

# Notes on the Russian Army of the 17th Century (1632-98)

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[This article is incomplete. The author has not found the time to complete it; however, it still contains some valuable and interesting information. This article is intended for private use. Any publication or sale is prohibited.]

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## A. Introduction.

This article is about the Russian Army from the 1630's through the 1680's. This period is not covered to any great extent in Western historical literature. During this time, Russia took part in many wars:

1632-34 War with Poland (Smolensk War)

1654-67 War with Poland

1656-61 War with Sweden

1670-71 Civil war in Russia (peasant rebellion by Razin)

1676-81 War with Turkey

(In addition, there were numerous Tartars raids in the southern part of Russia. In fact there was a constant, undeclared war on the southern borders of Russia, much like the American Wild West)

The main component of the Russian Army in all of these wars was the newly formed regular regiments. Many people believe that first regular units appeared in Russia only in 1698 with Peter the Great, but in reality they were formed 50 years earlier.

**Russian Army 1680's**

<b>Types of Military Units</b>	<b>Number of Regiments</b>	<b>Number of Men</b>	<b>%</b>
Conscripted Infantry	41*	61,288	37.3
Moscow Streltsy	21	20,048	12.3
<i>Slobod</i> Cossacks	4	14,865	9.3
Regular Cavalry	26**	30,472	17.9
Feudal Levy		26 097	15.9
Other		11,830	7.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>164 000</b>	

\* - 41 regiments according to Russian historian A. Chernov ("Military forces of the Russian State in the 15-17 centuries"), Ustrialov counted 38 and Myshloevskiy - 48

\*\* - 26 regiments according to Russian historians A. Chernov and Myshloevskiy, Ustrialov counted 25.

In addition 50 000 Ukrainian Cossacks were available.

This force was the result of the military reforms of the 17th Century. They were based on changes in the recruitment system. Usually, three periods are delineated:

- The 1630's, formation of enlisted units. First units of the new army were created.
- The 1640-50's, the introduction of the conscription system. These new regiments became the main part of army.
- The 1680's, the final phase of reform. The military administrative system was reformed.

In this article I will try to show the transformation of different types of Russian military units in the 17th Century. I have tried, where possible, to organize my materials as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Organization
3. Recruitment
4. Ammunition

Unfortunately, there is a lack of information on Russian Army and State in the 17th Century, and some areas are not covered in any detail.

## **B. The Russian State in the 17th Century.**

The beginning of the 17th Century was a very troubled time for the Russian State, it took part in many wars and conflicts:

- 1590-93 War with Sweden
- 1604-06 Civil War, Lzedmitriy 1
- 1606-09 War with Poland
- 1606-07 Peasant Rebellion by Bolotnicov (Civil War)
- 1609-15 War with Sweden
- 1609-11 War with Poland

As can be seen, there was uninterrupted war for 20 years. This period of Russian history is called the "Time of Troubles". Civil wars alternated with interventions. Many villages and towns were ruined; western lands including Smolensk were lost to Poland; and some lands in Baltic region were occupied by Sweden. Russia needed 20 years to make up the losses from the "Time of Troubles". By the 1630's Russia felt powerful enough to retake the lost lands. The first attempt in 1632 was unsuccessful. The Russian Army, which was based on the feudal levy, lost to the Polish enlisted regiments. Russia had new style units also, but they were few in number. After the 1632-34 War the reform of the Russian Army began.

## **C. Review of the Russian Army in the 17th Century.**

### **Military Administration**

The administrative system in Russia in the 17th Century was as follows:

The *Boiarskaia дума* was a deliberative body consisting of the members of the high Russian gentry (*boyarin*).

Russian military administration consisted of two main elements in the 17th Century:

The *Prikaz*: an administrative department, which controlled everyday service, recruitment and supply of troops.

The *Razriad*: a military district to which all military units on its territory were assigned.

The military administration system in use from the 1630's through the 1670's is described below. In the 1680's the system was reformed and it will be described later.

