

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****THE BEGINNING OF THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE DON
COSSACKS IN THE USSR**

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Abstract

The Southern Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences has been studying various aspects of the existence and development of the Don Cossacks for a long time. This paper discusses the beginning of the formation of a mass movement for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks in the last years of the USSR. The movement had a significant impact on the political, socio-cultural and other spheres of the country's life. The author considers the evolution of the movement for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks from cultural, educational, historical and patriotic associations that studied the history, folk-lore and customs of the Cossacks to a socio-political force of a patriotic orientation. The contradiction between the traditionalist attitudes of the movement and the new socio-historical realities, which required the solution of urgent problems of society and the state, is analyzed. The paper deals with the problems of the politicization of the movement, which gave rise to the ideological division into "whites" and "reds", which led to the promotion of slogans about the introduction of ataman rule in the region and the creation of an autonomous entity. According to the analysis, it is concluded that in the last years of the existence of the USSR, Cossack organizations on the Don were unable to institutionalize the significant potential of the movement, consolidate its healthy forces and form an image of a social structure that was attractive to supporters.

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1. Introduction

The formation of the prerequisites and the beginning of the reappearance of the Don Cossacks in the last years of the existence of the USSR has become one of the significant and resonant events in the social, political and cultural life of the country. The scale of this process in the second half of the 80s of the XX century went beyond the borders of the region. It began to have a noticeable and growing influence on the socio-political life of the country.

The undermining of the authorities and the fragmentation of society required new approaches to the expression and protection of the ideas of statehood. Accordingly, in the second half of the 80s, the first Cossack associations, consolidated in the form of various societies and clubs on a historical, educational, cultural, educational or folk-lore basis, were replaced by socio-political organizations of a patriotic orientation.

Researchers note various prerequisites and reasons for the rise of the Cossack movement on the Don and in other regions of the country. Initially, the reappearance processes were based on the continued interest of the descendants of Cossack families and certain groups of the population in the original culture, history and traditions of the Cossacks. However, as the crisis in Soviet society intensified, the public need to form new spiritual guidelines and meanings, fill in the ideological deficit, develop alternative socio-cultural guidelines and create a real force that could withstand the growing security threats became more and more clear. The growing movement manifested in various spheres of economic life, military service and law enforcement. It tried to develop principles for the consolidation of society and offered the Russian society the image of a new socio-political force.

2. Problem Statement

Most experts attribute the formation of a mass social movement for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks and the beginning of the creation of its organizational structures to the second half of the 80s of the XX century. At the same time, the prerequisites and potential for reappearance existed throughout the entire period of Soviet power. Despite the years of “Decossackization” (O’Rourke, 2007), the flooding of villages and farmsteads in the 1950s on the lands of the former First and Second Don Districts (Matishov & Savelyeva, 2019) and the subsequent wary attitude of the Soviet power to the Cossacks, the memory of him continued to exist at least at the level of families who remembered their origin (Tikidzhyan & Bondarev, 2019). By the beginning of the 1990s, the direct lineal descendants of the Cossacks accounted for 10–15 % of the population of the Don region. In total, up to 5 million people in Russia considered themselves to be the descendants of the Cossacks.

Even before the Great Patriotic War, academic studies of the folk-lore and sociocultural foundations of the Don Cossacks were carried out (Folk-lore, 1940). The changes associated with the period of the “thaw” in the history of the USSR allowed local historians to begin research on “blank spots” in the history of the Cossacks. Thus, in the 1960s, the Rostov local historian Voitov (2009) created a community, and then a regional club of “Dumenko-Mironovites”, engaged in rehabilitation and memorialization in memory of commander Dumenko and commander Mironov. Later, in the 80s, Voitov

played a dominant role in the formation of the Sholokhov Community and the All- Don Community, the processes of reviving the Don Cossacks.

Another significant moment in the reappearance of the memory of the Don Cossacks was the letter of Sholokhov, sent in 1970 to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU Brezhnev, with proposals to publish in the central press a series of articles dedicated to the 400th anniversary of the Don Cossacks, as well as to create a museum in the village of Starocherkasskaya, Rostov Region (Mikhail Sholokhov, 2005). After consultations with scientists, the departments of propaganda and organizational-party work of the Central Committee of the CPSU considered it inappropriate to organize events for the 400th anniversary of the Don Cossacks, but supported the proposal to create a historical and architectural complex in the village of Starocherkasskaya, which later became one of the strongholds of the Cossack reappearance.

