherwise of very much the same pattern as that of the Ural Cossack sergeant (*uryadnik*) shown here, except that the facings were as follows: Siberian, scarlet; Semirychie, crimson; Amur, yellow with khaki shoulder-strap; Ussuri and Transbaikal, yellow but both bearing the host letter on the shoulder strap; Orenburg, pale blue. The sergeant's mount is a typical steppe pony wearing the Cossack-pattern gear: a jointed snaffle with knotted joints instead of stitching, a standing martingale with the straps for the breastplate coming back loosely across the horse's chest and belly, not to the surcingle but to the lower part of the saddle. The stirrups are loosely tied together by an additional stirrup-leather running under the pony's belly, presumably to prevent the stirrup-irons from flying if they are lost by the rider. Other variations of standing martingale have been noted, including double leathers or ropes securing the horse's head harness to each side of the saddle. The rolled and strapped greatcoat is carried over the saddle-bow while saddle-bags and other accoutrements are secured to the rear.

G1 Orenburg Cossack, Undress Uniform, c. 1905

This picture shows a corporal (*prikazni*) of 3 Orenburg Cossack Regiment wearing undress uniform. The uniform, although dark khaki in colour, is in fact similar to the parade uniform worn by the sergeant of the Ural Cossacks in the earlier plate



Terek/Kuban Cossack cavalry, 1942. They are wearing the traditional *burka* mantle (Novosti)

except that a peaked forage-cap is worn. The forage-cap had been used throughout the Tsarist Army since as early as 1811, although in the early days it was without a peak and had a very wide crown and top. By the turn of the century the newer pattern cap with the glazed peak and coloured top (light-blue for Orenburg Cossacks) was being introduced. The heavy knee-boots were by this time common to most arms, infantry as well as cavalry. In summer a white linen tunic was often worn together with a white cover for the cap.

G2 Don Cossack, Field Service Uniform, c. 1914

With the approach of war a new khaki cloth uniform was introduced – this was a very light olive-green in colour with a tinge of grey. The colour was not, however, uniform and it sometimes appeared as a bluish-grey. This Don Cossack has retained his dark-blue breeches with the broad scarlet stripe, but has now been issued with a plain light khaki cap and khaki tunic fitted with pockets and khaki buttons. His shoulder-pieces, formerly of dark-blue backing with scarlet piping showing the regimental number in scarlet, have been made reversible, so that if the underside is worn uppermost, nothing shows except a khaki backing, without piping, and the regimental number worked in dark blue. This tells the observer nothing but that the wearer is a Cossack coming from 4 Regiment. Until the khaki breeches were taken into use, however, this was only an imperfect camouflage; an intelligence officer could deduce the identity from the scarlet trouser stripe, though he might conceivably confuse a Don with a Ural Cossack.

G3 *Ural Cossack, Field Service Uniform, c. 1914*

This Ural Cossack, although wearing the new-type khaki greatcoat with metal buttons, has not yet taken into use the reversible shoulder-boards. He is still equipped with the old Berdan dragoon-pattern rifle, first produced in 1871, which was once common in design to the infantry rifle except that the infantry weapon was three inches longer. Both took the same cartridge. The length of the dragoon rifle was four feet and its weight seven pounds six ounces. It was sighted up to 1,200 paces and was said to be effective up to 1,500 paces; its calibre was .420 inch. The 1869 Krinka rifle, a converted muzzle-loader with the hinged block breech and a calibre of .60 inch, had virtually passed out of service.

H1 *Kuban Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1914*

This Kuban Cossack sergeant (*uryadnik*) is wearing the ceremonial parade uniform. Surprisingly, however, there was no single pattern in the colour of the *cherkesska*, nor in such detail as the number of stitched cartridge pockets across the chest. Nor was there any uniformity in the letter worn on the shoulder-board designating the Kuban Host, for these might show 'Kb', meaning Kuban or, as is worn by the sergeant in this plate, they might be relics of a much earlier day, the 'Ch' being the designation for the Black Sea Host. 'L' (Labinski) or even 'Ln' for the old Line Cossack Host, was also to be found. The sergeant is armed with the newer-pattern 91 rifle which by then had become the general service weapon. It was a bolt-action .299-inch rifle with magazine taking a clip of five rounds, sighted up to 3,000 paces and weighing about eight pounds. Like its predecessor, the cavalry carbine, it was four feet long.

