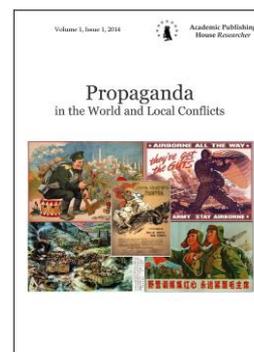


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Articles

The Birth of the Military Government Propaganda in the Don Host Oblast (1880–1890): Several Observations

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Abstract

In 1880-1890, a series of books came out in the Don region, which contained elements of military patriotic propaganda. A noteworthy fact is that their publication was initiated by the staff of Ataman N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky. The ataman also took other steps that can be interpreted as an attempt to arrange targeted military propaganda – his office coordinated preparations to establish the Don Museum, it tested and refined measures of “moral influence” on Cossacks to maintain their morale, etc. The paper generally endeavors to explain the reasons behind the development of such military government propaganda among Don Cossacks. To achieve the goal, the author reviews the essential military patriotic texts of the time, written by N.A. Maslakovets (assistant to the ataman), A.N. Pivovarov (army headquarters aide-de-camp), A.A. Karasev, S.F. Nomikosov and Kh.I. Popov (members of the Don Statistical Committee). The most important finding of the research suggests that the Don military propaganda naturally evolved from the bureaucratic infighting of army officials against zemstvo leaders who demanded to make the army service easier for Cossacks.

Keywords: Don Cossack Host, age of counter-reforms, military propaganda, N.A. Maslakovets, S.F. Nomikosov, Kh.I. Popov, A.N. Pivovarov.

1. Introduction

In the first half of the 19th century, an outstanding Don historian, V.D. Sukhorukov, the author of first studies into the history and statistics of the Don Host, categorically included the way of fulfilling military obligations into the range of army privileges (Sukhorukov, 1891: 263-267). The approach, which considered Cossacks’ long-term military service at their own expense as a *privilege*, rather than a *duty*, may seem rather odd, but V.D. Sukhorukov provided detailed arguments in favor of his view. He pointed out three factors that made the method of doing military duty quite profitable. First, a Cossack spent only part of his service term in the army, and periodically returned home for quite long stays; secondly, Cossack units offered a door for lower ranks to an officer career based “solely on their virtue and merits”; the last but not the least, contrary to popular belief, service Cossacks were entitled to certain payments from the state

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treasury (the amount was 75 rubles in the 1820s) (Sukhorukov, 1891: 265-267). Another well-known Don author, N.I. Krasnov, also wrote about the relative ease of service for Cossacks in the 1860s. He, in turn, emphasized the fact that the Cossack conscription was “easier than the recruiting duty and, moreover, implied such land ownership advantages that were not available for other social classes in the country” (Krasnov, 1864: 207). The “ease of service” of Cossacks (literal quotation!), as compared to the recruiting duty, was also stressed by Orenburg Governor General A.P. Bezak, calling for the reformation of the Orenburg Cossack army (Otchety..., 2016: 255).

On the other hand, the same N.I. Krasnov noted that Don Cossacks’ unique perception of their military service as a privilege gave root to peculiar changes in their mindset: “The Don Host regards the military service as a right, rather than an obligation, in unshakeable conviction that in return for this duty of every citizen towards their state, the Host has indubitable cause to be exempt from all financial obligations, owning vast lands and enjoying exclusive privileges” (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 10. D. 290. L. 116-116ob.). By the 1860s, the idea of Cossacks being not obliged to do their military duty, but enjoying the right to serve in exchange for privileges spread beyond Cossack troops. For example, a young officer of the regular army, N.A. Maslakovets reacted to it in the following way: “This estate has been established to reside in a certain area with the obligation to do active military service in return for the rights and benefits it was granted” (OR RNB. F. 1055. Ed. khr. 98. L. 55ob.).

As long as the Cossack military service was not hard, as compared to the service of Russian peasants, and Cossacks themselves enjoyed significant privileges, the situation did not pose any problems. However, in the second half of the 19th century, the circumstances changed. The price of Cossack equipment rapidly soared; most of Cossack privileges were revoked or became increasingly irrelevant, and in the rest of the empire, the backbreaking recruiting duty was replaced by universal military conscription comparable to the Cossack service. Of course, in the new conditions, Cossacks ceased to look on their service as a privilege and began to view it only as a duty. To make things worse, they started questioning to what extent the class benefits that Cossacks still retained compensate for the severity of their service. Some members of the Cossack intelligentsia wrote without reserve that Cossacks should not do their military service, since the service became too costly and, in fact, led their homesteads to ruin. For example, a Don public figure of the early 20th century, V.Ya. Biryukov, postulated regarding the issue that “Neither special rights and advantages nor other motivations have left now for the sake of which or by virtue of which it would be acceptable to impose special duties on Cossacks as compared to the duties of the rest of the population in the empire” (Protokoly..., 1899: 125).

