Managing the Ethnic Factor in the Russian and Soviet Armed Forces

An Historical Overview

Susan L. Curran, Dmitry Ponomareff

Rand

ISBN 08330-0341-0
81-11893

The Rand Publications Series: The Report is the principal publication documenting and transmitting Rand's major research findings and final research results. The Rand Note reports other outputs of sponsored research for general distribution. Publications of The Rand Corporation do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the sponsors of Rand research.

Published by The Rand Corporation

R-2640/1

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July 1982

Rand
SANTA MONICA, CA. 90406

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

PREFACE

This report examines the history of Russian (pre-Soviet) and Soviet attempts to employ and manage national minorities in military establishments and campaigns. The analysis concentrates on policies and practices adopted to involve minority manpower in the military while maintaining Slavic dominance of and control over the armed force of the state. In particular, the study traces how the number of ethnic groups drawn into the military has consistently expanded throughout the centuries, identifies the types of units and operational roles to which minorities have been assigned, and discusses the difficulties encountered by virtue of language differences and the potential unreliability and disloyalty of non-Russian soldiers.

This study should be of special interest to military analysts and intelligence consumers generally who are concerned with future Soviet military capabilities and behavior, as well as to those who analyze Soviet military manpower issues in the light of current demographic shifts in the USSR.

SUMMARY

The history of Russian (pre-Soviet) and Soviet use of non-Russians in the military indicates that while Slavs heavily dominated the population, successive regimes employed minority soldiers to defend the state, participate in foreign campaigns, and conduct internal police functions. In the earliest times, only select—the most loyal—nationalities were used for these purposes. But over the centuries, the leadership found it necessary to draw more and more ethnic groups into the armed forces.

From the founding of the modern Russian state, non-Russians served voluntarily in auxiliary or allied forces. The first such troops came from the Kasimov Tatars, Siberian Tatars, and Nogay Tatars. Having proved effective and helpful in these cases, the military employment of non-Russians in nationally segregated units became a standard practice, which survived the demise of the Russian Empire and continued under the Soviet regime.

Even when the Russian regime instituted a modern conscription policy in 1699-1700, most non-Russians in military service continued to serve as volunteers outside the framework of the regular army in units designated as "troops of different nationalities." The draft was only applied in Russian areas, apparently to restrict the number of minorities in the army and thus ensure Russian control. The compulsory service policy remained focused primarily on the Russian population through the eighteenth century, although select nationalities gradually were made subject to the draft.

As part of a set of military reforms adopted in 1874, the "troops of different nationalities" were disbanded, and conscription, officially, was made universal. In practice, however, the Imperial recruitment policy toward non-Slavs continued to be bifurcated: Ethnic groups considered loyal to the Tsarist regime were drafted, whereas unreliable elements were excluded from service in the regular army. In particular, Caucasians, North Caucasians, and Central Asians were either exempted or excused from military service at this time. This practice was in conformity with the regime's stipulation that the ethnic composition of the annual recruit cohort and of existing military units be no less than 75-percent Slavic. The regime raised some volunteer units among the North Caucasian nationalities, and Caucasians were eventually conscripted, but Central Asians continued to be exempt until 1916, when the regime's ill-fortune in World War I forced it to attempt to draft them.

As the drafting of Central Asians indicated, Imperial conscription policies followed up to that time were inadequate to provide the numbers of men required by the magnitude of the struggle in which the regime was engaged in World War I. In another departure in its recruitment policy, the leadership encouraged the creation of some national units, in order to capitalize on the hostility of various nationalities of the Empire toward the Central Powers. But the efforts of the government proved inadequate to augment Slavic manpower deployed on the Eastern Front.

In the fluid period of the Civil War, before the Bolsheviks were able to consolidate control, many nationalities formed their own military units and struggled to achieve different degrees of independence from the new regime. Such units variously sided with the Reds or the Whites, depending on which appeared to offer the ethnic minorities the greatest opportunity for achievement of their own national aspirations. Whereas some White leaders apparently made little attempt to conceal their Russian chauvinism and status quo ante intentions, the Bolsheviks proclaimed a novel ideology that promised national self-determination. As a result of such factors, the Reds were more successful in garnering minority allies in their struggle to defeat the Whites, and even obtained the cooperation of some minority units in

subjugating their own homelands. The involvement of minority units with the Red Army made its drive into their regions somewhat more palatable to the natives.

The Bolsheviks' campaign to recruit minorities was most successful among Central Asians. They created a Central Asian Commissariat, which was directed and staffed by locals, to recruit Muslim nationalities into a Red Muslim Army. This Army swelled with volunteers who had defected from the White side and drew in many others. Its size as an independent entity is not known, for the Bolsheviks quickly integrated these units into the regular Red Army. By early 1919 possibly between 225,000 and 250,000 Muslims served in the Red Army under native officers. Muslims are said to have constituted more than 50 percent of the Soviet personnel on the critical Siberian Front and to have made up 70 to 75 percent of the combat personnel of Tukhachevsky's Fifth Army, which played a decisive role in Kolchak's defeat.

At the conclusion of the Civil War, many of the nationalities continued to press for the creation of their own national armies to support their claims for political autonomy and independence. The Bolshevik leadership rightly recognized that such a move would jeopardize its control of the borderlands, and, therefore, national armies were not permitted. However, the leadership compromised in allowing the establishment of national military units, with the stipulation that they be restricted in size and firmly subordinated to central Russian authority. An ambitious, long-term program for the creation of national units was adopted in 1924-1925. Although some success in fulfilling the plan was achieved, the program soon foundered, largely because of the questionable loyalty of native officers and commissars, language problems, and resurgent nationalism. In March 1938, all national units were officially abolished.

At the beginning of World War II, the Red Army was officially composed of ethnically integrated units, but some de facto national units existed as a result of the recent integration of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union and because of the nature of the Red Army's reserve system. Even though some of these de facto national units proved unreliable, the government repeated the pattern of creating national formations when faced with a military crisis. In November 1941, responding to the German invasion and under dire necessity to strengthen the failing Red Army, the State Defense Committee authorized the establishment of official national units to mobilize more manpower and physical resources of the republics in defense of the country.

From existing data, it is impossible to ascertain how many minorities participated in the war effort and how many of them served in genuine national detachments, as opposed to regular army units. Many units that bore a national designation probably included a large number of Russian or other Slavic soldiers who lived in the non-Russian republics. Nonetheless, a substantial number of national formations and regular units containing a significant percentage of non-Russians was raised. Even more important, most non-Slavs were mobilized during the period when a large part of the Slavic population was unavailable to the government, having fallen under German control. Their participation at this crucial time is significant in and of itself. There is evidence that non-Russians were present on a number of important fronts, but their effectiveness and reliability are open to question. These developments account in part for the drop in the percentage of minority soldiers in the Army in the latter part of the war.

Some national units survived until the mid-1950s, at which time all were disbanded and their personnel integrated into regular formations of the Red Army. There were probably many reasons for this reintegration—including the desire to use the Army as an instrument to russify the population—but disloyalty is perhaps the most important. Émigré interviewees continually cite the refusal of native Georgian troops to fire on their own population at the time of the Tbilisi uprising in 1956 as the reason for termination of national units. At the present time, all nationalities are assigned to ethnically integrated units, and personnel are generally stationed according to the principle of extraterritoriality. That is, most serve in regions other than their native republic.

Russian and Soviet experience in using minority troops has been mixed. Non-Russian sol-

diers have played important roles in numerous specific instances, and the sheer number of non-Russian soldiers raised were important factors in the Civil War and World War II. In these cases, as at other times, the creation of national units facilitated the mobilization of many minority soldiers. But, in general, non-Russian troops have been—or have been perceived to be—of questionable effectiveness and reliability, if not outrightly disloyal. For that reason, past leaderships have sought to limit the number of minority soldiers in the military whenever this was possible—that is, in peacetime—and to assign those who do serve to integrated units where their nationalistic tendencies can be more readily controlled. In event of war, immediate manpower requirements have superseded these precautions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge the helpful suggestions and advice of Rand colleagues S. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev. They also thank Margaret Krahenbuhl and James Hayes of The Rand Corporation for reviewing an earlier draft of this report and making numerous suggestions that improved the publication. For the conclusions and any remaining shortcomings of the study, the authors bear full responsibility.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The dominant role of ethnic Russians in the political, economic, and military life of the Soviet Union has often masked important ethnic distinctions in the composition of the USSR's population. Even the division of the union into fifteen primary republics (see Fig. 1) represents only some of the major ethnic differentiations of Soviet society. That over 100 languages enjoy official status indicates more fully the diversity of the Soviet population. The expansion of the Russian Empire before 1917 and the equally determined policy of the Soviet government to retain its Imperial patrimony has resulted in Russian control over such disparate peoples as the Western-oriented Christian inhabitants of the Baltic States—Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—and the Turkic and Iranic Muslims of Central Asia.

Russians have always been the largest single ethnic group in the multinational state, and along with the other Slavs, who include Ukrainians and Belorussians, they have constituted an absolute majority of the population. This numerical advantage is now being eroded by differences in annual average rate of population growth in the various ethnic regions of the USSR. The birthrate of the "European" population (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Baltic peoples) shows a slowing trend, while birthrates in the "Asian" areas (Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan) are among the highest in the world.

The changing ethnic balance of the Soviet population is likely to pose a number of new problems for the leadership, among the most potentially troublesome of which is the changing ethnic composition of the Soviet military manpower pool. With a declining number of "European" draft-age recruits, the government may be forced to accept an increasing percentage of "Asians" into the armed forces.

Other studies in this series address the nature and extent of the demographic shift in the conscript pool, various options that might be available to the leadership to minimize or manage the demographic change within the military, and problems the Soviets may encounter as a result of language problems, nationality-related conflicts, and decreasing efficiency, effectiveness, and reliability of forces.

This study, an examination of the history of Russian (pre-Soviet) and Soviet policies and practices in mobilizing and using minorities in the military, is designed to provide a background against which to analyze the impending leadership dilemma. The ways non-Russians have been recruited, assigned, and employed historically may suggest methods the current regime could consider in managing minorities in the military in the future. Also, the success or failure of earlier attempts to use non-Russians in the military probably shapes, or at least influences, the perceptions Soviet leaders may have about the effectiveness and reliability of minority troops.

The historical review reveals that even though Russians and other Slavs heavily dominated the population, from the founding of the modern Russian state, the Kremlin has traditionally drawn on the support of minority troops to defend the country, conduct foreign campaigns, and perform internal police functions. The evidence indicates that minority troops have played important roles in a number of specific instances, and that the sheer numbers of minority soldiers raised were important factors in the Civil War and World War II. At the same time, instances of questionable effectiveness and dubious reliability, if not outright disloyalty, involving non-Russian troops underscore the limitation of using minorities to augment Moscow's military manpower.

Fig. 1—USSR administrative divisions

II. ETHNIC RECRUITMENT UNDER THE EMPIRE

Since the earliest days of the modern Russian state, Russian regimes have employed indigenous non-Russian nationalities in a variety of military and internal security capacities. The history of their policies and practices regarding minority personnel reveals a continuous struggle to balance off the inherent advantages and disadvantages of a multinational military. Although a policy of mobilizing non-Russian nationalities obviously increased the available military manpower pool, it also presented command and control problems because of historical, linguistic, and cultural differences. Segregating national minorities in their own ethnically distinct units mitigated the language problem and also allowed the deployment of ethnically antagonistic units to suppress rebellions in any given area of the state. At the same time, however, the reliability of and control over separate minority units were matters of serious concern.

A few select minority groups were employed as allies or auxiliaries in Russian campaigns in the fifteenth century. Over time the number of nationalities mobilized for the military expanded gradually but extensively, until in 1874 all nationalities were officially (although not yet in practice) subjected to conscription. By this period the Russian military was also transformed into a modern mass army patterned on the Prussian example. As mobilization and organizational policies evolved, the desire to maximize military manpower while ensuring the reliability of and control over troops guided decisions as to which nationalities would be included in the military and the types of units in which they would serve.

EARLY NON-RUSSIAN ALLIES OR AUXILIARIES

Non-Russian soldiers first participated in Russian military campaigns as allies or auxiliaries. The efforts of successive Grand Princes of Moscow to unite the numerous Russian city-states to break what would be a two-century-long Mongol domination resulted in the establishment of the modern Russian state by the fifteenth century. Although the burden of this struggle against the Mongols fell principally on Russian soldiers raised through feudal levies, the Moscow Princes formed alliances with select non-Russian feudal tribes whose support proved important to the success of Russian military operations. Kasimov Tatars, for example, provided military leaders and advisers to the Grand Princes and troops that defended Moscow's southern and eastern borders from attacks. Kasimov Tatars also reinforced Ivan III's armies during the forcible subordination of the mercantile city of Novgorod in 1477. Troops of the similarly allied Siberian Tatars and Nogay Tatars participated in the defeat and sacking of the Golden Horde in 1481, a defeat from which the Mongol overlord and Moscow's prime enemy was never able to recover.[1]

Having proved effective, if not vital, in these instances, the use of Tatars as allies or auxiliaries became a standard practice that survived well into the establishment of the Russian Empire. For example, Kasimov Tatar troops served in the armies of Ivan the Terrible (1547-1584) during his conquest of the Volga Basin and in the Livonian War.[2]

Ivan also used Tatar nobility from Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Crimea—especially those of Gengesid descent—to command his purely Russian armies.[3] He appears to have begun this

[1]Grey, 1967, pp. 22, 27-28, 53.
[2]Interview with Professor Alexandre A. Bennigsen at Rand, May 9, 1979.
[3]Ibid.

practice because some Russian commanders defected in the course of the Livonian War. Unlike such defectors, Tatar commanders were free from association with the various Russian aristocratic cliques, fully dependent on the Tsar for their careers, and thus could be expected to advance his wishes.