## **Prikaz**

Military administration in Russia in the 17th Century was divided among several *prikaz*. The *prikaz* was a kind of administrative department, office or ministry. The word means, "order". The direct control over Russian military was organized in the following *prikaz*:

- Cossacks
- Gunners
- Reiters
- *Streltsy*
- Foreign
- *Razriad*
- Recruiting
- Siberian
- Kazanian
- Malorussian

These *prikaz* managed only recruitment, supply and service of the troops. The provisioning and production of arms and equipment were organized in other *prikazes*:

- Barrels
- Armor
- Weapons

A description of the functions of each *prikaz* is as follows:

The Cossack *prikaz* managed *gorodovye* Cossacks. Slobod Cossacks were placed under the direct command of the Belgorod *razriad* (military district).

The Gunner *prikaz* managed the *nariad* (artillery), its recruitment and service. The production of artillery pieces was the function of the Barrel *prikaz*.

The Reiter *prikaz* managed the regular cavalry. The Feudal Levy was managed by each *Razriad prikaz*. It is uncertain whether the settled dragoons were in this *prikaz* or under direct command of each *razriad*.

The *streltsy prikaz* managed the *streltzy*. Each *streltzy* (the soldier) was on active duty one year in a two-year period. The second year he was an artisan or merchant. Details will be described in D. Part 1 "Streltsy".

The Foreign *prikaz*, called *Inozemniy*, managed the regular infantry regiments. At first it controlled only enlisted regiments, but later, in 1650's when mass recruitment began, the *datochnye* regiments were added

The Recruitment *prikaz* was called *sbora ratnykh* and *datochnikh ludey* (muster of mobilized and recruited people). It was created only during war and controlled the mobilization of the Russian Army. It organized the recruitment of *datochnye* soldiers, and the gathering of the feudal levy and *streltzy*.

The last three *prikaz* (Siberian, Kazanian & Malorussian) were connected to the autonomy of these territories. The Siberian *prikaz* was created on the territory of the conquered Siberian Khanate, and the Kazanian *prikaz* from the Kazanian Khanate. The Malorussian *prikaz* was created in 1654 and managed the territory of the Ukraine. Each of these territories was autonomous, and had its own traditional military organization. These *prikazes* managed not only the local military forces (as a rule these were levies), but Russian garrisons were also included.

## **Razriad**

The other main element of the Russian military organization was the *razriad*. It was a kind of military district. During peacetime the main part of Russian army was dismissed, and only border troops remained on duty. These latter units were located in dangerous sectors. In 1630's the *razriad* were frontier districts; but later they became permanent with a standing staff. They included field and garrison troops, and each had its own artillery (formed from *gorodovye* Gunners, H. Part 5.). During war all of the field troops in the *razriad* formed a separate Army Corps called a *razriadnyi polk*. The number of troops in each *razriad* varied and depended on its mission. For example, in 1640's the Belgorod *razriad* counted about 30 - 35,000 men, while the Novgorod *razriad* had only 7,000 men.

There were 7 *razriads* from the 1630's to the 1670's:

- Tula
- Smolensk (created in 1655, after its capture)
- Novgorod
- Sevsk
- Belgorod
- Ryazan
- Kazan

In the first part of the 17th Century the Tula *razriad* protected Moscow from the West. After Smolensk's capture Tula's importance declined and by the 1680's it was disbanded.

The Smolensk *razriad* was formed in 1655, after the city's capture. During the war with Poland it was a base for the main Russian field army's operations in Belorussia. Weapons and supplies were stored there when Russian regiments were dismissed for winter.

Novgorod *razriad* protected the northern border with Sweden. There were numerous well-fortified localities in this sector and this prikaz consisted mainly of garrison troops. It also managed the settled infantry in the northern regions (see F. Part 3. 2.b.)

Sevsk *razriad* was a base for the field army operating against Poland. It was situated on the border between Belorussia (a part of Lithuanian State) and the Ukraine. As a rule, the Sevsk *razriadnyi polk* (Corps formed from units stationed in the Sevsk military district) operated on the left wing of the main Russian army. It was one of the most effective *raziads* behind only that of Belgorod.