A logical consequence of the changes was an attempt by the authorities to organize some forms of military propaganda in the Cossack community, to translate the idea that a Cossack is a warrior by his nature and must serve. Apparently, for this purpose, even some modifications were introduced to the system of Cossack conscription in 1880-1890. V.Ya. Biryukov himself wrote about efforts to exert “moral influence” on Cossacks, which, however, in practice, rather made one lose a liking for service – it came to the public humiliation of inappropriately equipped conscripts who were forced to ask for forgiveness before the stanitsa community (stanitsa – a Cossack settlement and an administrative-territorial unit (and center) in the Cossack regions) (Protokoly..., 1899: 119, 126). We can assume that other measures put into operation on the Don in 1880-1890 also had integrated elements of military propaganda. In particular, establishing the Don Museum in Novocherkassk was the responsibility of the Ataman’s Office and the Oblast government since 1884, and the authorities engaged with local history enthusiasts only after the latter chose another leader when non-resident officials in the Ministry of Public Education were replaced by Kh.I. Popov, a Don Cossack, distinguished for his conservative and patriotic stance (Boiko, 2010: 98-99).

This storyline, which deserves a detailed exploration, has been omitted by historians so far, and we would like to partially fill in the gap at least in part. Without touching on most forms of propaganda, we will analyze several texts written in 1880-1890 to show how the Don authorities took first step, awkward and stumbling though they were, in war propaganda.

2. Materials and methods

Subjects in our analysis will be four books published in 1880-1892, i.e. “Explanatory note on the application of the Don Zemstvo reform to the region on the grounds corresponding to the local conditions of the region and the everyday characteristics of the main (Cossack) mass of its

population” [Ob"yasnitel'naya zapiska k voprosu o primenenii k oblasti voiska Donskogo zemskoi reformy na osnovaniyakh, sootvetstvuyushchikh mestnym usloviyam kraya i bytovym osobennostyam glavnoi (kazach'ei) massy ee naseleniya] by N.A. Maslakovets, “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region” [Statisticheskoe opisanie Oblasti Voiska Donskogo] by S.F. Nomikosov, “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army” [Kratkoe istoricheskoe i statisticheskoe opisanie Voiska Donskogo] by A.A. Karasev and Kh.I. Popov and “Don cossacks” [Donskie kazaki] by A.N. Pivovarov. Two of the books were published with the consent of Don Ataman N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky, and the remaining two were authored by people from his staff (by an assistant for civil affairs and army headquarters aide-de-campe). All of them contain elements of military propaganda, and using the historical-comparative method we can trace its development in the Don in the late 19th century. On the other hand, the historical-descriptive method will help us reconstruct the context in which the books were created and which is vital to understand their features and the reaction that they set off in the public.

3. Discussion

The history of military government propaganda on the Don stemmed from the conflict between the Host authorities and zemstvos (zemstvo – an elective council responsible for the local administration of a provincial district in czarist Russia). As they faced with Cossacks’ reluctance to pay zemstvo duties, Zemtsy (Zemtsy – delegates to the bodies of local zemstvo self-government) explained this, among other reasons, by the “onerous burden” of military service for Cossack farming homesteads and raised the question of the need to alleviate the service (Maslakovets, 1880: 8). We should note that the Ministry of War itself refused to grant such a request, and, theoretically, the Host authorities, when rejecting the zemstvos’ proposals, could confine themselves to referring to the fact (Maslakovets, 1880: 2). However, General N.A. Maslakovets, Assistant to the Host Ataman for Civil Affairs, a prominent researcher of the Don, prepared arguments that are key to the topic of our paper, which explained why the Cossack service should not be alleviated in principle: “Conscription is a frequent subject in the propositions of stanitsa communities, submitted on various occasions, but not at all as a onerous burden, but as an immutable fact, from which Cossacks are accustomed to constantly proceed in all their actions. Protests against the requirements of zemstvo authorities, complaints about the shortage of land suitable for agricultural use, poor crops and similar phenomena adverse for the economic well-being of the Cossack population have been at all times brought about by the same invariable cause – the necessity to do military service. And if the compulsoriness of this service alone is accepted in the Cossack life with complete obedience, it is only because <...> that in the perception of a Cossack, his personal well-being is unthinkable without doing military service in one form or another, whether it will be personal service in the combat units mustered by the Host, or making a payment of a certain amount to the Host budget in substitution of personal service” (Maslakovets, 1880: 81-82).