The policies of Ivan the Terrible set the precedent of drawing on select non-Russian nationalities whose loyalty was trusted to expand the military manpower base, to conduct operations against Russian enemies, and to perform internal police functions in Russia proper. With the exception of Tatar nobles who served as officers, non-Russians were not integrated into Russian units but served in separate units raised from among their own nationality.

The ways in which Russian leaders sought to capitalize on non-Russian military manpower remained essentially unchanged in succeeding centuries, even when major changes were instituted in the mobilization and organization of the military. With the exception of selective integration of aristocrats of the Empire as officers in the Russian Army, non-Russians participated outside the framework of the regular, standing army in units considered allied nomadic hordes of the Russian military establishment.[4] Whereas conscription was instituted in Russian areas in 1699-1700, the policy was not applied in other parts of the Empire until considerably later, and most non-Russians who served were still volunteers in auxiliary units.[5]

CONSCRIPTION AND THE CREATION OF THE MODERN RUSSIAN ARMY

To create a modern Russian Army, Peter the Great replaced the raising of feudal levies with modern conscription. When first instituted in 1699-1700, the draft applied only to Russian parts of the Empire. Each landholder in these areas was directed to provide a specified number of draftees, according to the number of serfs he owned. The balance of the enlistees were drawn from the poorer urban social elements.[6]

The conscription policy remained focused primarily on the Russian population through the eighteenth century. This practice was codified in the Imperial Decree of May 17, 1798, which specified that recruits were to be "native-born Russians." Although in the parlance of that time this term encompassed Ukrainians and Belorussians, ethnic Great Russians carried the disproportionate burden of conscription. The other Slavs only began to be systematically recruited in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.[7]

Despite the focus of the draft on Russians, not all non-Slavs were exempted from conscription throughout this period. As early as 1722, such small ethnic minorities as the Mordvinians and Cheremisov Tatars became subject to compulsory service.[8] This indicates that the regime chose to expand its military manpower by drafting those nationalities considered most loyal and that could more readily be integrated with Russian soldiers.

As earlier, non-Russian nobles served as officers in the regular army of Peter the Great. The Russian Empire, like the Moskovite state that preceded it, accepted Tatar and Transcaucasian nobility into the Russian aristocracy and into the Imperial officer corps. This allowed Armenians, Georgians, and Ossetins to enjoy distinguished military careers in the Tsarist Army.[9] Members of the Georgian aristocracy traditionally served in the Imperial Guard and enjoyed a well-earned reputation for recklessness and valor.

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[4]Beskrovnyi, 1958, p. 23.
[5]Beskrovnyi, 1973, p. 70.
[6]Beskrovnyi, 1958, p. 23.
[7]Ibid., pp. 298, 300.
[8]Ibid., p. 28.
[9]Kolarz, 1953, pp. 191-192, 202; and interview with Bennigsen, May 9, 1979.

For the most part, however, non-Russian soldiers continued to serve in auxiliary units, which acquired the designation "troops of different nationalities" (*inordnye voiska*) at the time Peter the Great modernized the Russian Army. Kalmyks, Bashkirs, and Tatars are known to have served in such units. The nomadic Kalmyks served as military gendarmerie, protected the eastern approaches to the Empire against incursions by other nomadic elements, and supported Peter's ill-fated Persian campaign. Kalmyk units also participated in Peter's Great Northern War (1700-1721) against Sweden. Later Kalmyk units served alongside Russian troops in the Seven Year War (1756-1763) and in Russian campaigns against Napoleon (1812-1813).[10] In the 1740s and 1750s, Bashkirs and Tatars made up most of the "troops of different nationalities." Men in these units retained their native dress and arms and mainly performed missions involving reconnaissance and protection of the lines of communication of field armies.[11] In 1805 this force, in addition to Cossack units, consisted of nine regular cavalry regiments, which included five raised in the Caucasus and two from the Volga Tatars.[12]

In 1850, the auxiliary "troops of different nationalities" included 189 officers and 37,500 men, which constituted 3.5 percent of the 1,072,000 regular troops in three combat arms of the Russian Army.[13] This figure dropped sharply to 82 officers and 3115 men in 1862, and in 1876 the 114 officers and 4371 men represented only 0.64 percent of the 679,048 men in regular combat arms.[14] Because Muslims (Tatars) were heavily represented in the auxiliary units, it is possible that their proportionate strength was reduced in anticipation of or in conjunction with the final Russian drive into Central Asia, out of concern that they might tend to side with the local Muslim population.[15]

MILITARY REFORMS OF 1874

As part of a set of military reforms initiated in 1874, the Russian leadership adopted a universal military service policy, which officially subjected all nationalities of the Empire to conscription. In practice, however, the draft continued to be considerably less than universal. Although more non-Slavic elements were conscripted, the Imperial recruitment practice continued to be bifurcated: Those ethnic groups, such as the Volga Tatars, considered loyal to the regime were drafted, while unreliable elements, such as the Crimean Tatars, whose loyalty was seen to lie with the Turkish Sultan, and Central Asians, were excluded. Also as part of these reforms, "troops of different nationalities" were disbanded and made part of the regular army.

The military reforms of 1874, undertaken under the leadership of War Minister Count Miliutin, were aimed primarily at replacing the professional military constructed along eighteenth-century lines with a modern mass army patterned on the Prussian example. According to contemporary observers, one of the keys to the resounding victories of the Prussians over the Austrians and French lay in their ability to expand massively and swiftly the size of the standing army by mobilizing an extensive number of reserve units. The Russian reforms were designed to create such a reserve capacity through a universal service policy and a drastic reduction in the length of service, thus maximizing the number of males who received military training.

Distrust of some non-Slavic ethnic minorities appears to have been the reason that the

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[10]Kolarz, 1953, pp. 81-82; and interview with Bennigsen, May 9, 1979.
[11]Beskrovnyi, 1958, p. 65.
[12]Ibid., p. 32.
[13]Beskrovnyi, 1973, pp. 19, 23, 26, 34.
[14]Ibid., pp. 48, 52, 55, 65.
[15]Ibid., p. 34; and Zaionchkovskii, 1952, p. 17.

application of conscription continued to be restricted in practice, however. Miliutin, in a memorandum to the Tsar dated November 7, 1870, while presenting a strong case for the military necessity of adopting universal conscription, made it clear that the system should not be extended to the Caucasus or some of the eastern parts of the Empire because the population there exhibited a "low level of . . . civic development."[16]

Miliutin's argument seems to have won the day. Exempted from service were the populations of Transcaucasia, Turkestan (which included the present-day republics of Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirghizistan, Turkmenistan, and part of Kazakhstan), parts of Siberia, all of the non-Russian nationalities of Siberia, Crimean Tatars, people of the North Caucasus, and those residing in Asktrakhan Province, Arkhangel'sk Province, Turgaiskaia region, and Ural'skaia region.[17]

The exclusion of these areas from the draft enabled the regime to maintain a desired ratio of Slavic soldiers in the armed forces. Official policy at this time stipulated that the ethnic composition of the annual recruit cohort and of existing military units be no less than 75-percent Slavic.[18] The non-Slavic contingent was recruited primarily from Russian-ruled Poland, the Baltic provinces, the russified Volga Tatars, the Jewish settlements of the Pale, and the smaller minorities in Russia proper.[19]

Also as part of the 1874 reforms, the "troops of different nationalities" were disbanded and made part of the regular army. Still, some minority units were raised from volunteers in such draft-exempt areas as the North Caucasus and Central Asia.[20]

Compulsory military service was gradually extended to Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, but Muslims in these areas were allowed to make monetary payments in lieu of service,[21] and extension of the draft to Central Asia was not undertaken until 1916. Central Asian historians have argued that Russian fear of a "cunning religious leader" unifying the Muslims against "infidel" Russians motivated this policy. Excusing and excluding most Muslims from the draft meant in effect that they would not acquire training in the use of modern arms or exposure to more advanced military techniques.[22]

That such considerations played a part is indicated by available evidence such as the secret report prepared in 1882 by the Giers Commission, one of a series of Russian efforts to improve administration of Central Asia. The report bluntly argued against extending military service to peoples of the region on the grounds that it was unsafe to increase the military ethos of the natives or to acquaint them with modern military organization and the use of advanced weaponry. Contending that the loyalty of existing Muslim auxiliary units was questionable at best, the report argued that the recruitment of Central Asian soldiers would produce an ever-growing number of demobilized soldiers who, particularly by virtue of their military training, would constitute an acute danger to the presence of Russian forces in the region. Because it was considered impossible to maintain a larger Russian garrison in the area, the creation of such a large body of trained Muslim manpower was viewed as a threat to the very existence of Imperial rule in Central Asia.[23] To all appearances, the conclusions of the Giers report were accepted by the Tsarist government.

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[16]Zaionchkovskii, 1952, p. 305.

[17]Zaionchkovskii, 1973, p. 115.

[18]Ibid., p. 119.

[19]For the extension of military service to European groups and smaller ethnic minorities, see Curtiss, 1965, pp. 234, 239. Information on the Volga Tatars was obtained from Professor Bennigsen, May 9, 1979.

[20] Beskrovnyi, 1973, p. 88.

[21]The result of the 1874 reforms in terms of the relative contribution of the general ethnic types to the military is illustrated by the fact that in 1885 only 359 out of 91,862 men in European Russia subject to the draft were exempted from serving, while in the Caucasus 5742 out of 7284 and in Central Asia 5042 out of 5327 did not serve. The ratio of soldiers per 1000 males for that year stood at 18.4 for European Russia, 6.1 for the Caucasus, and 1.0 for Central Asia. Beskrovnyi, 1973, pp. 88, 90, 93.

[22]d'Encausse, *Organizing and Colonizing the Conquered Territories,* 1967, p. 162.

[23]Ibid., p. 222.

Exclusion of Central Asians, among others, from the draft was eminently sensible from the standpoint of securing control over the multiethnic empire as long as there were sufficient numbers of Slavic and European recruits to maintain the Army at required levels. The selective conscription policy proved adequate to meet the needs of an army engaged in maintaining internal control or involved in a limited military campaign, such as the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. But World War I severely tested the Russian military system and required a commitment of all the available personnel of the state to support its military effort.

WORLD WAR I

In the course of World War I, the Russian regime's management of the military and ability to commit all of the resources of the Empire to its defense were severely taxed, and found wanting. The Imperial government again somewhat modified and expanded military employment of minorities to meet the demands on its army. In facing an external threat, the leadership repeated the familiar pattern of raising voluntary national units. Also, the regime undertook the nonvoluntary enlistment of Central Asians into the regular Russian Army for the first time. But these measures proved insufficient to wage the magnitude of struggle in which the state was engaged.

Voluntary National Units

The formation of volunteer national units from among nationalities excluded from conscription testifies that the Tsarist government demonstrated some ability to manipulate the hostilities of non-Russian groups under its control toward the Central Powers so as to rally their support and involvement in the war. For example, Tsar Nicholas II personally encouraged the aspirations of the Armenian population of the Russian Empire to liberate Armenians under Turkish rule. This encouragement undoubtedly accounts, at least in part, for the creation of Armenian volunteer units totaling 10,000 men who fought in the Caucasus and supported Allied armies in the Middle East.[24]

Another voluntary unit, known as the "Wild Division" (*Dikaia Divisiia*), was raised from among the tribes of Turkmenia and the North Caucasus. This cavalry division, consisting of four regiments, was used in the tradition of non-Slavic auxiliary units.[25]

Also, in May 1915, as Russian casualties mounted, the Russian Parliament consented to a proposal by a Latvian delegate for the formation of Latvian rifle units. These units, which grew to a force of eight regiments, distinguished themselves in the course of the war[26] and later played a decisive role in the Bolshevik Revolution.

That the St. Petersburg government acquiesced to, if not encouraged, the formation of such national units, suggests the extent of its manpower difficulties. Although the willingness of the Latvians, for example, to participate in the war effort undoubtedly stemmed from historical enmity toward their former German masters, their desire to form national units was a profound demonstration of their own national aspirations. Acceptance of these units indicates both that there was not enough Slavic manpower to fill the ever-growing gaps in the army and that the Tsarist government in extremis accepted the political risks associated with the formation of clearly identifiable national military units. The enormous losses suffered by the

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[24]The Armenians also apparently provided 250,000 men for the regular Russian Army. Kazemzadeh, 1951, pp. 24-25; and Simon Wratzian, *Armenia and the Armenian Question,* Mairenik Publishing Company, Boston, 1943, pp. 32-34, cited in Lobinger, 1973, p. 71.

[25]Bennigsen interview, May 9, 1979.

[26]Lobinger, 1973, pp. 65-68.

Russian Army apparently forced the regime to create national units, even though their existence could not but enhance nationalism and provide support for the political claims of various parts of the Empire.

Conscription of Central Asians

Manpower shortages drove the Tsarist regime to another significant departure in its mobilization policies. The Imperial Decree of June 25, 1916, directed for the first time the nonvoluntary enlistment of Central Asians. The Turkestan Governor-Generalship (comprising the four current Central Asian republics) was to provide 250,000 men, or 8 percent of its male population. In addition, the Steppe Governor-Generalship (roughly, present Kazakhstan) was to contribute 243,000 recruits. These personnel were to be employed in the rear area as support troops, thus freeing up Slavs for combat roles at the front.[27]

Flaws in concept and insensitive application hindered implementation of the decree. The issuance of the directive came at the worst possible time, the height of the cotton season, when the financial security, and often survival, of many Central Asian families depended on having enough labor in the fields. Furthermore, the number of draftees demanded was unrealistic. The extensiveness of the demands, along with the Muslims' reluctance to serve in the Russian Army, where they believed they would be forced to eat pork and become contaminated by association with the "infidels," served as a catalyst for the great Central Asian rebellion of 1916.[28] Once it had restored order, the center gradually put the conscription policy into effect. This ultimately produced 150,000 to 180,000 men for support duties in the European part of the Empire, well less than half the number of men that had been required.[29]

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[27]Pierce, 1960, pp. 271-297; and Wheeler, 1964, pp. 92-93.