Thus, due to the thorough work of historians, writers, local historians, artists and other ascetics, there was a gradual expansion of the Cossack themes in cultural and educational activities on the Don, a certain kind of “legalization” of this once forbidden topic.

These trends received a powerful impetus for development in the second half of the 1980s, when the USSR entered the final crisis: the transformations, conceived as a reform of society, led to an accelerated regression and collapse of the existing socio-political system. Cardinal political changes opened up fundamentally new opportunities not only for research of the history of the Cossacks (Skinner, 1994), but also for the development of consolidating principles.

The growing movement attracted attention as a political and, eventually, military force. The CPSU, in the face of the loss of control over the country, tried to contribute to the reappearance of the Cossacks, primarily as a military force, hoping to find support in it (Kozlov, 1995). However, the Cossacks themselves sought to unite, primarily in connection with the growth of separatism and the expansion of conflicts in the Caucasus, the growth in the number of refugees, and the increased threats to security in the South of Russia (Cornell, 2001).

The undermining of the authorities, the fragmentation of society required new approaches to the expression and protection of the ideas of statehood. Accordingly, in the second half of the 80s, the first Cossack associations, consolidated in the form of various societies and clubs on a historical, educational, cultural, educational or folk-lore basis, were replaced by socio-political organizations of a patriotic orientation.

This process can be traced on the example of the development of the Don military-historical club by Platov (DMHC), organized in 1986. with the assistance of the Rostov branch of All-Russian society for the protection of monuments and culture on the basis of the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore. Among the main statutory tasks of the DMHC were patriotic education, popularization of the military history of the Don Cossacks, participation in the protection and reappearance of the Monuments of the Motherland (Vodolatsky & Ozerov, 2010). The club distanced itself from political goals, but the logic of the development of the movement in the conditions of the social crisis in the country made it necessary to determine political self-identification, to defend unifying ideas that had a political sound. DMHC raised and consecrated the Army banner, prepared a congress of the Don Cossacks. On the basis of the club, the headquarters of the "Don Cossacks" was formed, a complete military structure was developed, the

Cossack education system began to reappear in the cities and villages of the Rostov region. The patriotic basis of the DMHC and the patriotic idea as a whole has become one of the most demanded areas of socio-political renewal and development of the country.

In 1989, the literary partnership "Sholokhov Community" was created in Rostov-on-Don, which included about 40 writers, journalists, scientists, and publishers (Borisova, 2009). This association has done significant work on the development of the Cossack mass media, the publication of scientific and journalistic works, literary monuments on the history of the Cossacks. Thus, the ideological basis of the regional patriotic movement was created – the "All-Don Community", established in 1990 (Vodolatsky & Ozerov, 2010).

In the same period, the historical and cultural society "Starodone" was organized, and on its basis the "Cossack Community of the Don" was organized, which took part in the Moscow Big Community and began to promote the organization of Cossack communities in the Rostov region. It set many socio-cultural tasks, organized both folk-lore holidays and actions on acute public issues (Borisova, 2009). It is necessary to note that the formation of these two structures was a manifestation of the politicization of the Cossack movement, the division into "red" and "white". The "Cossack community of the Don" expressed its distrust of the "Vsedonsky community" on the grounds that a significant part of its members were members of the CPSU.

After the adoption of the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of November 14, 1989 "On the recognition of illegal and criminal repressive acts against the peoples subjected to forcible resettlement and ensuring their rights", constituent communities of Cossack organizations were massively held in the country. The movement needed to unite and develop directions for development, which became the main task of the 1st Constituent Big Community of the Union of Cossacks of Russia (UCR), held in June 1990 in Moscow (Matsievsky, 2012). A native of the village of Nizhne-Gnilovskaya, Rostov Region, A.G. Martynov was elected ataman. The Charter of the UCR and the Appeal were adopted, a program of historical and cultural reappearance, social protection, and economic activity was discussed.

In the Rostov region, the Vsedonsky Community and the Cossack Community of the Don began preparations for a congress of Cossacks. However political disagreements grew between the two structures, arising from different social composition: in the Sonosky community mainly the intelligentsia concentrated – mostly members of the CPSU, and in the "Cossack community of the Don" – the representatives of the "Cossack commoners" (Borisova, 2009). Nevertheless, in November 1990, the Constituent Community of the Union of Cossacks of the Don Cossack Region was held, which elected M.M. Sholokhov. This forum adopted the Program, the Charter and eleven resolutions on a wide range of issues. The disagreements that were arising in the course of the development of the movement took shape on a community in the form of a divergence between the atamans. 40 out of 417 delegates formed an opposition on the resolution to end the civil war on the Don, which meant an ideological division into "whites" and "reds". A number of opposition atamans led local Cossack communities and proclaimed a struggle to purge the Cossack ranks of communists, which in practice contributed to deepening the split.