Therefore, in the late 1870s, the Don Host authorities supported for the first time the view of the Cossack military service not as a privilege or even a duty, but as a constant and an “immutable fact”. The position manifested obvious deceit – just in the previous period, from 1860 to 1870, major military reforms took place in the Don Host, which, in a number of aspects, alleviated the situations of Cossacks. It was not until 1876 that an official of the Central Department of Non-regular Troops, A.M. Grekov, published an article on the reforms, where he noted that the new law on military service “grants significant benefits to the Cossack population” (Grekov, 1876: 98). While earlier a Cossack was conscripted in the field grade for fifteen years and he was called to active duty two or three times in the period, now the field grade assignment time was reduced to twelve years, with a single call-up (Grekov, 1876: 76-78). On the other hand, the price of Cossack equipment significantly went up (at least 1.5 times) in the same period (Peretyat'ko, 2018: 159-160). Of course, these changes greatly affected the hardships of the Cossack military duty, and could make it both an “easy service” and an “onerous burden”. Accordingly, with all dynamic changes in 1860-1870, the Cossack service could no longer be an “immutable fact” and a starting point for doing other duties.

Then again, fulfilling the requirements of military service by Cossacks “with complete obedience” was a blatant exaggeration on the part of N.A. Maslakovets. By virtue of his position, he certainly had access to the information collected from the Don stanitsa assemblies and officials

with regard to the mass conscription of unequipped Cossacks in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. This information suggested that, although Cossacks officially did not protest against universal military service, in practice entire stanitsas looked for illegal methods to alleviate it. We will confine ourselves to providing one very illustrative example. The head of the Cherkassk District complained: “Some stanitsas sent all their Cossacks not excluding well-off people who, exploiting the weakness of their fellow villagers incapable of taking any coercive measures against them, did not care about their equipment and argued that well-off Cossacks had the same right to public money as the poor ones; and this equipping practice not only utterly exhausted stanitsas’ funds; but some of stanitsas incurred significant debts” (GARO. F. 310. Op. 10. D. 85. L. 124ob.). As a result, at least some of the Cossacks preferred to pay for equipment out of someone else’s pocket, not only evading Russian laws, but also pushing their own stanitsas into debt. Of course, no one speaks that such Cossacks showed any special respect for the compulsory military duty.

However, the inaccuracies made by N.A. Maslakovets will be quite understandable if we consider his words as an attempt to convince readers that for “true Cossacks”, military service is both an “immutable fact” and the greatest value, whose requirements were fulfilled “with complete obedience”. It should be noted at this point that in general playing with information was quite typical for Cossack documents of 1860–1870. For example, in early 1860, it was N.A. Maslakovets who put forward a proposal to liquidate the Orenburg Cossack Host, which sparked anger among the command of the army. Its representatives responded to “gospodin Maslakovets” with a humiliating rebuke, where not only did they distort the surname of their opponent and accuse him of having no idea about the history and life of the Orenburg Cossacks, but also, when explaining the financial benefit the existence of the Orenburg Cossacks gave to the Russian Empire, “lost” some expenditure and income items and cited others twice to get the desired result (Peretyat’ko, 2019: 251–252). A similar maneuver, but at a much higher level, was designed by the Ministry of War central apparatus in 1875 in their reply to Minister of Internal Affairs A.E. Timashev. Despite the fact that the latter only objected to particular aspects of the military reform in the Don Host, they credited him with attacking the “privileged position of Cossacks in the country in general”, and then refuted his arguments by using fabricated statistics (Peretyat’ko, 2020: 87–91; 103–104). We can therefore conclude that deliberate distortion of information to produce a certain effect on the reader was a common practice in the apparatus’ games in 1860–1870, and N.A. Maslakovets had experience of involvement in such situations. There is a high probability that in his battle with the Don zemstvo officials, he quite deliberately dressed up his somewhat idealized notion of how ordinary Cossacks should perceive military service in the garb of a true fact. It is important to understand that N.A. Maslakovets considered his picture of Cossacks’ attitude to the service to be totally right, and lied for good in an attempt to lend more credence to his point of view.