[28]The overall rebellion lasted from July to the autumn of 1916 and was unprecedently violent. The unrest began in the Uzbek area and quickly spread to the Kazakh-Kirghiz Steppes. Russian settlers, officials of all nationalities, and military men were killed out of hand; industrial assets were destroyed; and, in general, every effort was made to eradicate the Russian presence in the area. The rebellion was only put down when the armed Russian settlers of the region were reinforced by two Cossack regiments, 24 squadron equivalents (*sotnia*) of cavalry, 35 infantry companies, 16 artillery pieces, and 47 machine guns. Losses on both sides were heavy. See d'Encausse, "The Fall of the Czarist Regime," 1967, pp. 209-213.

[29]Pierce, 1960, pp. 271-297; and Wheeler, 1964, pp. 92-93.

III. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE CIVIL WAR

The chaotic and fluid period of the Russian Revolution and Civil War provided a brief opportunity for diverse ethnic groups of the former Empire to assert demands for and struggle to realize their individual national aspirations. The collapse of the Romanov Dynasty had shattered the power structure required to hold together the multinational state. As the Reds and Whites fought each other for control of the former territory of the Empire, the different nationalities sought to achieve varying degrees of independence from the successor regime. The Finns and Balts sought and, because of external circumstances, gained independence from Russia. The Georgians and Armenians declared their independence and sought protection among foreign powers but were ultimately subjugated to Moscow. The Ukrainians apparently favored creation of a loosely structured federal system in place of the defunct empire. Some, primarily Muslim, ethnic groups sought national-cultural autonomy under the umbrella of an as-yet-undefined Moscow-based state.

The different ethnic groups viewed their participation in the Civil War struggle as a means to fulfill their own national goals. When the Imperial Army collapsed, many nationalities formed their own units to defend and achieve independence for their native territories. Some of these units sided with the Reds or the Whites, depending on which appeared to offer the better opportunity for realizing their specific aspirations; others refused to cooperate with either side.

Both the Reds and Whites followed the practice of gaining and using the military support of national minorities wherever it could be acquired. Each sought the alliance of native military units in its struggle against the other and in campaigns to subjugate the borderlands. Each also at times attempted to integrate minority units into its regular forces.

In the contest for garnering allies, the Reds proved more successful in the long run, although even that success was modest. The bloody Civil War was played out in an unending series of temporary agreements, betrayals, broken promises, and alliance reversals between the Reds and Whites and the various ethnic groups that sided with them. Some White leaders apparently made little attempt to conceal the Russian chauvinism and status quo ante intentions behind their drive, made exorbitant demands for manpower and other resources, and plundered native lands and villages. Such conduct exacerbated anti-Russian sentiments and eventually alienated even groups that for a time had cooperated with the Whites. The Bolsheviks proved generally more skillful in manipulating the minorities to defeat the Whites and to consolidate control over much of the former Empire.

Although no more well-behaved, the Reds had the advantage of a novel and untested ideology that propounded national self-determination for Russia's minorities. The Bolshevik government sanctioned the formation of its own Red "national" units of Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Tatar-Muslims. Although touted as national liberation forces, these units were little more than a front for the Bolsheviks; their existence masked efforts of the Russian center to forcibly subordinate these peoples' homelands.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RED ARMY

By the time the Bolsheviks took power in November 1917, the Imperial Army had already disintegrated under the pressures of the war, Tsarist mismanagement, and the corrosive effects of Bolshevik antimilitary propaganda. The Soviet decree of demobilization merely

formalized the phenomenon of soldiers simply leaving their units for home. While this meant that the old army was no longer available for use by opponents of the Revolution, it also left the new Soviet regime with almost no military potential at a time when its hold on power was extremely precarious. The detachments of armed workers, the Red Guards, and the Kronstadt sailors were an insufficient force to protect the young Soviet state from advancing German armies and the first stirrings of counterrevolution.

Traditional Communist ideological opposition to professional military establishments, which were viewed by the Reds as the major tool of capitalist oppression,[1] complicated the young regime's dilemma of how to defend itself. The establishment of a new army was delayed for two months, during which argument raged over whether the army should be professional or a more ideologically acceptable form of military establishment. This debate continued well into the 1920s, but decisive steps taken by Lenin and Trotsky made moot the ideological opposition to the formation of a Red Army.

In January 1918 the Bolsheviks issued a decree for the creation of a volunteer 300,000-man army. A force of this size proved impossible to raise from volunteers because of the war weariness of the population. Consequently, the regime resorted to conscription, which—although very unpopular—yielded the desired results. By the end of August, the military totaled more than half a million men, and by the close of the Civil War in January 1921 there were 1,549,334 soldiers in the three combat arms alone.[2]

Soviet sources indicate that the number of non-Russians fluctuated between 20 and 30 percent of the total force during the Civil War.[3] There are no data to indicate how many of these were in national type units and how many in integrated units.

We will now examine the part played by various nationalities in the Civil War and how the Reds and Whites attempted to use them.

WESTERN NATIONALITIES

At the time the Bolsheviks took power, the Western Republics were still under German control or denied to Soviet control by native political entities. The new regime employed existing national units and formed new ones from among the peoples of the Western provinces who were living in Russia proper for the purpose of conquering and annexing their homelands.

The Bolsheviks inherited intact from the old regime two Latvian infantry brigades, including their reserve regiment, and two regular infantry regiments of the line. Their high standards of discipline and cohesion allowed these units to play important military and police roles in the early days of the Revolution. The Latvians reportedly guarded the top Bolshevik leadership, patrolled the Kremlin, provided detachments for the secret police (Cheka), performed such unpopular duties as forcibly dispersing the Constituent Assembly, and possibly participated in the execution of the Romanov family. Furthermore, Latvian units continued to serve as elite units of the Red Army in the most vital sectors of various fronts throughout the war.[4]

The numerous existing Latvian units made it possible for the regime to consider creating an entire Soviet Latvian Army. An initial commitment was made to form a division from the nine national regiments, and there were plans to field a force of two infantry divisions with cavalry support.[5] These plans were apparently never realized, perhaps because the chief of

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[1]For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Kolkowicz, 1968, pp. 223-232.
[2]Kliatskin, 1965, pp. 79-95, 192-201, 463.
[3]Artem'ev, 1975, p. 17.
[4]Erickson, 1962, p. 19; Lobinger, 1973, pp. 67-68; Odom, 1973, p. 26; and Silnitskii, 1978, pp. 146-147.
[5]*Grazhdanskaia voina v pribaltike, na zapodnom fronte i na podstupakh k Petrogradu,* 1928, pp. 151-152.

the Latvian military establishment, K. A. Peterson, attempted to establish control over Latvian units in the Red Army and challenged the authority of central Soviet organs in his territory.[6]

The Bolsheviks also made plans to create an Estonian division. The Russian Sixth Division was assigned the initial penetration of the region pending the arrival of the Estonian formation.[7] We have no definite indication that the Estonian force was ever actually formed.

No Red Lithuanian unit was created because of a lack of trustworthy Lithuanian recruits. Soviet authors of the 1920s frankly described the Lithuanian population as hostile to Soviet rule. The Bolsheviks assigned absorption of Lithuania to the Red Army's Second Pskov Division.[8]

Three Ukrainian divisions and two Belorussian regiments were raised to conquer and control their respective native territories. It is now stated that the national units were not expected to perform this mission singlehandedly but were to be "assisted" by units of the regular Red Army.[9]

Unfortunately for the Bolsheviks, these Western national formations promptly demonstrated nationalist tendencies inimicable to Soviet interests. Because Bolshevik rule was not yet consolidated, the relationship between Moscow and the local Revolutionary Military Councils remained largely undefined. In the absence of strong central control, local authorities took advantage of the opportunity to pursue their own specific goals. Current Soviet sources claim that the center provided significant quantities of military supplies, one-third of the available manpower, one-fourth of the machine guns, and one-fourth of the artillery tubes for the struggle for the Western provinces. Despite this support, or perhaps because of it, non-Russian local military authorities did not cooperate fully with the Red Army. Local commissariats did not organize along the approved pattern, created bloated staffs at the expense of line units, and were inefficient in their recruitment efforts.[10]

More seriously, Western national groups are charged with not having adequately aided the Red Army in its campaign against the Whites. It has been asserted, for example, that the Ukrainians provided only 32,000 men, rather than an expected 50,000, for the needs of the Red Army. Instead of supporting what Lenin considered the primary mission of the Red Army—the preservation of Soviet power in Moscow—the Ukrainian Communists held back 82,000 men in hopes of regaining their native territory.[11]

These developments were clearly unacceptable to Lenin and the Russian military leaders. The behavior of the national military groups was labeled "not being goal oriented and harmful to success."[12] Moscow's degree of concern over these nationalistic tendencies and its readiness to take whatever measures were necessary to establish centralized control are evident in the following statement by Lenin:

> Standing against a massive front of imperialistic states, we who struggle against imperialism constitute a union which demands close military integration, and any attempt to destroy this unity is viewed as a totally inadmissible phenomenon, as treachery to the interests of the struggle against imperialism.... We state, it is imperative to have unity of military forces, retreat from this unity cannot be allowed.[13]

Unity was the theme of a series of measures announced in the spring of 1919. In April, a Central Committee resolution stressed the need for unity of command over all units of the

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[6]Kliatskin, 1965, pp. 377-387.
[7]*Grazhdanskaia voina v pribaltike, na zapodnom fronte i na podstupakh k Petrogradu,* 1928, pp. 151-152.
[8]Ibid., p. 152; and Grechko, 1974, p. 128.
[9]Kliatskin, 1965, p. 328.
[10]Ibid., pp. 378-387.
[11]Ibid.
[12]Ibid.
[13]Cited in Grechko, 1974, pp. 126-127.

Red Army. In May, a directive ordered that the military logistical system and all the railroads be put under centralized Russian control.[14] On June 1, 1919, the first military union of component parts of the Soviet state was consummated, when the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic Republics "agreed" to Moscow's creation of a military district for each of the Western provinces and the subordination of the districts to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Russian Federation.

As a result of this new organization, control over the military potential of the Western provinces and over units dedicated to their "liberation" officially became the sole prerogative of Moscow. The so-called Belorussian and Latvian "armies" were reorganized and reformed into units corresponding with Moscow's strategic needs. The reputed Estonian Soviet Army ceased to exist as an independent entity. Forces dedicated to the Ukrainian theater were subdivided into two field armies under Russian command, with previous Ukrainian military authorities either disbanded or relegated to political work.[15] The missions of these forces no longer reflected the aims of the Western national groups, but rather were committed largely to the Bolshevik goal of defeating the White armies then threatening the Soviet capital from all sides.

In the Baltic area, the combined power of anti-Russian elements, White forces, German Freicorps units, and allied assistance proved too great to be overcome by a Red Army struggling on many fronts in the Civil War. The initial Soviet drive into the area in December 1918 met with some success, but by the summer of 1919 the Red Army was in full retreat.[16] Soviet republics would only be established in the area on the eve of World War II.

The Ukraine witnessed repeated waves of local, Red, White, German, and Polish forces during the Civil War. Successive Ukrainian governments during this period created their own truly national military units, a process paralleling the raising of Soviet Ukrainian formations by the Bolsheviks. It is interesting that the Ukrainian units fielded by the Reds turned out to be more reliable than those raised by the Ukrainian governments. This paradox can probably be explained as the result of the Ukrainian government's political ineptitude, as indicated and compounded by the rapid turnover among various ruling groups in the period 1917-1919. Indecision as to whether to pursue a course of total independence or one of autonomy within a Russian federation mitigated the most powerful tool available to the Ukrainian elite for more effective mobilization of its populace—the call of nationalism.[17] When Bolshevik power was finally established in the area in December 1919, the Ukraine was forcibly returned to the Russian fold by regular Soviet units, which were made more palatable by the participation of Soviet Ukrainian national formations.

TRANSCAUCASUS

In the Transcaucasus, national units fought to realize specific national goals and do not appear to have collaborated in the establishment of Soviet power in the respective territories. On the contrary, they were engaged in efforts to defend their lands from all foreign forces, including the Bolsheviks. Agelong ethno-religious conflicts between the nationalities of the region contributed both to making the area perhaps the most chaotic of all during the Civil War and to the Reds' eventual success in subjugating the region.

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[14]*KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza Documenty 1917-1968,* 1969, pp. 59-60.

[15]Kliatskin, 1965, pp. 388-390.

[16]*Grazhdanskaia voina v pribaltike, na zapodnom fronte i na podstupakh k Petrogradu,* 1928, pp. 165-166.

[17]As in the case of other opponents of Moscow, the Ukrainians lacked slogans to compete with Lenin's powerful promises of peace, land, bread, and freedom for the minorities. The attraction of Bolshevik promises is attested to by the fact that in addition to the previously mentioned Soviet Ukrainian national units, the Red Army in its repeated sweeps into the region was able to create Red Cossack and Red Guard units, which apparently remained loyal to the Bolsheviks. See Pipes, 1970, pp. 56-73, 115-150.