H2 *Don Cossack, Field Service Summer Uniform, c. 1944*

The uniform of the Don Cossack sergeant of the Red Army was very similar to that of his predecessors a generation before. He wore dark-blue breeches of riding pattern with a scarlet side-stripe which was, however, wider than that of the old Don Host. His boots were of the normal Red Army pattern and were considerably shorter in the leg than the knee-boots of the First World War. The cap, though of more modern design,

was of a similar blue-grey colour but had a patent leather peak and the old Don Host scarlet band and scarlet piping. The soldier might have a khaki or blue-grey tunic, but more commonly in the field he wore, as here, the khaki *gimnasterka*, a pull-over type of blouse with a soft stand-up collar and loops for the shoulder-boards. The field shoulder-boards themselves were close to those of 1914, with a plain khaki background, the three bars of rank and a dark-blue edging to signify that the wearer came from the cavalry arm. This particular sergeant has been issued with the old-pattern Cossack sword, wears two heavy-wound stripe badges and carries the insignia denoting that his formation has been taken on to the roll of the Guards. This distinction was granted as a battle honour. In winter and on ceremonial occasions the Don Cossacks still wore the fur cap, although this was shorter in height than that worn before the First World War. It was scarlet-topped and carried an unringed red star badge.

H3 *Kuban Cossack, Parade Uniform, c. 1945*

The parade dress of the Kuban Cossack in 1945 was almost identical with that worn a generation earlier, except that the detail, at long last, was in fact uniform. The head-dress, the *kubanka*, was somewhat shorter than the earlier pattern and, instead of being slightly conical in the shape of an inverted flower-pot, overhung at the top edges. The red star badge was worn on the front of the *kubanka*. Black piping has replaced gold, and spurs have been taken into use instead of the *nagaika*. Breeches were piped with scarlet braid, which was also worn on the soft forage-cap. The Terek Cossacks wore a similar uniform except that the scarlet Kuban colours were replaced by the old traditional light blue. The Terek Cossack *cherkesska* was grey, lined with light blue.



Men-at-Arms Series

Each title in this series gives a brief history of a famous fighting unit, with a full description of its dress and accoutrements, illustrated with eight colour plates and many drawings and photographs. Collectors of militaria, war-gamers, and historians will find no other series of books which describe the dress of each unit so comprehensively. The series will range widely in time and terrain, with a special effort to include some of the lesser-known armies from other lands. About twelve titles will be published each year.

TITLES ALREADY PUBLISHED

THE STONEWALL BRIGADE <i>John Selby</i>	CONNAUGHT RANGERS <i>Alan Shepperd</i>
THE BLACK WATCH <i>Charles Grant</i>	ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGH- LANDERS <i>William McElwee</i>
FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION <i>Martin Windrow</i>	30TH PUNJABIS <i>James Lawford</i>
FOOT GRENADIERS OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD <i>Charles Grant</i>	GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ARMY <i>Peter Young</i>
THE IRON BRIGADE <i>John Selby</i>	THE BUFFS <i>Gregory Blaxland</i>
CHASSEURS OF THE GUARD <i>Peter Young</i>	LUFTWAFFE AIRBORNE AND FIELD UNITS <i>Martin Windrow</i>
WAFFEN-SS <i>Martin Windrow</i>	THE SOVIET ARMY <i>Albert Seaton</i>
THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS <i>Charles Grant</i>	U.S. MARINE CORPS <i>John Selby</i>
U.S. CAVALRY <i>John Selby</i>	THE COSSACKS <i>Albert Seaton</i>
THE ARAB LEGION <i>Peter Young</i>	
ROYAL SCOTS GREYS <i>Charles Grant</i>	

FUTURE TITLES INCLUDE

BLÜCHER'S ARMY <i>Peter Young</i>	THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR ARMIES <i>Peter Young</i>
THE PANZER DIVISIONS <i>Martin Windrow</i>	RUSSIAN ARMY OF 1812 <i>Albert Seaton</i>
JAPANESE ARMY OF WORLD WAR II <i>Philip Warner</i>	MONTCALM'S ARMY <i>Martin Windrow</i>
THE ROYAL ARTILLERY <i>W. T. Carman</i>	WELLINGTON'S PENINSULAR ARMY <i>James Lawford</i>
THE KING'S REGIMENT <i>Alan Shepperd</i>	

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ALBERT SEATON (Retd.) is the author of many books on Russian military history; his *The Russo-German War 1941-45* is probably the only complete and authoritative account published in the free world, and has appeared in London, New York and Frankfurt. Among his recently published works is *The Battle for Moscow*; *Stalin as Military Commander* will be published in 1973, and he is at present engaged on the writing of *Stalingrad*.