In most cases, information distortions by Ministry of War officials in 1860–1870 could not be considered as propaganda as they were made in documents intended for internal use. However, the explanatory note about zemstvos submitted by N.A. Maslakovets was soon published, and, surprisingly, without any official stamps (we will explain this below). Moreover, the note became widely known among other Don authors of the late 19th century: for example, S.F. Nomikosov, Secretary of the Don Statistical Committee, rated the “Explanatory note on the application of the Don Zemstvo reform to the region” as one of the most reliable sources of Don statistics, and emphasized the “deep understanding of the situation” with which the work was written (Nomikosov, 1884: 5–7). In his “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region”, S.F. Nomikosov also repeatedly referred to the study by N.A. Maslakovets, quoting and developing the key points of the text. For example, S.F. Nomikosov underlined that “a Cossack <...> wants to remain a born warrior and shun a taxed estate” (Nomikosov, 1884: 616). As he postulated the idea of the Cossack service as an “immutable fact”, S.F. Nomikosov also reiterated N.A. Maslakovets’ statements that it was unacceptable to alleviate the service, at least if the initiative was escalated by lower administrative levels, i.e. by zemstvos: “Zemstvo institutions in the region, just like in the rest of the country, are intended, provided the local population has all rights and obligations, to create for it the best possible economic environment” (Nomikosov, 1884: 616). However, we should note that S.F. Nomikosov also made efforts to justify the usefulness of the Cossack service from the perspective of the Zemtsy’s concept, according to which the military service for Cossacks was the payment for their privileges. At the same time, he argued that “the correlation between the duties and the methods of their fulfillment is many times more beneficial for a Cossack than for a

peasant”, and “the severity of the Cossack military duty that was much discussed by zemstvo leaders and some publicists on the Don, was not at all as great as people tend to think” (Nomikosov, 1884: 361-362). Yet, the Don statistician did not go as far as to call the Cossack system of service a “privilege” and described it in the section on “duties” (Nomikosov, 1884: 336).

Therefore, “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region” by S.F. Nomikosov developed N.A. Maslakovets’ idea at the angle of interest to us and proved that a Cossack, as a warrior by nature, must serve, and the existing system of service gives him advantages. Furthermore, the book became a classic for the Don historiography. Contemporaries spoke of it as “the best work of its kind, and, moreover, created in a literary style of writing” (Dontsy, 2003: 341). It is only logical that, in the end, S.F. Nomikosov's work became, as A.A. Volvenko, today's leading expert in the history of Don Cossacks of the second half of the 19th century, notes, “a major element in molding the views of those individuals in the position of power and in society who believed that the more demanding requirements for the service of a Cossack are fully paid off with his privileged position” (Volvenko, 2017: 154). We would also like to add the following: the “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region” spread the opinion in society that military service was natural for Cossacks. Moreover, A.A. Volvenko points out that the book was printed by order of Don Ataman N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky, and, in fact, contained the rationale for his policy carried out towards Cossacks (Volvenko, 2017: 154). N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky, in turn, who became the Don Ataman in 1881, was a combat infantry general, had little concern with the affairs of the civil administration in the region and heavily relied on his staff (Karasev, 1899: 113). The post of assistant to the ataman for civil affairs, essential in this environment, was still held by N.A. Maslakovets until 1884 when S.F. Nomikosov's book came out. It is not surprising that the thoughts he expressed of military service as an “immutable fact” for Cossacks, formed an integral part of both the policy of the new ataman and the “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region” by S.F. Nomikosov. As a result, by publishing not an official document, but a comprehensive book that had pretensions to a scientific character and on the other hand interpreted facts in line with the authorities’ stance, the Don Oblast government made a final step from an apparatus infighting to propaganda.

An important digression should be made here. Modern researcher Goran Rajovic comes to the interesting conclusion in his paper “The History of Military Propaganda: The Horizons of Related Research in the 21st century” that military propaganda before 1900 was employed mainly in times of revolutions and wars of independence, and armies did not have the institution of military propaganda officers in place (Rajovic, 2019: 46). As for the Don Host Oblast, first attempts to exercise targeted military propaganda took place in the Crimean War, but they emanated from individual officials and public figures, had no much success and gained no immediate development (Peretyatko, 2018: 39-48). According to G. Rajovic, it was only as late as after 1900 that the importance of military propaganda grew, and dedicated military bodies responsible for it took root (Rajovic, 2019: 47). And we can see how the government’s military propaganda was a “self-generated” phenomenon in the Don. Initially, no one hardly even thought that it was possible; there was regular apparatus infighting under way between the military administration and zemstvos. Distorting information by parties concerned in order to get neutral officials and senior authorities round to their way of thinking was a standard practice for the infighting. However, it was decided to discuss zemstvos’ life with the elected representatives of the entire Don Host, including ordinary Cossacks (Ob"yasnitel'naya zapiska, b.g.: 2). The host authorities resolved then to use their proven information handling methods on them by publishing the explanatory note by N.A. Maslakovets. Evidently, military commanders were pleased with the outcome (indeed, the balance of “public opinion” tilted to the disadvantage of zemstvos in the end) (Ob"yasnitel'naya zapiska, b.g.: 2). They decided to continue with the experiment, and soon the de facto head of the Don Statistical Committee funded by the Don Host prepared a learned work that justified correctness of the government's policy towards Cossacks. Riding on the wave of the success of the works which insisted, among other things, on the naturalness of military service for Cossacks, the administration of N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky moved to providing consistent financing for military propaganda in peacetime, although a full-fledged unit to specifically deal with propaganda was not yet created.