As the disintegration of the Imperial Army of the Caucasus left the area virtually undefended against the advancing Turkish armies, the Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaidzhanis at first made an attempt to achieve regional military unity. To meet the Turkish threat and to protect their populations against the violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers streaming home from the front, the three major nationalities formed the Transcaucasian Federation and placed their military forces under the jurisdiction of the Military Council of Nationalities. These forces consisted of Armenian military units that had been created in the course of World War I, Georgian formations created with the approval of the Provisional Government, and Azerbaidzhani detachments that had been formed without any central sanction.[18] The military union was short-lived, as Azerbaidzhan subsequently sided with the Turks, nullifying the federation. Each nationality took steps to fend for itself, and three independent republics of the Transcaucasus were formed.[19]

In April 1920, Moscow absorbed Azerbaidzhan, whose military force was largely ineffective. In September-October 1920, Armenia, weakened by an unsuccessful war with Turkey, was annexed by the Soviets—ostensibly for its own protection. In February 1921, in conjunction with a Turkish offensive, a Red Army force of 100,000 invaded Georgia. Despite an heroic resistance by the Georgian army, indirectly assisted by a bloody Armenian rebellion of February-April, the Tbilisi government was forced to surrender. This, in turn, enabled the Red Army, with the help of Georgian units, to expel Turkish troops from the republic.[20]

The Dagestan people of the North Caucasus also fought to keep their area free of all foreign presence. The Dagestani leadership labored to form a fundamentalist Islamic theocracy in its region, and as early as May 1917 Dagestani nationalists formed a Shariat (religious) militia. By January 1918 they could boast a 10,000-man force.

Although historical accounts of the campaign are murky, it appears that in their first drive into the area the Reds were initially successful in controlling the lowlands of Dagestan. But in the second half of 1918, the nationalist units forced the Red Army to withdraw.

The Dagestanis similarly resisted the White forces under Denikin that swept into the area in early 1919. Denikin used considerable force, including the destruction of three towns, in putting down native rebellions in the lowlands. He also attempted to conscript 8029 Dagestanis, of whom 1580 were to be mounted and outfitted at the expense of the local population. These extensive demands on Dagestani human and physical resources brought on a rebellion in which Denikin's forces suffered a number of serious defeats. White casualties ran into several thousand, either killed or captured.

Red forces returned to the North Caucasus in March 1920, assisted by such North Caucasus groups as the Ingush, whose support the Bolsheviks had been able to engage in the summer of 1918. The release of considerable numbers of troops to the Red Army following the end of the Civil and Polish wars, together with the collapse of the Armenian and Georgian republics that had been providing indirect support to the North Caucasus rebels, enabled the Red Army to bring most of Dagestan under Soviet control by March 1921.[21]

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[18]The military potential of the tripartite force was never tested, because the federation was rent by conflicting political goals within its ranks. The conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany left the federation in difficult straits, because it did not participate in the negotiations, and the peace provisions did not cover its front with Turkey. The Azerbaidzhanis' preference for cooperation with the Turks and apparent hopes for restoration of Muslim rule over Transcaucasia split the federation. These feelings, which led to ethnic clashes—including race riots and armed conflict—made meaningful cooperation among the Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaidzhanis impossible.

[19]By the summer of 1918, Armenia had a force totaling 20,000 infantry, 1000 cavalry, and 4000 militiamen. Georgia allocated one-third of its budget to the military, which enabled it to maintain both a regular army and a volunteer militia—the Popular Guard. In all, Georgia could field 50,000 men in 23 battalions of the Popular Guard and 36 regular battalions plus support cavalry and artillery elements. By 1920, Azerbaidzhan had raised a force of 20,000.

[20]The discussion of the Transcaucasus is based on Allen and Muratoff, 1953, pp. 457-498; Kazemzadeh, 1951, pp. 52-242, 246-328; and Pipes, 1970, pp. 203-214, 232-239.

[21]The discussion of the North Caucasus is based on Takho-Godi, 1927, passim.

In neither of the regions surveyed thus far—the Western provinces or the Transcaucasus—were native military forces successfully used to achieve national independence or even to determine the terms of their entry into the Soviet Federation. Political ineptitude, insufficient strength, and regional fragmentation prevented them from repelling the Red Army. (Only Finland and the Baltic states found themselves free from Russian rule, and this was due primarily to a fortuitous combination of historical antecedents, foreign intervention, geographical location, and the timing of their bid for freedom. The national military organizations played distinctly secondary roles in the eventual outcome.)

Neither were the Bolsheviks able to use national troops from these areas to defeat the Whites and gain control of the borderlands, except in a limited, symbolic way. Such tasks fell primarily on the regular, basically Russian units. Perhaps ironically, the greatest Bolshevik success in employing national units to achieve its ends occurred among Muslim nationalities of the Eastern provinces, who constituted the absolute majority of forces deployed on the key Siberian front and whose overall participation significantly eased the pressing manpower shortage problems facing the Red Army.

EASTERN NATIONALITIES

By the end of 1917, Muslim nationalists had already formed a sizable independent Muslim Army. The Bolsheviks quickly moved to neutralize the effectiveness of Muslim political organizations and to attract the Muslim military potential to their cause. Repressive measures taken by the Bolsheviks against the Muslim political organizations prompted the latter's military units to side with the Whites for a time. But eventual disillusionment with the Whites led to en masse crossovers to the Reds by early 1919.

As early as January 1918, the Bolsheviks also took steps to create their own Muslim Red Army. Recognizing that recruitment of Muslims to the Red Army would be most successful if administered by native leaders, they created the Central Muslim Commissariat with numerous local bureaus. The size attained by the Muslim Red Army in its short-lived guise as an independent entity is unclear. The Bolsheviks integrated these units into larger formations of the Red Army in late 1918 and early 1919, by which time there are reported to have been between 225,000 and 250,000 Muslims in the army. Clearly, Muslim participation constituted a major success for the Bolshevik policy in recruiting minorities.

Independent Muslim Units

In the fluid times of the Revolution, the Volga Tatars, elites of the Muslim world, demanded the creation of an autonomous Muslim (Tatar) state within a Russian federation. The Provisional Government rejected this demand, but the turbulent political situation rendered the rejection meaningless. In July 1917 the Tatars convened the Second All-Muslim Congress in Kazan', which sanctioned the formation of Muslim military units and an "Army Council" to supervise the raising of national battalions.[22] This act laid the foundation for the creation of a Tatar-Muslim Army, whose enlisted men were drawn primarily from the Bashkir peasantry and whose commissioned and noncommissioned officer staff consisted of young Volga Tatar nationalists who had served previously in the Imperial Army.[23] By January 1918, the Muslim Army, whose political program was Pan-Turkic, anti-Russian, and indifferent to Communism, represented a force of 50,000 men.[24]

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[22]Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1967, p. 80.

[23]Bennigsen interview, May 9, 1979.

[24]Ibid.; Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1967, pp. 81-87; Pipes, 1970, pp. 156-159; and Pipes, 1950, p. 307.

Initially, Muslim national and Bolshevik political organizations coexisted in the Volga region, but Moscow soon determined that the division of power was incompatible with its goals and attacked the Muslim nationalist political-military infrastructure. In February 1918, pro-Soviet sailors dispersed the Second Military Congress of Muslims of Russian in Kazan', and the native government of the city was liquidated. In March, Muslim national regiments in Petrograd were disbanded, and the headquarters and local branches around the country of *Habri Shura,* the Tatar political organization, were closed. In April, the Muslim political organization of the city of Ufa was similarly terminated.[25]

As a result of these repressive measures, most Muslim political groups and their military units turned to the Whites. In June, Zeki Validov, leader of the Bashkirs, brought his considerable volunteer force down from the mountains and cooperated with the Social Revolutionary government in Samara and later with the Orenburg Cossack forces of Ataman Dutov. When Admiral Kolchak was made supreme leader of the White movement, Bashkir units took part in his drive against Moscow. The political organization of Kazakh-Kirghiz, the *Alash Orda,* also cooperated with the forces of Dutov and Kolchak, although the extent of their military contribution to the White cause is not known.[26]

The Whites, because of their own rigid and short-sighted treatment of these minority groups, never fully realized the cooperation of the Muslims. Unwilling, even temporarily, to set aside their insistence on one, indivisible, greater Russia, the Whites refused to consider the Muslims' demands for autonomy. The result was an increasing amount of friction between the allies, a problem made worse by the White practice of ruthlessly extracting the resources of—and actually pillaging—native villages.

The conflict between the Muslims and the Whites came to a head in February 1919, when Kolchak, apparently concerned about the reliability of the national formations, ordered the integration of the Bashkir corps into his Siberian Army. This ill-fated decision apparently accelerated already ongoing negotiations between the Bashkirs and the Bolsheviks that resulted in Validov's leading 2000 of his warriors en masse to the Red side.[27]

In the Kazakh-Kirghiz region, the *Alash Orda* pulled its units into the Steppes and also formed an alliance with the Bolsheviks. The latter permitted the *Alash Orda* to establish an autonomous government, which the Reds later liquidated once the Red Army had cleared the region of Whites.[28]

The crossover of Muslim units provided the Bolsheviks with an invaluable transfusion of fresh manpower who were well acquainted with the local terrain and deeply embittered toward the Whites. These alliance reversals, coupled with the stories of White mistreatment, also encouraged other Muslims to join the Muslim Red Army being formed by Sultan Galiev.

Muslims in the Red Army

Sultan Galiev, a Volga Tatar, headed the Central Muslim Commissariat, a body created under the auspices of Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats) for the purpose of raising a Muslim Red Army. This force had begun to take shape as early as January 1918, when Sultan Galiev succeeded in drawing some units of the Volga Tatar *Habri Shura* organization to the Red side. The Commissariat's recruiting efforts, which were conducted by local bureaus, suffered a serious setback with the Bolshevik attack on Muslim political organizations, but eventually Sultan Galiev's Red force swelled with an influx of non-Russians—

[25]Ibid.

[26]Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1967, pp. 92-93; and Pipes, 1970, pp. 84-85, 161-162.

[27]Bashkiria also proved to be a fertile area for additional Soviet recruitment. The Red Army fielded a cavalry division of four regiments and an infantry brigade of three regiments among Bashkir natives. Pipes, 1950, p. 310.

[28]Dimanshtein, 1928; and d'Encausse, "Civil War and New Government," 1967, pp. 237-238.

primarily Muslims—who had abandoned White armies. Although there have been reports estimating their numbers in the tens of thousands, the exact size of the Tatar-Muslim Red Army in its short-lived status as an independent entity is unclear.[29]

In late 1918 and early 1919, the Bolsheviks integrated the Muslim units into the larger formations of the Red Army. Because of a lack of Russian personnel conversant with the languages of these soldiers, the Muslims remained under the command of native officers and political workers.[30] Bennigsen and Wimbush have estimated that as early as 1919 from 225,000 to 250,000 Muslims served in the Red Army under native officers.[31]

The process of integration into the Red Army does not appear to have diminished either elite or popular Muslim support for the Bolsheviks.[32] In fact, the contribution of Muslim soldiers to the Red cause was greatest after their integration. Sultan Galiev claimed that on the critical Siberian Front, Muslim soldiers—in national units and sprinkled among regular formations—made up more than 50 percent of the Red force. He also asserted that Muslims constituted 70 to 75 percent of the combat personnel of Tukhachevsky's Fifth Army, which played a decisive role in Kolchak's defeat.[33]

The military contribution of the Muslims to the Bolshevik cause was obviously a significant one on at least two grounds. First, the raising of approximately a quarter of a million troops eased the recruitment difficulties the Reds faced in Russian areas. Second, the Muslim soldiers were concentrated on the front which, in the view of the Bolshevik leadership of the day, was the decisive theater of operations. In the summer of 1919, Lenin wrote to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Siberian Front, "If by winter we do not conquer the Urals, then I will consider that the failure of the revolution would be inevitable."[34] Because Muslims probably comprised roughly one-half of the personnel on the front, the fate of the revolution rested heavily on them. The defeat of Kolchak's armies, despite significant Allied assistance, suggests that the Muslim units performed well.

Subjugating Central Asia

Paradoxically, although Muslim support constituted a major success for the Bolshevik minority recruitment program, the Muslim borderlands presented the most serious challenge to the extension of Russian rule. The North Caucasus and Central Asia (both Muslim areas)

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[29]Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979, p. 25.

[30]Bennigsen interview, May 9, 1979; and Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1967, p. 90.

[31]Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979, pp. 64-65.

[32]The disappearance of the independent Muslim army set back but did not end Sultan Galiev's pan-Islamic political endeavors. The existence of Muslim regiments and battalions within the Red Army represented to him a potential nucleus from which a new independent army could eventually be formed. Also, it appears that even after the integration of the units, Sultan Galiev and his Collegium maintained a powerful role in that they continued to appoint officers and commissars as well as control the all-important political education of the native commanders. The maximum utilization of the military potential represented by the Muslim units could only be realized by the employment of native command personnel who were recruited and controlled by Sultan Galiev's organization.

Sultan Galiev claims that in a period of one and a half years (apparently from mid-1918 to the end of 1919) the Collegium trained thousands of Muslim Red commanders and prepared a significant number of military technicians such as engineers and radio operators (Sultan Galiev, "The Tatars and the October Revolution," 1921, in Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979, p. 143). Current Soviet sources provide a limited amount of support for this assertion by noting that during the Civil War there existed a 29th National Infantry Command Courses (school) in Tashkent, although no data are provided on the number of graduates (Belonozhko et al., 1976, p. 95). Soviet sources also indicate the existence of a special commissar school under the Collegium which, in conjunction with courses functioning in the reserve army, produced 330 Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, and Kirghiz political officers between May and December 1919. Additional lower-ranking commissars were trained in the field by the political section of the Bashkir infantry brigade, and other organizational-agitational courses for Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz existed in Tashkent (Kolychev, 1979, p. 72).

[33]Sultan Galiev, "The Tatars," p. 143.

[34] Cited in Lototskii, 1969, p. 72.

were the loci of the longest lasting and most difficult to suppress movements for national freedom. As in other regions, the inclusion of national units in the Red forces assisted, and provided a convenient legitimization for, the Bolshevik drive into these areas.