Belgorod *razriad* was the most effective military district. It protected Russia from the Crimean Tartars. Units of the Belgorod *razriad* repelled yearly raids of Tartars. The most devastating raids were in 1661, 1662, 1680 and 1691. In 1691, 65 Russian settlements were destroyed, 2,000 men were captured and about 10,000 head of cattle were stolen. At the same time about 15,000 Tartars were beaten in 1641 near Chuguev, 7,000 in 1672 near Meretha, in 1679 10,000 Tartars were repelled from Kharkov and the following year they were beaten near Zolochov. The last raid in the 17th Century was in 1693. 15 000 Tartars were repelled from Russian border and 14 khans were captured. The Belgorod *razriad* was the most unsettled sector on the Russian frontier. The service there was very dangerous and honorable.

Ryazan *razriad* protected the border on the River Don. It was rather serene sector. The only worry was Don Cossacks, sometimes robbed merchants. Units of this *razriad* were a kind of reserve for neighboring Belgorod *razriad*.

The area of Kazan *razriad* was along the Volga River. It controlled the local tribes, and protected Russian settlements and merchants. Russian government did not oppress the natives of the Volga area, and the main duty of Kazan *razriad* was police service.

## **Army Components**

Russian Army in 17th century consisted of 4 main components:

- Streltsy
- Feudal levy
- Regular regiments
- Cossacks

The artillery was a separate element, called *Nariad* in Russian. It did not have a stable organization and strength. It was an enlisted unit with life-long service. Its details will be described later.

The *Streltsy* were the first regular units in Russian army. They appeared in the 16th Century as an elite unit armed with firearms. *Streltsy* conditionally can be divided into two groups:

- Garrison units
- Regular regiments.

It is uncertain if this was an official division. There were *Streltsy* units in each town and monastery, and they used only for guard and garrison duties. *Strelets* (the member of Streltsy regiment)" means "marksman, rifleman, man who is shooting". So, possibly every man armed with a firearm at this time was called a *Strelets*.

Another main component of the Russian Army in the 17th Century was the Soldier regiments. First formed in 1632, they became the main part of the field army by 1655. Soldier regiments consisted of two different types:

- **Regular**
  - \* Enlisted
  - \* Conscripted
- **Settled**

Conscripted regiments were further divided in the two types:

- *Gorodovye* (stationed in towns)
- *Vybrannye* (selected, a kind of guard infantry)

*Gorodovye* regiments were stationed in towns. During peacetime these units were dismissed and gathered only one month a year for inspection and exercises. *Vybrannye* regiments were elite units. They were stationed in Moscow and were on full-time duty.

Cossacks also consisted of two different types:

- Unregistered or free Cossacks
- Cossacks on the state service

The first type were unregistered men living in the lands between Russia and Turkey. These steppes did not belong to any country. These men lived by their own laws and customs. It is important to know that all Cossacks were Slavs and Orthodox. The most famous these were the Don and Zaporog Cossacks.

The second type was on state service and consisted of two types:

- *Gorodovye* Cossacks
- *Slobod* Cossacks.

*Gorodovye* Cossacks were enlisted units on the state service. They were a kind of light cavalry. They were called *gorodovye* (stationed in town), because usually they served in the garrison, especially on the southern border. *Slobod* Cossacks settled on the southern borders of Russia and were a kind of settled military forces.

Before proceeding it is necessary to discuss the Russian word *Polk* which has several meanings. The first and most usual meaning is "regiment". The second meaning is "corps". In 12th-17th Centuries parts of the main army were called *Polks*. For example, the "*Storozhevoi*(guard) *Polk*" meant vanguard, the "left hand *Polk*" - left flank, the "large *Polk*" - the main center part of army. In 17th Century *Polk* could also mean Corps as a group of regiments. For example, in 1672 the *Belgorodskiy Polk* consisted of 7 Soldier regiments, 5 Cossacks regiments, etc. Sometimes *Polks* (corps) were called after

their commanders. The third meaning is that of administrative district in the Ukraine in 16th-18th Centuries. Hetman Rozynskyi divided the Ukraine in 20 Polks in 1516. Each of these districts formed a *Polk* (regiment) of about 2,000 Cossacks.

## **D.Streltsy. (In preparation)**

## **E. Feudal Levy (In preparation)**

## **F. Regular Regiments**

The ambitious policy of Russian government demanded the availability of a large, well-trained regular army. By the 1630's the Russian Army consisted of the Feudal Levy and Streltsy. This was not enough for the forthcoming wars with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden. Reform of the Russian Army was necessary. The main component of this reform was the recruitment system.