Publication of first specialized military patriotic books on the Don was the most obvious consequence of the effort. While the works by N.A. Maslakovets and S.F. Nomikosov only glossed over the army topic, and were, above all, robust scholarly studies, albeit not completely unbiased,

they were followed by works printed in Novocherkassk, aimed at the general reader and describing the exploits of the Dontsy and the intrinsic bond between Cossacks and military service. “The inhabitants of Great Britain and the Iberian Peninsula were the only ones who did not hear the whooping of the Don surge triumphantly sweeping over their land”, one of the books said (Karasev, Popov, 1887: 25). “Peoples of the Caucasus will never forget the Dontsy and Vlasov and Baklanov together with them; Turks have more experience in meeting with Don Cossacks than all other peoples: it came to the point that they preserved the severed head of Don Starshina Frolov to send it to the Sultan; Arabs, roaming in Palestine, are aware of the Dontsy; finally, in Egypt, at the foot of pyramids, a half-savage Arab sheikh exclaimed at the words ‘Don Cossacks’ – ‘Ah! these are valiant warriors! true shaitans!’” another informed (Pivovarov, 1892).

We will confine ourselves to a brief analysis of two such works. In 1887, “with the authorization of the Host Ataman”, “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army” [Kratkoe istoricheskoe i statisticheskoe opisanie Voiska Donskogo] was published (the book was edited by prominent historians of the Don region, Kh.I. Popov and A.A. Karasev and authored by “members of the Don Regional Statistical Committee”). Contrary to the title, the book was completely different from the earlier historical and statistical descriptions of the Don, which were issued from the pen of V.D. Sukhorukov, N.I. Krasnov and S.F. Nomikosov. It comprised a number of loosely interconnected parts – a brief outline of the Don Cossack history, a geographic and statistical record of the Don Cossack Oblast, a list of Don Atamans, a story about the Defense of Azov and several Cossack songs. The central theme of the “Brief historical and statistical description” was the service of Cossacks to Russia, portrayed as a natural fact of their life, and this was done in a completely unscientific manner. “The meaning, imperceptible to the eye, but comprehensible to the mind and the heart, of the inscription on their (Cossacks’ – A.P.) victory banner becomes natural: *White Tsar* and *Orthodox Faith*, a flag that Don Cossacks held in their hands when honorably passed through the entire history of the unification, expansion and glorification of the Russian tsardom. The Dontsy’s fundamental commitment to the tsar’s power was expressed even in their domestic life (italicized by the authors – A.P.)” (Karasev, Popov, 1887: 3). And it was solely military service – there are no examples of other types of service in the “Statistical description”, but the military exploits of Cossacks, extending from Ivan the Terrible to Alexander II, are highlighted in detail, emotionally and without mentioning any situations when the Dontsy felt burdened by their military duty (Karasev, Popov, 1887: 1-25). Of course, previous Don historical and statistical descriptions also wrote about the centuries-old service of Cossacks to Russia, but they did it in a markedly different, much calmer and more scholarly manner. An excellent illustration of the attitude can be the corresponding passage from the “Military review of the Land of the Don Army” [Voennoe obozrenie Zemli Voiska Donskogo] by N.I. Krasnov: “Cossacks have been doing their military service in the country over three hundred years, first at sea, then on land; they have forged a peculiar kind of military duty, specified by part I in book II of the Code of Military Regulations and use a drill and ceremonies statute that differs from the one of regular cavalry regiments; as well as they learned a distinguished course of action in a war” (Krasnov, 1864: V). Further N.I. Krasnov also addressed exclusively the topic of military service of Cossacks, which was determined by the genre of his book as a military review. However, he at the same time elaborated both on the exploits and triumphs of Don Cossacks, and on the emerging issues, and even wrote about the “extinguishing warrior spirit of Cossacks” (Krasnov, 1864: XVI). V.D. Sukhorukov in his “Statistical description of the Land of the Don cossacks” did not focus on the Cossack military service at all. Even in the list of privileges of Don Cossacks, he put the model of government in the first place, rather than the way of service (Sukhorukov, 1891: 259-263). Therefore, until the 1880s, the authors of historical and statistical descriptions of the Don depicted the military service of Cossacks as an important but not the only defining characteristic of the Cossack life; in addition, they admitted that Cossacks themselves did not always display an invariably positive attitude to the service. As for the new “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army”, never before had the works of the genre considered military service as the prime constant of the existence of Cossacks.