To resist the Bolsheviks, Central Asian political refugees joined up with bandit groups, known collectively as the Basmachi. The refugees lent the Basmachi a nationalistic and religious fervor that transformed their popular image as criminals into one of freedom fighters, warriors of Islam. What ensued was one of the longest and bloodiest rebellions against Soviet rule, fueled by native grievances stemming from political alienation, land confiscation, forced labor, harsh requisitioning of foodstuffs, coercive tax collection, and brigandage on the part of the Soviet troops.

The Basmachi movement, initially centered in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan, was organized along tribal lines, with the commanders of individual bands enjoying the role of minor warlords. Tribal frictions and personal rivalries among the commanders prevented centralized direction of the rebellion.

To oppose the Basmachi, the Red Army deployed nine regiments of the Second Turkestan Division together with three other regiments, one of which is said to have been at least originally composed of Kirghiz from the Fergana Cavalry Brigade. In addition to such native elements, Soviet sources indicate the participation of an "Eastern Regiment," composed of various groups of Soviet Muslims.[35]

Despite the sizable Red forces committed against them, the Basmachi, whose forces were estimated by a Soviet source at 20,000,[36] scored notable success. They were able to take towns held by the Reds, invoke a constituent assembly, and establish a provisional government (which apparently never functioned). By the fall of 1919, they controlled most of the Fergana Valley.[37]

Only with the defeat of Ataman Dutov's forces by Frunze's armies in September 1919 and the reestablishment of the Moscow-Tashkent link were the Reds able to begin to redress the balance. Reinforcements arrived in the form of three brigades of the Third Turkestan Cavalry Division. Frunze adopted a conciliatory policy in his capacity as Red warlord of Central Asia, ending the more odious practices of forced labor and requisitioning of property. As a result of the use of both the carrot and the stick, the Basmachi movement began to wane.[38]

The revolt was refueled, however, when the Soviet government moved to absorb the former Imperial protectorate of Bukhara in August-September 1920. Although Frunze's veterans easily defeated the Emir's army of 40,000 to 45,000, Ibragim Bek (appointed by the Emir to be Commander in Chief of the Armies of Islam) continued the Basmachi movement, which now centered around Bukhara. Although continuing to be plagued with organizational problems, the Basmachi fielded 15,000 to 20,000 men, scored such victories as retaking the city of Dushanbe, and generally inflicted heavy casualties on the Red Army units.[39]

The Red Army at the same time suffered from native desertions. An effort to recruit "Soviet Basmachi" in 1920 ended in the defection of these units to the rebels in September of that year, that is, at the time of the assault on Bukhara. Some Young Bukharans who aided the Soviets in the conquest of the city-state also went over to the Basmachi, taking part of the Bukhara police force with them. But the most spectacular defection of all was that of Enver Pasha.[40]

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[35]Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 78-80.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Park, 1957, p. 41; and Wheeler, 1964, p. 108.

[38]Belonozhko et al., 1976, p. 81; and Wheeler, 1964, p. 108.

[39]d'Encausse, *Civil War and New Government,* 1967, pp. 250-251; Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970, pp. 23-25; and Wheeler, 1964, pp. 108-109.

[40]d'Encausse, *Civil War and New Government,* 1967, p. 252; Pipes, 1970, pp. 257-259; Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970, p. 25; and Wheeler, 1964, pp. 109-110.

The Bolsheviks directed Enver Pasha, one of the leaders of the Young Turk revolt and then serving in Moscow, to Central Asia in the hope that by virtue of his name and reputation he could mollify at least some of the Basmachi leaders, thus permitting pacification of the region. Enver Pasha, however, sought nothing less than the establishment of a great Pan-Turkic state that would include all of Central Asia. Not surprisingly, he defected in 1921 and attempted to assume leadership of the Basmachi movement. Like others before him, he was unsuccessful. Ibragim Bek did not acknowledge his authority, and the exiled Emir was suspicious of his intentions. By mid-1922 Enver Pasha was battling both the Red Army and rival Basmachi leaders. After suffering defeats, he was killed in a Red Army ambush in August 1922.[41]

Ibragim Bek continued the struggle in 1923. The size of the forces available to him by that time is not known. The Red Army committed one infantry division, one cavalry division, three cavalry brigades, two detached Turkestan cavalry brigades, and units of the "autonomous" Bukhara Army against him. The concentration of Red Army power brought the desired effect. The Soviets claimed pacification of the Fergana Valley in November 1923 and of the Turkmen region and eastern and central Bukhara by 1924.[42]

Although the backbone of the Basmachi movement was broken in 1924, the rebellion sporadically flared up in response to perceived wrongs for at least another decade. Tribal leaders had access to sanctuaries in Afghanistan from which to stage raids into Soviet territory, and small bands of Basmachi continued to operate even in the 1930s.[43]

The concentration of Red Army units into this area suggests that the Soviet government spared no effort to subordinate Central Asia to Moscow. As in other cases, the Soviet military power was masked by the inclusion of units composed of representatives of local nationalities. The participation of such units served to blunt anti-Russian slogans of the Basmachi and tacitly to hold out to Central Asian intellectuals the possibility of autonomy under Soviet rule. Soviet willingness to use both force and concessions facilitated the reintegration of Central Asia to Russian control.

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[41]Ibid.
[42]Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 108-120.
[43]Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970, pp. 26-38.

IV. THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The Red Army in 1920 totaled 5.3 million men, 4.7 percent—or 250,000—of whom were non-Slavs, mostly Muslims.[1] Devastated by the tolls of World War I and the Civil War, the Soviet state simply did not have the financial ability to support an army of several million and took measures to scale the military down to peacetime levels. At the same time, national minorities demanded the fulfillment of Lenin's promises of national self-determination, which they interpreted as the right to field their own national armies. The intense debate this generated on the nature of the future Red Army was resolved in a set of military reforms formalized in 1924. The centerpiece of these reforms was the transformation of the Soviet Army into a territorial-militia force. Although the minorities were denied the right to form national armies, the center compromised by acceding to the raising of national units that would be strictly subordinated to the Moscow-based chain of command.

Difficulties associated with shortages of native command personnel and intractable nationalism doomed the policy on national units to benign neglect and eventual official termination in 1938. The liquidation of the national units coincided with two important related developments: the great purges, which decimated the Party and leading representatives of the society at large, including military commanders; and innovations in military doctrine that rendered the territorial-militia system obsolete. To facilitate a combined arms strategy, the territorial-militia units were replaced with standing military formations, and the national units were integrated into the regular army.

REORGANIZING THE RED ARMY

At the conclusion of the Civil War, former political allies of the Bolsheviks and even some non-Russians within the Party itself agitated for the creation of truly independent national military forces for the various constituent parts of the USSR. For instance, in the Ukraine the Borotbist Party, which initially supported the Bolsheviks, clashed with Moscow over the creation of an independent Ukrainian army,[2] and the Georgians resisted efforts by the center to consolidate regional military resources under the umbrella of the projected Caucasian Republic.[3]

The creation of independent military establishments was entirely unacceptable to the Kremlin. It ran contrary to the Party's commitment to centralized military command and threatened the ageold Russian determination to preserve control over the borderlands. The end of the Civil War had not eradicated the internal threat to Soviet power. We have already noted the continuing Basmachi rebellion in Central Asia. Rebellions in the Volga region, Tambov province, and Siberia, as well as unrest in the Ukraine,[4] further underscored the need for loyal military units. From Moscow's vantage point, it must have appeared highly doubtful that national armies would crush uprisings among their own people. The Soviet leadership could reasonably even have expected to find national armies fighting the Red Army in situations of conflict between the borderlands and Moscow.

The issues of ensuring central control over the military and ensuring the proper ethnic mix in the Red Army came together in the problem of what to do about Sultan Galiev's Muslim

[1]Grechko, 1974, p. 130; and Berkhin, 1958, p. 28.
[2]Silnitskii, 1978, pp. 224-229.
[3]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 118-119.
[4]Ibid., pp. 39-40.

units. The manner in which the Party resolved this question serves as an excellent example of how the Soviets consolidated Slavic control in the military.

As we have already noted, a large number of Muslim-Tatar-Bashkir units raised by Sultan Galiev were engaged in pacification efforts in Muslim areas as part of larger Red Army formations in 1920. Because their involvement helped to modulate resistance to Soviet power among the populace, swift, wholesale disbandment of Muslim units probably would have produced undesired effects. Yet, questions of their loyalty must have troubled the Kremlin.

The fact that native officers and commissars commanded the Muslim units not only attentuated central control, but also meant that they constituted a potentially powerful base for antiregime activities. Current Soviet sources note the role of national formations of that time as a massive political school for the natives, and argue that the military as a whole trained numerous ethnic cadres who would serve the Soviet power with distinction.[5] But such formulations gloss over the all-important matter of the type of political indoctrination the trainees received. The Muslims, segregated into national units, were more likely to be exposed to nationalistic than to the more orthodox and internationalist ideas of Lenin.

It is not surprising, then, that beginning in 1920 the Muslim-Tatar military units were gradually disbanded and their officers retired.[6] The conduct of this policy in an incremental fashion allowed continuing use for a time of those units aiding the Soviet pacification effort and avoided the open conflict that might have resulted from a more precipitous execution. The disbandment of all such units by 1923 constituted a significant reduction in the number of minorities in combat forces.[7]

FORMATION OF NATIONAL UNITS

While Sultan Galiev's questionably loyal units were dismantled, Lenin and Frunze in this same period agreed to the formation of other national units. They appear to have had a twofold reason for doing so. For one, Lenin was concerned with the need to mollify demands for the creation of independent national armies and to dampen national hostilities within the union. Second, national units could play an important role in furthering the Party's foreign policy by enabling the regime to project a multinational, noncolonial image to the colonial world.

Previously existent military assets formed the basis for national units raised in the Caucasus. By 1920 the Azerbaidzhanis and the Armenians had each fielded a brigade, while the Georgians boasted a force of two infantry brigades, a cavalry regiment, and auxiliary units. To ensure subordination of these units to the center and prevent their gradual transformation into national armies, Moscow consummated an agreement with the republics in 1921, according to which no republican force could exceed 10,000 men, the logistic system was centralized, and units were firmly subordinated to the Red Army high command.[8]

Lenin and Frunze also sanctioned certain individual national regiments in Central Asia. In

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[5]For instance, Grechko, 1974, p. 128.

[6]Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979, pp. 71-94.

[7]Also as part of a general consolidation of military educational institutions, the programs designed expressly to produce Muslim command personnel were integrated into regular military schools and, thereby, brought under greater central control. In May 1922, the 29th National Infantry Command Courses (school) was disbanded and part of the students assigned to the 23rd Tashkent Infantry School, where they formed the Third (Muslim) Cadet Company. In November 1922, the Third Artillery Course and the Alma Ata Command Course—both apparently dedicated to the training of minorities—suffered the same fate, becoming, respectively, the First Artillery Battery and the cavalry squadron of the Tashkent school. (Voropaev and Iovlev, 1960, p. 78.)

[8]By 1923 each of the Caucasian republics could field a national division composed primarily of natives: the Armenian division was 95-percent native; and the Georgian division was 85-percent native, 7-percent Armenian, 5-percent Russian, and 3-percent Ossetin. Lack of data on the Azerbaidzhani division suggests that its native composition was not as favorable. (Berkhin, 1958, pp. 117, 119-120.)

1920, Khiva (temporarily the Khorezm People's Republic) had two infantry and one cavalry regiments composed primarily of Uzbeks, together with an 8000-strong national militia.[9] The value of these Muslim units appears to have been essentially propagandistic. Ostensibly, these units would play an important role in stirring revolutionary unrest among colonial peoples. Frunze asserted, for example, "the moment is not far away when the liberation of the East, exploited for centuries, will be realized by the iron battalions of proletariat Muslims."[10] He most likely did not mean this statement literally.

A directive of the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923 called for closer relations between the Red Army and the various national units and placed stress on centralization of control.[11] The Fourth Conference of the Central Committee with representatives of the national republics and oblasts in June 1923 echoed the call for national units, stressing their

> foremost importance in the repulsion of possible attacks on the part of Turkey, Afghanistan, Poland, etc., and also in the sense of a possible forced military action by the Union republics against neighboring states. The importance of the national military units from the standpoint of internal conditions does not require additional evidence. It is expected that in connection with this [measure] the size of our army will have to be increased by 20 to 25,000.[12]

The conference recognized that the successful employment of national units rested on resolution of the traditional problem with non-Slavic troops, the lack of or political unreliability of native command personnel. The loyalty of these units was initially to be assured by insistence that a high percentage of the command personnel be either Party members or come from the proper social class, that is, the proletariat. The problem was to be overcome in the longer term through establishment of military schools to train native cadres.

In accordance with these various directives, Frunze, by now Commander of the Red Army, formally announced in March 1924 a program for the creation of national units with an eye to the "natural" military traits of a given people. Thus, Central Asians were to form cavalry units, while the people of the North Caucasus would field mountain troops. This recruitment pattern would produce troops suitable for deployment in their home terrain.[13]

Nationalities with previous military experience were immediately to form national units, the number of which would be determined by the availability of native command and political personnel. Those previously excluded from service—Kirghiz, Tadzhiks, people of the North Caucasus, Yakuts, Buryats, and others—were to form national units gradually in a multistage process beginning with the training of commanders, proceeding to the creation of experimental units staffed by Komsomol members, and only later fielding full-scale units. Members of smaller ethnic groups with draft contingents too small to form full-scale units would serve in national subunits (squads, platoons, etc.) within larger formations.[14]

Although all males of appropriate age were now officially subject to universal conscription, recruitment for national units of the previously exempted nationalities was initially to be voluntary, augmented by special levies of Party, Komsomol, and trade union members. Partial call-ups in areas with native proletariats helped to fill out some national units, but full application of the draft was not to be undertaken until attainment of the necessary socioeconomic development of the region.