### **1. Enlisted (Kormovye) Regiments (1632-64).**

The forming of a regular Russian Army began in April 1630. The Russian government tried to form 2 regiments of 1,000 men each from the *bezpomestnye deti boyarskie* (members of gentry owning a small estate or without any estate). It was an attempt to form a kind of feudal infantry in addition to feudal cavalry, which was the main part of the Russian cavalry at that time. However, this attempt was unsuccessful because the gentry did not want to serve on foot. By September 1630 only 60 men had been enlisted. Then the government expanded the group eligible for enlistment, and allowed any volunteers to join the new regiments. By December 1631 these regiments had 3,323 men. Their state was 1600 soldiers and 176 officers each. Each regiment consisted of 8 companies and a regimental staff.

Staff included the following officers:

- 1 Colonel
- 1 Lieutenant Colonel
- 1 Major
- 5 Captains



Each company consisted of:

- 1 Lieutenant
- 1 Ensign
- 3 Sergeants (the commander of 50 men)
- 1 Quartermaster
- 1 Captain of Arms (NCO)
- 6 Corporals
- 1 Doctor
- 1 Clerk
- 2 Interpreters
- 120 Musketeers
- 80 Pikemen

In the beginning of 1632 the number of new "Soldier" regiments was increased to six. The formation and training of the first four regiments was completed by August 1632, and they took part in the first actions of Smolensk War. The other two regiments joined the main army in June 1633.

In the middle of 1632 Russian government decided to form a new Reiter (Heavy Cavalry) regiment. At that time the feudal cavalry did not have a fixed organization, and this was an attempt to form regular cavalry. Gentlemen actively enlisted in this regiment because they were paid 5 rubles a month (soldiers in infantry received 2 rubles and gentlemen in feudal cavalry nothing). By December 1632 this regiment numbered 1,721 Reiters (2,000 men with officers). It consisted of 14 companies (each commanded by a rittmeister). At the beginning of 1633 a dragoon company of 400 men was added.

At the same time, a separated dragoon regiment (1,600 men, including 1,440 soldiers) was formed. It was divided into 12 companies of 120 dragoons each. This regiment had its own regimental artillery of 12 small pieces (24 rounds each) with gunners. Each dragoon received 4 rubles a month, and was armed by musket and pike.

During the war two more infantry regiments were formed. During the 1632-34 war a total of ten new regiments (8 Infantry, 1 Reiter and 1 Dragoon) were formed; however, after the war they were disbanded. The experience of using these regiments was successful, and in 1637-38 the Russian government began to form new regiments on the southern border.

After war with Poland, Russia began to look after the protection of its southern border. At that time there was not a clearly defined border between Russia and the Tartars. The latter raided these southern regions every year. From 1636-37 the construction of fortified towns, small fortresses and strongholds began. The border forces consisted of three main parts:

- Streltsy, they were on garrison duty in towns and strongholds,
- Cossack ( *Gorodovye* Cossack). These Cossacks were on state service, received money for it, and their main task was patrol duty.

- Regular regiments (infantry and dragoon). They were used as a field force and a reserve for the garrisons.

In 1638, 4,000 infantry and the same number of dragoons were enlisted in soldier regiments. A large number of these men had served in Soldier regiments during the 1632-34 War. Their organization is unknown, but they probably had the same organization as previously. These regiments took part in actions in 1638, but were dismissed for the winter on 1 November 1638. The following spring they were recalled. In April 1639 there were 8,658 infantry and 5,055 dragoons. They were dismissed again in September of that year. This seasonality severely impacted the military efficiency of these units. They were used in the following years also, but by then Russia passed on to another method of recruitment.

During the period 1640-1680 Russia continued to form dragoon regiments from enlisted men. They were called *Kormovye* (supplied by the state). After beginning of the war with Poland in 1654 their numbers were increased. In 1653, 6,000 men more were enlisted. By 1658, 4 new dragoon regiments (about 5,000 men) were formed in the *Belgorodskiy polk* (Belgorod Corps). However, by the end of the war in the 1667, only 3,390 of these dragoons remained, and most were converted into the settled dragoons.