On the other hand, the book under review explored the tradition of military patriotic literature that had already taken form on the Don. Its most obvious precursor was the two-volume treatise “Donets” [Dontsy] by M.Kh. Senyutkin, who, by the way, was the editor of Donskiye Voyskovye Vedomosti news sheet during the Crimean War, when the editions were broadly utilized

as a military propaganda tool (Peretyatko, 2018: 44-45). In the final section of the two-volume book, entitled “A View of the history of the Don Host” [Vzglyad na istoriyu Voyska Donskogo], M.Kh. Senyutkin also wrote without scientific and objective reasons about military service as an immanent historical vocation of Cossacks. Here is how he characterized “the value of the subject of the history of the Don Host”: “A whole poem of miraculous exploits, as superb as the glorious Iliad and almost excelling it in grandeur and truthfulness of its events, will instantly appear before your astonished eyes. For, no matter how vivid the poetic imagination can be, it is unlikely to ever be able to reconstruct such bellicose ideals as shown by the life of Cossacks” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 158-159). However, the series of “patriotic” texts on the Don history, inspired by the Crimean War and continued by M.Kh. Senyutkin, was advanced by the “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army” with many novelties. First of all, until the 1880s, such texts were personal initiatives of their authors and did not enjoy any designated support from the military authorities. During the Crimean War, patriotic short stories and poems for Donskiye Voyskovye Vedomosti were produced mainly by people totally unknown in the Don history and literature, who apparently were influenced by patriotic zeal (Peretyatko, 2018: 45-46). M.Kh. Senyutkin's “Donets” was published in Moscow, and although he himself, undoubtedly, belonged to the Don Cossack elite, neither in 1850, nor in 1860 did he hold any positions that entailed intimate connections to the military authorities (Dontsy, 2003: 439-440). Now the situation was different, and the publication of books, propagandizing military service in the Cossack communities, was bolstered by the ataman's staff. In addition, if we take early Don “patriotic” texts that can be defined as research works, rather than works of fiction, their authors, nevertheless, sought to ensure objectivity and introduce unknown historical information. And, while the first aspiration was compromised by the love amateur historians felt for their homeland, the second one was actually achieved by them. M.Kh. Senyutkin's “Donets” is a vivid example of the achievement as it, for example, provided a detailed description of Don Cossacks' operations against the Nogais for the first time in the Don historiography (Senyutkin, 1866a: 91-180). The author's preface also emphasized that the two-volume edition was created with a two-fold goal – to demonstrate Don Cossacks' “everlasting devotion to the Russian throne”, and to “protect many valuable documents of the past century from inevitable destruction” (Senyutkin, 1866a). “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army”, by contrast, was a strictly publicizing essay devoid of academic originality – it retold facts that were well known to specialists and were repeatedly described. Therefore, we can define the book as the first purely propagandist text, coined with a single aim to shape desired views about the Don region and its history, without any scholarly content.

As a result, “Brief historical and statistical description” had a rather odd and obviously transitional character. For example, the geographical and statistical overview of the Don Host Oblast, included in its structure, was written in a barren academic style, standing out of the rest of the text (Karasev, Popov, 1887: 1-7). In a brief outline of the Don Cossack history, the authors also had to divert their attention to non-military topics with occasional references, for example, to the “reforms of the Tsar Liberator” on the Don (Karasev, Popov, 1887: 23). Apparently, it was a bad idea from the very start to combine two literary and academic traditions that existed in the Don Cossack society and what is more used opposite methodologies – the tradition of comprehensive and predominantly scientific historical and statistical descriptions of the region, and the tradition of military patriotic literature. Of course, it was possible that historical and statistical descriptions (for example, the one by S.F. Nomikosov) contained elements of patriotic propaganda, but the genre itself meant voluminous geographical and statistical sections in such a book, which hardly were of any interest to general readers and thematically did not suit well the purpose of promoting military patriotic ideas. The Don military propaganda needed to look for another narrative genre that better met its goals, and the one was actually found in in the 1890s.

1892 saw the publication of the book “Don Cossacks” (Donskie kazaki) by A.N. Pivovarov. By contrast to the works reviewed above, this edition did not make it clear that it was printed “with the authorization” or “by order” of the Don Ataman. However, its author was an active army headquarters aide-de-camp, who received the His Imperial Majesty's Grace and a gold watch a gift for his book (Dontsy, 2003: 358-359). It was the first work in the Don literature and historiography whose author openly admitted in the preface that the focus of his book was not historical, but military and patriotic, and that the author not so much quested for little-known facts and collected rare documents, as he intended to invigorate the eagerness about military service of contemporary