By the fall of 1924, Frunze could claim initial success for his program, in view of the existence of four Ukrainian, two Georgian, one Belorussian, an Armenian, and an Azeri national division. Smaller nationalities had also fielded their own units. In the Russian

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[9]Silnitskii, 1978, p. 224.

[10]Kuliev, 1956, p. 28.

[11]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 122-123; and Nikonov, 1928, p. 73.

[12]Excerpted from the Resolution of the Fourth Central Committee Conference cited in *KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza Documenty 1917-1968,* 1969, p. 206.

[13]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 123-125.

[14]Ibid

republic there was a detached[15] Dagestani cavalry squadron, a detached Yakut infantry company (with a cavalry squadron), and a Crimean Tatar infantry company. Bukhara and Khorezm also boasted of detached infantry companies and cavalry squadrons.[16]

The Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR in November-December 1924 adopted a Five-Year Plan for the expansion of national units, and the Third Congress of the Soviets approved this course of action in May 1925. The plan envisioned the expansion of national units in the East and among non-Slavic groups in the Russian Republic, and already existing formations in the Ukraine and Belorussia were to be strengthened but not increased. Uzbeks were to raise an infantry and a cavalry division, and Turkmen and Kazakhs a cavalry regiment each. Two Georgian divisions and the Armenian and Azerbaidzhani divisions were to be brought up to authorized levels. A Buriat-Mongolian cavalry division, a Yakut infantry regiment, a North Caucasian cavalry division, a Korelian jaeger battalion, a Tatar infantry division and cavalry regiment as well as a Bashkir infantry division and cavalry regiment were to be formed in the Russian Republic.[17]

Some progress was made in realizing the Five-Year National Military Program in Central Asia in 1925. Soviet sources indicate that national units constituted 10 percent of the Red Army strength at that time.[18] Uzbekistan had an infantry battalion, an infantry company, a cavalry division, a cavalry squadron, and a mountain artillery battery (all units being detached); Tadzhikistan fielded a detached cavalry division; the Kirghiz had formed a detached cavalry division; and the Turkmen composed a detached cavalry division.[19] Although no national units yet existed in Kazakhstan, all existing Kazakh commanders were made subject to service in planned national units, and a selection process was set in motion.[20]

The paucity of data on the development of national units after 1925 strongly suggests that further expansion of the program did not occur. Indirect references by Russian authors indicate that the scheme was doomed to benign neglect and eventual abandonment because difficulties associated with the shortage of trained native command elements and nationalist assertiveness by minorities were never overcome.

Frunze had banked on education as the means of ensuring success of the national units program in the long run. In June 1924 he issued a special directive entitled "About National Military Educational Institutions," which envisioned the expansion of the educational system for minority officers from the then-existing six schools and various teaching centers.[21] By November 1924 the number of military schools for training national commanders totaled thirteen, two of which were expressly for non-Soviet citizens.[22] The military part of the educational system remained stable during the next few years. Thirteen national command schools are identified as existing in 1928.

In the same period, the existing five military-political institutions for training political

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[15]"Detached" in this context is used to signify an independent unit, that is, not attached to a larger tactical formation.

[16]Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 522; and Berkhin, 1958, p. 126.

[17]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 129-130; Grechko, 1975, p. 148; and Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 552.

[18]Epishev, 1977, p. 135; and Voropaev and Iovlev, 1960, p. 87.

[19]Erickson, 1962, p. 167.

[20]To ensure the production of future national commanders, entry into the preparatory class of the Kazakh ASSR All-Branch Command School was restricted solely to Kazakhs. In addition, there existed an All-Branch Command School for Central Asian Nationalities—which prepared officers for all the republics of the region—the location of which is not specified. Farther east were a Buriat-Mongol cavalry command school and a Bashkir detached territorial squadron. (Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 123, 133.)

[21]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 123-127.

[22]In the Russian Republic, these schools included a cavalry command school for the North Caucasian mountain nationalities; an all-branch Tatar-Bashkir school; an all-branch Kirghiz school; and a Polish school and school for "internationalists," which were to train military cadres to carry the revolution abroad. In the Caucasus there were individual schools for Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaidzhanis. In the Ukraine, there was an NCO school, a cavalry school, and a military-preparatory school. (Berkhin, 1958, pp. 132-133.)

commissars[23] were augmented by the creation of eight regional institutions that apparently recruited minorities.[24]

Although the public outcry in response to the announcement that all languages other than Russian were to be excluded from the Soviet Army forced the regime in 1923 to allow the use of the vernacular in national formations,[25] great stress was placed in these schools on the use of the Russian language to cement the multiethnic military edifice. To facilitate the full use of national units in the event of their employment as part of greater Russian formations and to begin the long-term process of russification, soldiers were to be taught Russian and commanders were required to be conversant with the language.[26]

Unfortunately for the Soviets, a lack of politically reliable non-Russian teaching staff, of educational materials in the native languages, and of Russian instructors conversant with the native languages hampered the educational effort designed to mold reliable national units. Marshal Grechko has written:

> The process of training and education of personnel in national formations was significantly complicated by the fact that the process of teaching military affairs had to be conducted simultaneously using two languages: national and Russian. Great difficulties were encountered in production of [military] codes, directives, and teaching materials in the many languages of national formations.[27]

Furthermore, the low cultural-educational level of the trainees—in 1924-1925, 94 percent of the students had primary or home education only, and 90 percent of the Central Asian cadets were illiterate—forced courses to be simplified and stretched out the program from the normal three- to a four- or five-year period.[28]

Equally serious, problems with political loyalty and resurgent nationalism soon surfaced within the national units. Berkhin notes that the Party had to engage in a major propaganda effort to combat both Russian chauvinism and "local nationalism." Army newspapers were printed in various native languages, as were the Soldier's Oath and other patriotic literature. Linguistically able apparatchiks were transferred to the Independent Army of the Caucasus, the North Caucasus Military District, the Belorussian division, and what was called the Turkfront (which encompassed Central Asia) to improve ethnic relations in the military and between the Army and the host population.[29]

Despite such endeavors, nationalism proved difficult to root out. Berkhin admits that

> A part of the local [Party] workers in the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and other regions attempted to transform national formations into the nuclei of national armies, to tear them away from the Red Army. "The Revolutionary Military Soviet of the (Soviet) Union considers," stated M. V. Frunze, "that this tendency is incorrect, that it does not correspond to the class interests of workers and peasants, since it does not guarantee us the unity of military thought and risks dispersing our workers in different directions and creates confusion which military affairs absolutely do not tolerate."[30]

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[23]In the Russian Republic there was a Tatar military-political institution, most likely dedicated to combating the nationalistic influence of Sultan Galiev. In the Caucasus, each of the three major nationalities had its own military-political school, and there was a Transcaucasian military-political school. (Berkhin, 1958, pp. 132-133.)

[24]In 1927 an effort was made to improve the training of junior commissars and, as a result, schools were set up in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia. These five schools managed to produce 75 non-Russian junior commissars (Voropaev and Iovlev, 1960, pp. 100, 104-105). There also appears to have been a two-year course for training commissars for Central Asian national units that was created in 1923 and integrated into the all-branch Central Asian military school noted above. (Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 123, 133.)

[25]Rakowska-Harmstone, 1979, pp. 132-133.

[26]Berkhin, 1958, p. 131.

[27]Grechko, 1975, p. 150.

[28]Berkhin, 1958, pp. 125, 133.

[29]Ibid., pp. 125, 136.

[30]Ibid., p. 130.

As a result, national units were never considered entirely loyal. Witness the fact that while dual authority of the commander and commissar in regular units was ended in favor of professional supremacy in 1925, the policy did not apply to the national formations.[31] Authority in these units continued to be shared between the commander and commissar, apparently in order to ensure central control.

TERMINATION OF NATIONAL UNITS

The Soviet government probably targeted national units for disbandment quite some time before their actual termination in 1938. The original 1936 Constitution failed to grant the union republics the right to field national units.[32] Those national military assets that survived from that time enjoyed at best an extralegal status.

A short, terse, and remarkably uninformative directive of the Central Committee entitled "In Regards to National Units and the Formation of RKAA" (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army), dated March 7, 1938, announced official termination of the national units. The directive hinted that such units no longer justified their existence, because they were not compatible with the transformation of the Red Army from a semiterritorial militia to a fully cadre military establishment. National units and military educational institutions associated with them were to be reformed into regular formations no longer necessarily posted in their native regions, and all USSR citizens were to serve in ethnically mixed regular units of the Soviet military.[33]

In explaining the demise of the national units in the 1930s, a recent authoritative Soviet source asserts that

> The victory of socialism and the leveling out of the economic and cultural levels of the nationalities of the USSR permitted a different formulation of the national military question. It was recognized that the further strengthening of the national defense, friendship, and combat cooperation of the nationalities of the USSR . . . were better met by mixed, in the ethnic sense, military units.[34]

Because significant socioeconomic and cultural differences between the Russian Republic and the borderlands survive even today, this rhetoric undoubtedly masks more fundamental reasons for the elimination of national units.

Not incidentally, the liquidation of the national units coincided with the great purges of the thirties that decimated the Party and leading representatives of the society at large. In the process of establishing absolute rule and eliminating competing power centers, Stalin did not overlook any possible opponents to his rule.[35] Part of the 1936 purges were aimed directly at native elites, who were accused of deviations of one kind or another. Abolition of national units, which might have supported these native elites, was a logical element of Stalin's consolidation of ever-greater centralized control over the union republics and the various ethnic groups.

Military doctrinal considerations probably also played a role in the decision to abolish national units. Under the leadership of Marshal Tukhachevsky, the Soviet High Command abandoned its reliance on massive infantry attacks, for which purpose the half-trained mi-

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[31]Fedotoff-White, 1944, p. 236.

[32]This privilege, along with the right to enter into direct relations with foreign powers, was only granted in the course of the Second World War as an amendment—Article 18b—to the Constitution. (See F. J. M. Feldbrugge, 1979, pp. 69, 119.) The 1977 Constitution rescinded this grant. (Ibid., pp. 106-107, 114-115.)

[33]Directive cited in *KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza Documenty 1917-1968,* 1969, p. 264.

[34]Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 552.

[35]See Conquest, 1968, passim.

litiamen of the territorial and national military troops were adequate, in favor of integrated armor, infantry, and artillery tactics, supported by aircraft and airborne troops. The fact that the territorial-militia and national units were infantry and cavalry formations—specialized arms such as armor were always kept professional—impeded their acquiring the skills required by the new combined arms doctrine and severely limited their usefulness on a hypothetical battlefield. In short, the national militia units simply did not meet the military requirements of the 1930s.

In the second half of the 1930s, the Red Army replaced territorial-militia units with standing military formations. Because national units were inherently organized on the territorial principle, the rationale for liquidation of the regular Red Army units applied equally to them. Grechko has written: "National units were unavoidably tied to their territories, which did not ensure their preparedness for action in differing climate and locale or battle situations."[36]

National units raised among Central Asians, Caucasians, and non-European groups of the Russian Republic were not located in areas of the most likely axis of attack by a hostile foreign power—that is, in the West or the Far East. The newly expanded cadre Red Army would be concentrated in those areas by the late 1930s. Because of the previously noted problems with recurrent nationalism indicating less than complete loyalty to the center and its purposes, serious doubts must have existed as to the degree of enthusiasm with which national units would defend territories other than their own. Therefore, the minorities were probably integrated into mixed units to ensure that they would fight where needed.

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[36]Grechko, 1975, p. 150.

V. WORLD WAR II

At the time of the opening barrage of Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941, the Red Army was officially composed of ethnically integrated units, but some de facto national formations existed as a result of Stalin's 1940 conquest of the Baltic States and because the Army's reserve system tended to group native servicemen together. Despite their reservations regarding the reliability of national units, the center once again quickly resorted to the creation of official national units in order to mobilize more of the union's resources in the war effort.

It is important that the Soviet leadership attempted to mobilize non-Slavic troops from the different republics when much of the Slavic manpower was unavailable, having fallen under German occupation. This recruitment effort appears to have been quite successful. But despite special selection measures and a political propaganda effort waged among non-Slavic soldiers, many non-Russians defected to the German side.[1] Their defection and the later availability of Slavic manpower apparently were the prime consideration behind the leadership's move to reduce non-Slavic participation to a minimum once the Army took the offensive.

DE FACTO NATIONAL UNITS

Two types of de facto national units existed at the outbreak of World War II: territorial infantry corps of the recently annexed Baltic republics and reserve formations of the Red Army. Both types proved unreliable.

Upon annexing the Baltic States in 1940, the Soviet government undertook creation of territorial militias in these areas, apparently in an attempt to give some credence to Soviet contentions that the annexation was voluntary and that the new republics would enjoy a degree of independence. The previously existing Baltic national armies formed the basis for the new units. War broke out before the Soviets had been able to purge the Baltic territorial militia units sufficiently, and their personnel collaborated with the Germans—whom the Baltic nationalities welcomed as liberators.[2]

Soviet sources openly admit that the Baltic units proved unreliable. In the 183d Latvian Division, for instance, officers and soldiers connected with the political organization, the Aiszargi, reportedly "wrecked" the defensive efforts of the Red Army. Similar subversion took place in the 180th Estonian Infantry Division and other Baltic units. These formations soon lost their Baltic coloration, as reinforcements were drawn from other regions. The lack of reliable native replacements eventually led to the transformation of the "Baltic" divisions into regular units of the Red Army.[3]

Reserve formations of the Red Army constituted another type of de facto national unit, because the very nature of a reserve system mitigates against an ethnically integrated organization. Reservists, as a rule, serve in units located in close proximity to their homes. As a

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[1] Another Rand report addresses the matter of the loyalty of non-Russian Soviet troops in World War II. See R-2772/1, *Soviet Nationalities in German Wartime Strategy, 1941-1945*, by Alex Alexiev, forthcoming.