## **2. Settled Regiments (1642-67).**

In addition to enlisted regiments, the Russian government formed so-called "settled" regiments. These units were conscripted rather than enlisted. The settled soldier did not receive pay from the state, and lived off of his allotted plot of land. Settled regiments first appeared in the 1640's on the Southern and Northern borders of Russia. In the West, Russia bordered the Polish-Lithuanian State. Numerous fortresses protected this border. In the North, Russia bordered Swedish territory. This area was swampy and wooded, and difficult to traverse for army. There were no strong fortresses on either the Russian or Swedish side. There were only small strongholds. The Southern border was the most dangerous region. In the 17th Century Russia began to expand into the South to gain control of large amounts of unoccupied, fertile lands. The terrain was primarily steppe with a few woods. This region was good for cavalry, and the protection of this border demanded mobile troops.

### **2.a. Dragoons on the Southern Border.**

In 1642-48 the serfs in the villages in Voronezh, Lebediansk and Sevsk *uyezd* (districts) were recruited as dragoons. They were released from serfdom, and received individual plots of land for each family. They were also supplied with arms by government, and had to report for duty to the various strongholds with their own horses and supplies in the case of Tartar raids. They were a kind of home guard or militia. Usually they were equipped with muskets of the infantry pattern, and sword or *berdysh* (a kind of pole-axe). They were not used as cavalry. They were mobile infantry designed for the protection of the towns and villages on the south border of Russia. For cavalry duty, *Gorodovye* (town) and *Slobod* Cossacks were used.

Dragoons were bound to report for military service with their own horses and supplies. From each peasant plot one dragoon was recruited for the service in field. Other men, who lived on this plot, were a reserve in the case of death or injury of the first man. For example, in August 1646 all serfs of Komarits *volost* (district) were recruited as dragoons. All families received their own plot, and from each one man was recruited for dragoon service. This resulted in about 5,000 active soldiers. They were divided into 3 regiments of 6 companies each. Each company had about 300 men. The number of companies depended on the availability of officers. The service in settled regiments on the south border was very dangerous and not honorable. Each dragoon had to have a horse, musket, sword or berdysh, a boar spear, and supplies for himself and his horse. In 1653 Russian government conducted an inspection of these units. The results were as follows:

- Dragoons in full equipment - 5,551 men
  - Foot with muskets and berdysh or bear-spear - 5,649 men
  - Youth (the age limits for this category are unknown) - 3,641
- Total - 14, 841

So, all of the adult population of this district were ready for military service in the case of war. It was very important, because Komarits district was on the border with Poland and Tartars. In 1653 the armistice with Poland ended, and the next year Russia went to war (The War of 1654-67).

The Komarits dragoons took an active part in this war. They were sent to the main army, and took part in many actions in Ukraine and Belorussia; however, the use of these units was a major error for the Russian government. These dragoons were a Home Guard, and were effective only in providing protection for their own lands. They did not receive any payment from the government and were supplied by their plots of land. When dragoons were on active service, their farms were ruined from a shortage of workers. As a result, the dragoons could not supply themselves and suffered. In addition, the Tartars took advantage of lack of military forces on the south border of Russia and increased their raids. In 1680 the Russian government converted the Komarits dragoons to settled infantry. By 1685 other settled dragoons had also been converted to settled infantry.

## **2.b. Infantry Regiments on the Swedish Border**

From this experience of using settled units, the Russian government decided to create other similar units on its northern borders. In 1649 the town of Olonets was founded. This town became the administrative centre of the northwestern district of the border with Sweden. The same year all of the male population became soldiers. All settlers received individual plots of land. These settlers were freed from taxes, but served as soldiers without pay. From each plot one man was recruited. If he died, his family sent another soldier to army. In nine *pogost* (small districts) of Olonets *volost* 7,902 men were recruited. They were divided into two regiments.

Another centre of recruitment was Somerskaia (Sumerskaia) *volost*. By an ordinance of 17 September 1649 all settlers of this district became soldiers. From each plot one man was recruited, but if family was large, then two or three men. From this district, 1,000 men were recruited and formed in a regiment.