Cossacks, harnessing examples from the Don history. We would like to cite the entire corresponding passage: “The knowledge of the exploits experienced with selfless valor excites deep sympathy and respect for the people who performed them, nurtures and further heighten the feeling of love for the cherished fatherland and for the beloved sovereign, and, finally, gives birth to an unconscious desire to model oneself on these splendid brave men and courageous performers of their duty. Unfortunately, we still have not collected accounts of the exploits of our Dontsy. This collection of stories is the first experience in providing concise descriptions for several feats of bravery, accomplished by Don Cossacks, their combat resourcefulness, devotion to duty, etc.” (Pivovarov, 1892). Actually, already during the Crimean War, one of early Don writers, I.S. Ulyanov, wrote a short story “Military ingenuity” (Voyennaya smekalka), narrating the exploits of M.I. Platov and making the pretense of being historically authentic: the author said he only reproduced accounts heard from the older generation of Don officers (Peretyatko, 2019: 11-12). One of our papers showed that the genre of (pseudo) historical short story, which was employed by the author to put ideas of importance to him into the mouths of historical figures had iconic significance for Don Cossacks, was later developed in the Don literature, especially by P.N. Krasnov in his “Pictures of the past Tikhii Don” (Kartiny bylogo Tikhogo Dona) in the early 20th century (Peretyatko, 2019: 12-14). A.N. Pivovarov was a pivotal figure in the history of the Don military propaganda, a transitory link between I.S. Ulyanov and P.N. Krasnov: he made a pioneering effort to bring to public the entire history of Don Cossacks, using not the conventional forms of a journal article, historical or historical statistical description, but an innovative form of a cycle of patriotic short stories about the “exploits of the Dontsy”.

Indeed, “Don Cossacks” collected short stories about the Don heroes from the time of Yermak Timofeyevich to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. However, the book, like “Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army”, did not have considerable success among Cossacks. Like his predecessors, A.N. Pivovarov made a mistake trying to preserve inappropriate elements of the scientific genre in the propaganda book. In some cases, the author simply took newspaper reports or archival documents and duplicated them word by word. For example, here’s how A.N. Pivovarov described the assault on Plevna on August 30, 1877: “On August 30, during the assault on Plevna, due to thick fog, our infantry units open fire at each other. Cossack Kireev of the 30th regiment was assigned to stop the shooting. The daring Kireev crossed himself and rushed straight into the terrible crossfire; to the right, to the left and to the front, bullets hissed, ours and enemy's. God saved the bold Don Cossack – not a single bullet struck him. Thanks to his valor, our crossfire was stopped, and the hero himself was awarded Order of St. George” (Pivovarov, 1892: 275). This excerpt is a verbatim reproduction the material that appeared in the Donskaya Gazeta newspaper in 1877 (Pivovarov, 1892: VII). Although it contains certain literary elements, the material by A.N. Pivovarov is frustratingly matter-of-fact and academic if compared with the corresponding description from “Pictures of the past Tikhii Don”. P.N. Krasnov depicted the assault on Plevna using a much more emotional and lucid style of writing: “On August 30, a grueling, bloody assault on Plevna commenced. Our infantry performed prodigies of valor. In front of the dense infantry lines, Skobelev astride a white steed stormed into Turkish redoubts. Since the seizure of Izmail by Suvorov, Russian troops have not yet shown such courage, such determination to win or die. Extended among the infantry units, Don Cossacks equaled their brothers, the Russian soldiers, in courage. At one time, the fog and smoke of rifle fire made impossible to discern where our troops were and where adversary ones, and our infantry units started shooting at each other. Cossack Kireev, who was assigned to the infantry chief of the 30th regiment, was detached to stop the fire. Kireev crossed himself and rushed into the heavy crossfire. Bullets whistled past him from all directions, but God saved the bold Don Cossack – not a single bullet stroke him. The crossfire was ceased...” (Krasnov, 1909: 487-488). So, to secure conspicuous success among the general public, comparable to that of “Pictures of the past Tikhii Don”, the book by A.N. Pivovarov lacked a literary style and a willingness to deliver imaginative story telling (and sometimes to think up missing pieces) for historical events. On the other hand, educated contemporaries, based on information that has survived to our days, severely criticized “Don Cossacks” for being one-sided and flagrantly ignoring peculiarities of the Don’s civilian life (Dontsy, 2003: 359). In sum, it remains to conclude that A.N. Pivovarov failed to create an analog of S.F. Nomikosov’s “Statistical description of the Don Cossack region” for the general reader – he failed to write a book that would be able to efficiently cultivate an idea of the “immutable fact” of the service among ordinary Cossacks.