[2] That the Balts staged large-scale armed rebellions and, even before the arrival of the Germans, organized voluntary civil defense units to fight against the Soviets, demonstrated the weakness of Soviet pretenses. See Alexiev, R-2772/1, forthcoming.

[3] Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 47-48.

result, reserve units tend to reflect the ethnic makeup of their area. The composition of the permanent cadre and officer components of the reserve system is not known. However, there is evidence that some reserve units, in the Ukraine, for instance, were composed almost entirely—including officers—of Ukrainians.[4]

RAISING NEW NATIONAL UNITS

Despite such problems with the de facto national formations, Soviet authorities followed the centuries-old tradition of creating national units to bolster their defense effort. At the very time when the unreliable de facto Baltic national units were being disbanded, the regime created new national units ostensibly from among Baltic nationals residing in the USSR proper.[5] Subsequently, in November 1941, the State Defense Committee (GKO) announced the decision to raise national units throughout the union.

The official rationale for the formation of national units was to permit the union and autonomous republics to participate more actively in the struggle against the invaders and to mobilize more fully all the resources of the state at this critical stage.[6] A recent Soviet source observes that

> National units were formed on the basis of internal resources of the union and autonomous republics—an added mobilization of their means and capabilities for the defense of the country. They were the largest mobilizations undertaken outside the scope of existing plans and were realized under the supervision of party organizations.[7]

Thus, the national formations represented a military potential above that routinely planned for the Red Army, and they were manned and outfitted at little cost to the central authorities. Republican organs were instructed to guarantee that supplies needed to equip the national units were drawn from assets of the republics, not diverted from central army stores.[8]

The Party devoted considerable attention to supervising the formation of the national units, presumably to prevent excesses of the sort that led to the 1916 rebellion in Central Asia and to ensure the units' reliability. The Central Committees of the republics were charged with seeing that recruiting bodies selected the best people—that is, those fully devoted to the Communist Party and the socialist homeland. Special attention was to be given to placing large Communist Party and Komsomol "layers" within the national units to further ensure their reliability.[9]

It is difficult to establish the exact number of national units formed. One Soviet source notes the creation of more than 80 national and multinational divisions and brigades in non-Russian regions. Another states that 42 national divisions and approximately 20 brigades, as well as smaller detached formations, were raised from among the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Armenians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Tadzhiks, Turkmen, Bashkirs, Kalmyks, Chechen-Ingush, and Kabardino-Balkarians. A third source indicates that, in addition to the Baltic units, there existed one mountain division (the 17th), five cavalry divisions, and smaller detached units of the national type.[10]

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[4]Ukrainian formations proved most unreliable. Before the arrival of German troops, Ukrainians revolted and proclaimed an independent republic. Like the Balts, Ukrainians, especially Western Ukrainians, sabotaged Red Army operations. When the Red Army retreated from the Ukraine, some of the Ukrainian units simply dissolved. Many of the soldiers preferred to return to their homes—no matter who controlled the territory—rather than continue fighting to defend parts of the union other than their own. See Alexiev, R-2772/1, forthcoming.

[5]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 48-50; and Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 156-158.

[6]Kirsanov, 1972, p. 155.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 159.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Artem'ev, 1975, p. 51; Kulichenko, 1972, p. 324; and Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 553.

The uncertainty and disparity in counts of national units appear to stem from confusion over which units were raised solely from the resources of a given republic or autonomous region—truly national detachments—and which included large non-Russian elements but were actually considered units of the regular army. Traditional Soviet secrecy and a general reticence about national units makes this difficult to sort out. Although fragmentary information is available, there are no explicit and complete data on the numbers of men contributed to national formations by each nationality through the course of the war.

From the standpoint of this study, however, it is probably less important to be able to distinguish between official national units and regular units with distinct ethnic majorities than to consider the overall non-Russian manpower contribution and the role ethnics played in the war effort regardless of unit type. Even here, difficulties arise. We have not been able to locate any presentation of the numbers of men raised from each nationality during the war. Some Soviet sources indicate the numbers of troops drawn from select republics, but these data are not comprehensive and do not indicate what percentage of the troops were actually Russians residing in the borderlands.

MILITARY PARTICIPATION OF THE NATIONALITIES

Although more comprehensive figures are not available, there are some data on the manpower contributions of various nationalities at particular points in time. For instance, according to Artem'ev, as of January 1, 1943, in 166 infantry divisions, which united more than one million men, there were "32,642 Kazakhs, 28,838 Tatars, 25,995 Uzbeks, 19,537 Georgians, 18,730 Azerbaidzhanis, 16,004 Armenians, 10,179 Mordavians, 9,622 Chuvash, 9,207 Estonians, 6,413 Bashkirs, 5,580 Kirghiz, 3,350 Mari, 3,239 Turkmen, 3,186 Udmurts, 2,680 Tadzhiks, etc."[11]

Further, Artem'ev provides an ethnic breakdown in terms of percentage of "more than 200 divisions, comprised of more than one million men" at four points in time. See Table 1.

One of the more interesting aspects of the information presented by Artem'ev is the twofold increase in the proportional representation of Ukrainians and Belorussians from January 1943 to January 1944. Table 2, also from Artem'ev, which gives the ethnic composition of 100 infantry divisions as of July 1944, shows a continuation of this trend.

Artem'ev and other Soviet scholars explain the growing percentages of Slavs in the military after January 1943 as a result of the Soviet victory at Kursk in July 1943, which opened a Red Army strategic offensive along the entire Eastern Front. This offensive soon engulfed and returned to Soviet control the Ukraine and Belorussia, making their manpower available to the Red Army. Simultaneously, the transporting of recruits from the Caucasus and Central Asia became less necessary or practical.[12]

Artem'ev fails to mention that the selection of recruits from the newly liberated Slavic areas must have proceeded with some care, because several well-armed and vehemently anti-Soviet Ukrainian partisan movements with considerable mass support openly opposed the reinstitution of Soviet control over the Ukraine.[13] This would suggest that the Ukraine was not quite as fertile a field for Soviet recruitment as Artem'ev implies.[14] For whatever reason, the percentage of non-Slavs in the Army fell dramatically.

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[11]Artem'ev, 1975, p. 57.

[12]Ibid., pp. 51-53, 57-60.

[13]Deker and Lebed, 1958, pp. 149-152.

[14]Still, any Slavic soldiers who would fight the Germans may have been more desirable recruits than the minorities by this point. Evidence suggests massive defections of non-Russians—Central Asians, Tatars, North Caucasians, and Caucasians—at the beginning of the war. Many of these people later even volunteered for service on the German side and took an active role in the fight against the Soviets. See Alexiev, R-2772/1, forthcoming.

Table 1

NATIONAL COMPOSITION OF INFANTRY DIVISIONS
(MORE THAN 200 DIVISIONS, COMPRISED OF MORE THAN ONE MILLION MEN)
(In percent)

Nationality	1 January 1943	1 April 1943	1 July 1943	1 January 1944	Nationality as a Percent of the 1939 Census Total
Russians	64.60	65.62	63.84	58.32	58.41
Ukrainians	11.80	12.37	11.62	22.27	16.56
Belorussians	1.90	1.68	1.35	2.66	3.11
Armenians	1.49	1.77	1.40	1.36	1.27
Georgians	1.82	1.48	1.17	1.52	1.33
Azerbaidzhanis	1.75	1.40	1.57	1.48	1.34
Uzbeks	2.42	2.62	4.44	2.02	2.86
Tadzhiks	0.25	0.33	0.87	0.46	0.72
Kazakhs	3.05	2.22	2.77	1.57	1.83
Turkmen	0.30	0.33	0.84	0.40	0.48
Kirghiz	0.52	0.57	0.84	0.36	0.52
Karelians	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.15
Jews	1.50	1.56	1.35	1.28	1.78
Chechens/Ingush	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.29
Kabardians/ Balkars	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.13
Osetins	0.19	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.21
People of Dagestan	0.26	0.14	0.17	0.15	0.50
Tatars	2.69	2.34	2.58	1.83	2.54
Chuvash	0.90	0.73	0.79	0.58	0.81
Mordvinians	0.95	0.75	0.82	0.62	0.86
Bashkirs	0.60	0.49	0.57	0.35	0.50
Kalmyks	0.08	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.08
Udmurts	0.30	0.25	0.28	0.20	0.36
Mari	0.31	0.27	0.28	0.19	0.28
Komi	0.20	0.13	0.16	0.13	0.24
Buriats	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.09	n.a.
Moldavians	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04	n.a.
Latvians	0.22	0.18	0.19	0.29	n.a.
Estonians	0.86	1.35	0.92	1.01	n.a.
Lithuanians	n.a.	0.27	0.11	0.14	n.a.
Poles	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.09	n.a.
Others	0.59	0.48	0.42	0.25	n.a.
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	

SOURCE: Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 57-58.

Table 2

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF 100 INFANTRY DIVISIONS

Nationality	Percent as of 1 July 1944
Russians	51.78
Ukrainians	33.93
Belorussians	2.04
Tatars	1.70
Uzbeks	1.25
Jews	1.14
Kazakhs	1.12
Moldavians	0.92
Azerbaidzhanis	0.81
Armenians	0.81
Mordvinians	0.56
Chuvash	0.52
Georgians	0.50
Tadzhiks	0.32
Bashkirs	0.31
Turkmen	0.23
Kirghiz	0.22
Others	1.84

SOURCE: Artem'ev, 1975, p. 59.

In the following section, we will examine, by region, such information as is available about the contribution of the nationalities of the union to the war effort.

The Western Nationalities

The State Defense Committee authorized the creation of the first official post-1938 national unit, the 201st Latvian Infantry Division, on August 3, 1941, ostensibly in response to a request from evacuated Baltic refugees. The division—promoted to guard status in the course of the war—was formed in the Moscow Military District primarily from veterans of the revolutionary Latvian regiments, who were collected for this purpose from all parts of the USSR. In addition, the First Latvian Reserve Regiment was formed, which initially trained replacements for the division, and which in turn served as the foundation of the 308th Latvian Infantry Division created in July 1944. On the same date, the two divisions were united in the 130th Latvian Infantry Corps.

The formation of Estonian units began in December 1941 under the administration of national Party leaders. Again, the soldiers were recruited from among nationals who had resettled in the USSR. By March 1942 this effort had yielded 30,000 recruits, who were formed into the 7th (118th Guard) and 249th (122d Guard) Infantry Divisions, plus a reserve regiment. During the course of 1942, the two divisions formed the 8th Estonian Guard Infantry Corps.

Lithuanian nationals living in the USSR proper likewise were recruited, resulting in the formation in 1942 of the 16th Lithuanian Infantry Division and a reserve battalion. After the reconquest of Lithuania by the Red Army, the Lithuanian force was augmented by the creation of the 50th Lithuanian Reserve Infantry Division.[15]

At the time of their formation, the Baltic units probably were made up largely of the nationalities of the region. Soldiers for these units were recruited from among the Baltic population settled in the USSR proper. The emphasis placed on the role of national Party leaders in the case of the Estonians—and possibly others—in screening recruits suggests that personnel in the Baltic units were not heavily Slavs.

Additionally, the existence of national reserve formations specifically dedicated to training replacements for these units indicates that the Baltic divisions may have retained their ethnic composition over time. Artem'ev notes that in mid-1943 the following percentages were native: the 7th Estonian Division, 81 percent; the 149th Estonian, 63 percent; the 43d Latvian Guard, 38.8 percent; and the 16th Lithuanian, 36.5 percent.[16]

The creation and maintenance of the Baltic units repeated the Soviet Civil War policy of using national formations as a justification for Moscow's interference in the affairs of former parts of the Czarist Empire and as a convenient cloak for the annexing Russian armies. Soviet Baltic units could be cited as proof of the nationalities' desire to be part of the USSR. Artem'ev notes that the Baltic units were created not only to fight the Germans, but also to combat local counterrevolutionaries, reactionaries, and nationalists who sought to prevent the "liberation" of the region and were bent on the destruction of socialist achievements.[17]

The Transcaucasus

In the Caucasus, the Soviets made strenuous efforts to raise both national and regular units to check the German drive into the region. Marshal Grechko, who fought in the region, notes that twelve large units (which in Soviet terminology means a brigade or larger), composed almost entirely of Caucasian nationalities, were raised. Compared with other Soviet sources, Grechko's figure falls between the highest—20 national divisions, 10 detached mechanized infantry brigades, and hundreds of infantry companies—and the lowest—two Azeri, three Armenian, and four Georgian infantry divisions.[18]

Between August 1941 and June 1942, the Azeri provided the manpower for the newly created 402d, 233d, and 416th Infantry Divisions, as well as men to restaff the battle-worn 77th Division. Native participation appears to have been high. According to Artem'ev, on January 1, 1944, the 402d Division was 50-percent Azeri and the 416th 70-percent Azeri.[19]

Also between August 1941 and June 1942, the Armenians contributed to the formation of the 89th, 390th, 408th, and 261st Divisions, and brought up to strength the 76th Division, which had been stationed in Armenia. As of January 1, 1944, the 89th was reportedly 80-percent Armenian.[20]

In Georgia, the 394th and 242d Infantry Divisions were raised, the 392d Division was reformed into a national unit, and the 276th Division—originally created in Moscow and decimated in the Crimean campaign—was rebuilt with the Georgians contributing 70 percent of its personnel. Apparently somewhat later, the 406th, 224th, 414th, and 296th Infantry

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[15]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 48-50; and Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 156-158.
[16]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 53-54.
[17]Ibid., p. 50.
[18]See Madatov, 1975, p. 106, for the highest figure; and Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 168-169, for the low estimates.
[19]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 53-54.
[20]Ibid.