By the end of 1990, Cossack communities were in the cities and districts of the Rostov and Volgograd regions, and the newly created structures were united into districts in accordance with the

division of the former Don Cossack Region. The idea of reappearing the Cossack units in the villages, where they were recruited at the beginning of the XX century, is beginning to be realized (Skorik, 2019).

By the end of the existence of the USSR, the Cossack movement on the Don was supported by about one million inhabitants of the Rostov region, but its powerful potential was dissonant with the weak actualization represented by several hundred activists of Cossack organizations. The most serious researchers of the reappearance agree that “a serious problem of the Cossack movement, among other things, was its disunity” (Venkov, 2008).

3. Research Questions

The Southern Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences has been studying various aspects of the existence and development of the Don Cossacks for a long time. The subject of this paper is the beginning of the formation of a mass movement for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks in the USSR, its sources, main directions and trends.

The prerequisites for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks that existed until the 80s of the XX century presents research interest. In particular, they need to study the form of existence and reproduction of the memory of the service class -subethnos, its role in the protection of the borders and integrity of the country in the conditions of "Decossackization" and the subsequent alienated attitude of the Soviet authorities to the Cossacks.

The second research aspect is the situation of the second half of the 1980s, when, under the influence of the breakdown of the political system, the collapse of ideology, the restructuring of the economy and other foundations of state social existence, the activity of ethnic and social groups that sought to find new or restore old foundations of self-identification, generally valid ideas and way of life.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the formation of scientifically reliable ideas and the concept of the reappearance of the Don Cossacks in the last years of the USSR, show the evolution from the cultural, educational and spiritual orientation to the dominance of the political component of the emerging structures and consider the main sources and features of the initial stage of the Cossack movement on the Don.

5. Research Methods

During the research, the principles of historicism and objectivity were used. The historical analysis of data, confirmed by several sources was applied in dialectical development. The author used descriptive techniques, took into account the provisions of ethnology and the theory of patriotism. As the methodological foundations of the work, the principles of institutional and political analysis, the unity of the historical and logical, the ascent from the abstract to the real, and system analysis were applied. The informational basis of the study was presented by the materials of the Cossack movement, the legalization of various aspects of the activities of the Cossack structures, scientific articles and monographs

considering the Cossacks as a socio-cultural and socio-political phenomenon, as well as sociological research data.

6. Findings

As a result of the study, the author found out that there was the gradual change in the form and content of the movement for the reappearance of the Don Cossacks – from cultural and educational associations focused on the study of history, folk-lore, original orders and customs of the Cossacks – to the reappearance of traditional forms of self-organization, forming a new socio-political force conservatively patriotic type. At the same time, politicized ideas about the Don Cossack were fixed in the mass consciousness of the last years of the Soviet period, and its criminal component was also highlighted. This was influenced by the active anti-communist direction of the movement, accompanied by the thoughtless promotion of slogans about the immediate establishment of ataman rule, the creation of an autonomous Cossack republic, etc., which was perceived as a tendency to extremism. Such assessments were also facilitated by the rather large-scale entry into the ranks of the movement of marginal elements, the only merit of which was often only the absence of a party membership card. As a result, despite the rather high loyalty of the population of the region to many ideas of the movement, a critical attitude to the practice of its activities prevailed.

7. Conclusion

The structures of the Cossacks, which were formed in the last years of the existence of the USSR in the form of various societies and clubs of cultural, educational, folk-lore and ethnographic nature, rather soon transformed into socio-political organizations, since there was a massive need for new positive ideas for social development. These were the socio-cultural foundations of the Cossacks, the patriotic direction of the movement, the image of the defender of the Motherland, the focus on the preservation of traditional values. However, the Cossacks could not be reappeared in the form in which it existed before 1917. It had to correspond to the new historical realities. In the last years of the studied period, the Cossack organizations that actually existed failed to institutionalize the significant potential of the movement. After the collapse of the USSR, the movement had to solve acute issues of further development, effectively participate in overcoming the disintegration processes in Russia, regulating interethnic relations, filling the spiritual and ideological vacuum, overcoming the growing atomization of society and forming an attractive social community.

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