Therefore, the period from 1880 to 1890 marked first attempts to publish special-purpose patriotic books for Don Cossacks. Although the books in many respects advanced the traditions set forth by earlier works on the Don history, it was the first time when the historical texts about the Don's past gave the military patriotic and propaganda components dominating priority over the research aspect. It is also important that the initiative to publish the books came from the staff of Don Ataman N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky. It was so far only initial, rather timid experiments of such military propaganda, and the authors of the patriotic texts did not risk totally moving away from the established canons of the Don academic historical literature. However, writing patriotic books required inventing new forms and methods, and it is not surprising that the books by A.N. Pivovarov, Kh.I. Popov and A.A. Karasev elicited a varied reaction among the public. Nevertheless, it was these ground-breaking works that laid the foundation which enabled the creation of the "Pictures of the past Tikhii Don" by P.N. Krasnov, which became the pinnacle of the pre-revolutionary Don military propaganda.

4. Conclusion

So, an attempt to shed light on the history of military propaganda on the Don in 1880–1890, at least in broad terms allowed us to make quite many conclusions that help understand how the amateur military propaganda of the 19th century essentially shifted to the professional military propaganda of the 20th century.

1) The causes that brought about the birth of the government military propaganda in the Don Host Oblast had a fundamental, but purely local, Cossack-specific nature. Until the 1870s, when the recruiting duty was repealed in the Russian Empire, Cossacks perceived their peculiar service system as a privilege, and a number of sources pointed out to the relative "ease" of the service. However, beginning in the 1870s, the situation changed: the Russian system of universal conscription appeared to become easier than the Cossack system of military service, and as a consequence critical voices began to call not only for the alleviation of the Cossack service, but for its complete revocation. In this context, mounting propaganda efforts to improve the attractiveness of the military service among Cossacks was an obvious and logical step on the part of the authorities.

2) On the other hand, the specific events, which led to the forming government military propaganda on the Don, were not Cossack-specific, and similar processes could also take place in other regions. The military propaganda originated from the apparatus infighting between officials. The end of the 1870s saw the signs of a conflict showing between the military authorities and zemstvos, in which the Zemtsy viewed the Cossack service as a duty and complained about its onerous severity for Cossacks. In response, Assistant to the Host Ataman N.A. Maslakovets proposed a concept in which the military duty was not a privilege or a duty, but an "immutable fact" of a Cossack's life. To substantiate his point of view, N.A. Maslakovets distorted real facts to a certain extent, which was typical for the apparatus infighting in the circle of Cossack officials in 1860-1870. However, N.A. Maslakovets' explanatory note was published because the issue raised by zemstvos was discussed in the Don Host Oblast with the elected deputies. As a result, the practice of pushing certain positions among Don officials in the apparatus infighting gradually evolved into the mass military propaganda.

3) The success of N.A. Maslakovets' publication and the support of military officials by the Don's "public opinion" against zemstvos paved the way to the growing use of the practice to print books that promoted the rightness of the policy of Don Ataman N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirsky. As the core component of the policy was the idea about the "immutable fact" of the Cossack service, the apparatus infighting between officials and public advocates continued to develop into the military propaganda proper.

4) With each subsequent book that came out, the process took a step forward towards professional military propaganda. The "Explanatory note on the application of the Don Zemstvo reform to the region" by N.A. Maslakovets was an official document published only due to a conjunction of circumstances. The "Statistical description of the Don Cossack region" by S.F. Nomikosov was planned for the printing right from the beginning and was a serious research study with integrated elements of military propaganda (the book substantiated and promoted the idea of the naturalness of military service for Cossacks). The "Brief historical and statistical description of the Don Army" by A.A. Karasev and Kh.I. Popov was the next step, from a research

study to a popular military patriotic book that does not contain new scientific information, but is intended to shape the idea of the intrinsic bond between Cossacks and military service in the general reader. However, the authors still proceeded cautiously without completely breaking with the academic tradition of historical and statistical descriptions of the Don and admitting the propagandist essence of their work. The risk was taken by A.N. Pivovarov in his "Don Cossacks", when not only did he write in the preface that his book conveyed a patriotic message rather than pursued scientific goals, but also find a genre that eventually became prevalent in the Don military patriotic literature – a cycle of historical short stories. In the early 20th century, this evolution set the scene for the creation of a military propaganda book that has demonstrated its relevance up to date – "Pictures of the past Tikhii Don" by P.N. Krasnov.

5) The publication of the four books within a relatively short period (1880–1892) naturally gave rise to an emerging circle of people in the Don Host administration, who stood to gain more from the military propaganda. Although a designated propaganda organization was not established, many related projects were implemented by members of the Don Statistical Committee (S.F. Nomikosov, A.A. Karasev, Kh.I. Popov, who set up the work of the Don Museum in Novocherkassk simultaneously with the events described). Government decorations received by A.N. Pivovarov for his "Don Cossacks" and the engagement of Kh.I. Popov as a leader in a number of propaganda initiatives can be considered as the progression of the government military propaganda to the professional stage in Cossack society.

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