Divisions were formed from Georgian manpower. Artem'ev reports that as of January 1, 1944, 90 percent of the personnel of the 392d were Georgians.[21]

Some divisions also combined the three major Caucasian nationalities. The 409th Division is cited as representative of several ethnically mixed formations raised in the Caucasus, which the Soviets fail to specify further. These may have included the 295th, 319th, 386th, and 396th Divisions, of whose personnel Caucasians reportedly constituted 60 or 70 percent; the 275th, 328th, and 136th, which were from 50- to 60-percent Caucasian; and the 389th, 176th, and 209th, which had up to 40-percent Caucasians.[22] There was also a 125th Infantry Division that was known as "Turkic" and had at least one regiment commanded by a Turkic-named officer, but the ethnic breakdown of that division is not available.[23]

It is important that native participation in the divisions raised in the Caucasus had dropped from a range of 30 to 90 percent when formed to a range of 2 to 15 percent in the closing period of the war.[24]

Central Asia

Uzbekistan formed five national cavalry divisions (99th, 100th, 101st, 102d, and 103d) and nine detached cavalry brigades (89th, 90th, 91st, 92d, 93d, 94th, 95th, 96th, and 97th).[25]

The picture in Tadzhikistan is somewhat less clear. It appears that the republic formed one national cavalry division (194th) and two detached infantry brigades (98th and 99th). It is also reported that Tadzhikistan fielded three cavalry divisions, two detached infantry brigades, and three reserve regiments.[26] (The discrepancy in Soviet counts, again, can probably be attributed to confusion over official national units and regular army units with large ethnic components.)

Kirghizia provided three national cavalry divisions (107th, 108th, and 109th) and three detached infantry brigades. In addition, the 358th Infantry Division and the 40th Detached Infantry Brigade (which were the basis of the 207th Division) were formed on the territory of the republic, both apparently being regular rather than national units. Soviet sources also note that "many" Kirghiz served in the 316th Infantry Division (the famed Panfilov Division), which was raised in Kazakhstan.[27]

Turkmenistan provided two national cavalry divisions (97th and 98th) and two detached infantry brigades (87th and 88th).[28]

Between 1941 and early 1942, Kazakhstan raised 12 divisions and detached brigades.[29] Of that number, three cavalry divisions (105th, 106th, and 96th—the latter being reformed into

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[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., pp. 44-46. According to German data, about 60,000 to 75,000 Caucasians served in Soviet units as of March 1942, and from 45 to 80 percent of the personnel of Soviet divisions (including the 398th, 236th, 396th, 390th, and 224th) that met the German 11th Army during the spring offensive on Sevastopol and Kertsch were Caucasians. (Buchbender, 1978, p. 191.)

[23]Madatov, 1975, p. 174. The data provided above are compatible with Artem'ev's estimate that Azerbaidzhanis, Armenians, and Georgians fielded ten national divisions and had 40- to 70-percent participation in 18 other divisions in the critical Battle of the Caucasus (Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 44-46). This estimate falls nicely between Grechko's 12 large units and Kirsanov's 9 formations. Madatov's very high estimate of 20 divisions and 10 brigades can perhaps be explained by his having confused regular units that had high percentages of native personnel with national formations.

[24]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 52-56.

[25]Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 167-169; Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 193-194; and Artem'ev, 1975, p. 43.

[26]An extra cavalry unit in question appears to have been the 20th Cavalry Division of the regular army, which was located in Tadzhikistan at the outbreak of the war and was brought up to authorized wartime levels while still stationed in the republic.

Kirsanov (1972, pp. 165, 167-169), Belonozhko et al. (1976, pp. 193-194), Artem'ev (1975, p. 43), and Sekretov (1978, p. 14) agree that Tadzhikistan fielded three rather than two cavalry divisions and three reserve regiments. See Artem'ev, 1975, p. 43, for data on the 20th Cavalry Division.

[27]Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 167-169; Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 193-194; and Artem'ev, 1975, p. 43.

[28]Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 167-169; and Belonozhko et al., 1976, pp. 193-194.

[29]Artem'ev, 1975, p. 41.

the 13th Kazakh Reserve regiment during the war) and two detached infantry brigades (100th and 101st) were national units.[30]

Grechko also mentions three Kazakh Guard Divisions,[31] by which he presumably means the 30th, 72d, and 73d Guard Divisions.[32] These three divisions were originally raised in Kazakhstan, but there is no evidence that they were national units. Known regular units formed or brought to war strength in Kazakhstan included the 316th (8th Guard), 310th, 314th, 238th, 387th, and 391st Infantry Divisions, and the 100th, 101st, and 151st (which became the 150th Division) Detached Infantry Brigades.[33] The total number of divisions and brigades identified matches the Soviet claim that 12 large units were raised in Kazakhstan.[34]

Kazakhs also served in considerable numbers in units raised outside the borders of the republic. The 196th Infantry Division consisted of 80-percent Kazakhs and 20-percent Russians at the time of its formation in 1942. Over half of the 4129 men in the 195th Infantry Division were Kazakhs. Kazakhs and Bashkirs comprised the 124th Detached Infantry Brigade raised in the Bashkir ASSR in early 1942. It is also reported—without statistics—that "many" Kazakhs served in the 333d and 193d Infantry Divisions.[35]

Artem'ev asserts that by the end of the war native participation in nine infantry divisions raised in Kazakhstan had dropped from a range of 40 to 80 percent to a range of 2 to 3 percent. Similar developments affected divisions raised in Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirghizia, and Turkmenia. It is interesting that native participation in the Kazakh divisions raised outside the republic remained slightly higher. In the 41st, 73d, 81st, and 192d Divisions, Kazakhs still constituted 10 to 15 percent of the personnel.[36]

The smaller autonomous republics also are purported to have contributed to the war effort. The Kalmyk ASSR raised the 110th and 111th Cavalry Divisions; in addition to part of the 124th Detached Infantry Brigade mentioned above, the Bashkir ASSR provided the 112th Cavalry Division and the 113th National Cavalry Division, which was downgraded to a reserve cavalry regiment; and the Checheno-Ingush recruited the 114th Cavalry Division. The Kabardino-Balkarskaia ASSR formed the 115th Cavalry Division; and the Karakalpak ASSR fielded a detached infantry brigade. Reference is also made to formation of a Khiva cavalry division in 1943.[37] But it is doubtful that the non-Russian natives of these areas constituted a very great portion of these troops for long, if ever. The Checheno-Ingush, Kabardino-Balkar, and Kalmyk units, in particular, were almost certainly mostly Russian or Slavic, as the regime had reason to seriously question the reliability of these minorities. A much larger number of Kalmyks, for example, are known to have fought with the Germans than on the Soviet side.[38] During 1943 and 1944, the entire Kalmyk, Karachai, Chechen, Ingush, Crimean Tatar, and Balkar populations were deported to Central Asia and Siberia for their perceived and actual disloyalty to the Soviet regime.[39] At the time of deportation, any remaining soldiers from these nationalities were systematically removed from Soviet military units.[40]

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[30]Kirsanov, 1972, pp. 167-168; and Belonozhko et al., 1976, p. 193.

[31]Grechko, 1974, p. 138.

[32]Gabdullin et al., 1964, Vol. I, pp. 11, 13.

[33]Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 10-13; Vol. II, pp. 246-248, 262-263, 302.

[34]Artem'ev, 1975, p. 41.

[35]Ibid. Because the Soviet data are very incomplete, and because of heavy Russian penetration of Kazakhstan, it is difficult to determine the extent of ethnic Kazakh participation in these units. Such data as are available indicate that the 312th Infantry Division was one-third Kazakh at the time of its formation in 1941. The ethnic composition of the 310th Infantry Division was 40-percent Kazakh, 30-percent Russian, 25-percent Ukrainian, and 5-percent others. (Artem'ev, 1975, p. 40.) It is possible that the level of native participation was higher in official national units, but there is no information available to verify that assumption.

[36]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 52-56.

[37]Kirsanov, 1972, p. 168; and Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 553.

[38]See Alexiev, R-2772/1, forthcoming.

[39]Nekrich, 1978, passim.

[40]Deker and Lebed, 1958, pp. 34, 42, 45-46.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE MINORITIES TO THE WAR EFFORT

As the foregoing information—fragmentary as it is—shows, a substantial number of national formations and regular divisions containing significant percentages of non-Russians were raised in the various regions of the USSR. The magnitude of the non-Slavic contribution to the war effort strictly in terms of numbers of men raised represents marked progress in the ability of the regime to involve all nationalities of the union in its defense. Most importantly, the Soviet government was able to mobilize the minorities at a time when much of its Slavic population had fallen under German control and thus was not available to the Red Army.

Another important measure of the contribution of the minorities to the war effort is the extent of their participation in the most critical battles and campaigns. Artem'ev suggests that the various national units and regular units with significant ethnic composition participated in such critical battles as Moscow, Stalingrad, Caucasus, and Kursk, as well as in campaigns to regain control over the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic.[41] As indicated earlier, however, native participation in divisions raised in the borderland areas varied greatly. Involvement of such units in major battles does not ipso facto prove that substantial numbers of minorities participated.

Data on ethnic representation at the various theaters of operation are available only for October 1942. As of that time, the Leningrad Front included 6000 Kazakhs, 3000 Uzbeks, 2000 Tadzhiks, and 10,000 Tatars. The Kalinin Front had 7000 Kazakhs, 5000 Uzbeks, and 5000 Tatars. The Western Front included 17,000 Kazakhs, 17,000 Uzbeks, 5000 Turkmen, and 3000 Tadzhiks. On the Voronezh Front, there were 8000 Kazakhs, more than 5500 Uzbeks, 7000 Bashkirs, and 7000 Tatars. The heaviest concentration of minorities occurred in the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front: 20,000 Georgians, 45,000 Azerbaidzhanis, and 10,000 Armenians.[42] These figures suggest that while not all ethnic groups supplied manpower commensurate with their share of the population, the overall personnel contribution of the minorities on critical axes was significant.

The question of how effectively the minorities actually participated in combat is even more difficult to answer. Soviet sources are most reticent on this topic. But Western scholars and non-Russian émigrés—including some who defected to the Germans during the war—have generated a substantial body of literature documenting that the minorities fought neither efficiently nor effectively and were of questionable loyalty.[43] According to Nekrich, by the end of the war the Wehrmacht had recruited into its ranks some 700,000 Soviet non-Russians, who served in non-Russian military formations.[44]

The Soviet experience in military employment of non-Russians in World War II, then, was a very mixed one. The government's ability to deploy a large number of minority personnel in both regular and national units early in the war compensated somewhat for the nonavailability of Slavic manpower. The minorities are known to have at least been present in Soviet forces during early, critical battles when the Red Army was on the defensive. At the same time, reported ineffectiveness and disloyalty of non-Russian, especially Asiatic, troops limited their contribution to the national defense effort. The World War II experience cannot have strengthened the Soviets' confidence in the loyalty and reliability of their national minorities.

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[41]Artem'ev, 1975, pp. 116-170.
[42]Kiriaev et al., 1967, p. 330.
[43]See Alexiev, R-2772/1, forthcoming.
[44]Nekrich, 1978, p. 9.

VI. POST WORLD WAR II

To all appearances, at least some national units survived until the mid-1950s. Ibragimbeili states that by that time the maturing of socialism at home, the appearance of the international socialist camp, and the growing politico-military might of the USSR obviated the need for national military formations in the union and the autonomous republics. Existing national units and subunits were disbanded and their personnel integrated into regular formations of the Red Army.[1] Interviewees report that the refusal of native Georgian troops to fire on their own population at the time of the uprising in Tbilisi in 1956 and general concern on the part of the leadership as to the loyalty of national units played a role in their demise.[2]

At the present time, all nationalities are assigned to ethnically integrated units. Personnel tend to be stationed in parts of the country with which they have no ethnic or religious identification. The Soviets seem to be making every effort to russify their nationalities, and military service plays an important role in this process. A companion study under this project assesses the effectiveness of this program.[3]

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[1]Ibragimbeili, 1978, p. 533.

[2]This information is from a Rand study, N-1486/1, *The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces: Preliminary Findings*, S. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev, May 1980.

[3]Ibid.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The most salient conclusion to be drawn from this historical account of Russian and Soviet policies and practices in using and managing the nationalities in the military is that even in the past, when Slavs dominated the population, leaders employed minority soldiers to defend the state. Over the centuries, the various regimes have found it necessary to involve more and more ethnic groups in their military operations. In times of crisis, successive governments have repeatedly created national units as a vehicle for mobilizing more minorities in the war effort.

Minority manpower, in both national and regular units, appears to have been helpful in certain vital instances, but overall minority soldiers have been of questionable effectiveness, notably unreliable, and sometimes completely disloyal.

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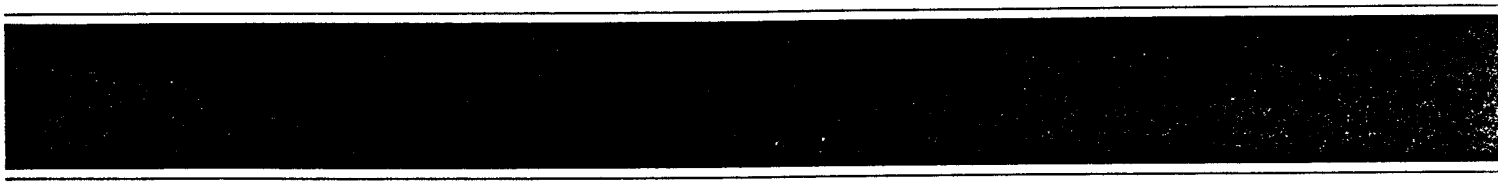
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