The Olonets and Somers regiments were formed for protection of the Swedish border, but during war with Poland (1654-67) they were sent to main army. When the first regiments were called out, new regiments were recruited for border service, and new men were sent to main army for the replacement of killed and wounded soldiers. As a result, by 1660 all of the adult male population of these districts had been called for army duty, and their farms lay in ruins. In 1662 government stopped recruiting from these districts, and in 1667 these regiments were disbanded.

### **3. Conscripted (Datochnye) Regiments (1652-98)**

The first attempt at conscription took place in 1652. At that time Russian government began to prepare for the new war with Poland. In 1654 the Deulinian Armistice which had ended the War of 1632-34 expired, and Russia decided to make another attempt to recover the western territory lost in 1611. In 1652, the formation of fifteen new Soldier regiments began. The formation of new infantry regiments was a necessity, because there was a shortage of infantry in the Russian field army. Before this war, in 1651, Russian field army consisted of:

Feudal levy - 37,596 men  
Moscow Streltsy - 8,122  
Cossacks - 21,124  
Tartars - 9,113  
Landsknechts (German & Swedish) - 2,707  
Reiters - 1,457  
Dragons - 8,462

All available Russian infantry was on garrison duty on the Southern borders of Russia, and it was very dangerous to move it away because of the raids by Crimean Tartars.

In the beginning, new regiments were formed by the enlistment of men, but this failed to produce sufficient numbers, and the Russian government ordered the first conscription. In 1652, one man from every 100 homesteads was conscripted. Including the enlisted manpower, this was enough number to form 15 regiments which bore the name of their colonel. The names of some these regiments were:

:  
- Abraham Leslie  
- Butler  
- Gypson  
- Trafert  
- de Stevill  
- Jander

- Gundermaher
- Englis
- Filippus
- Albert van Bukoven
- Martot
- Zacks

These 12 regiments were part of the Russian Army, which seized Smolensk in 1654. They were trained by the new regulations of 1647 *ucheny & khitrost ratnogo dela* ("Knowledge and Ruse of Military Science"). It was Russian translation of "Military Art of Infantry" by I. Valgenhausen (J.J. Wallenhausen, *Kriegskunst zu Fuss*, 16??). In 1650 Dutch regulations for Reiters were also adopted (J.J. Wallenhausen, *Kriegskunst zu Pferde*, 1616 ?).

Intensive actions on the wide front during the 1654-67 War demanded more soldiers and the Russian government continued to conscript soldiers from all parts of the country. Usually one man was conscripted from every 25 homesteads, but in some districts in the West of the country one soldier was conscripted from every three adult men. These soldiers were called *Datochnye* (given or conscripted). The conscription of 1658 (one from 25 homesteads) resulted in 18,000 men. The conscription of 1659 (on the same conditions) resulted in 15,577 men. Each conscripted soldier had an "obligator", who had to go to army if he deserted. The conscription in December 1660 (one soldier from 20 homesteads) resulted in 17,423 men. It continued until September 1661. The total number recruited during these three national conscriptions was 51,000 men. During the war with Poland 1654-67, about 100,000 men were conscripted (this is the total for both national and local conscriptions). *Datochnye* (recruited) soldiers had to serve for life. During peacetime, most of the soldiers were dismissed until war began, the rest were used for border and garrison duties. The strength of these regiments differed. During the war in 1663 there were about 50-60,000 men in 55 regiments. After the war this was reduced to 25-30,000 in 20-25 regiments.

In the 1663 the Russian field army against Poland consisted of:

- 42 Infantry regiments - 24,377 men
- 8 Dragoon regiments - 9,334
- 22 Reiter regiments - 18,795
- 2 Lancer regiments - 1,185
- 1 Hussars - 757

Conscripted regiments were conditionally divided into the two groups:

- *Gorodovye*
- *Vybrannye*

*Gorodovye* regiments were stationed in garrisons throughout the Russia. As a rule, in peacetime these regiments were quartered in towns, and soldiers were dismissed and gathered once a year for inspection and exercises.

The word *Vybrannye* means "selected". They were the elite regiments of Russian Army. There were two such regiments, and they were stationed in Moscow. They were kept at full strength all of the time; however, their organization changed over time. At the beginning of the 1650's they probably numbered 1,600 men in 8-10 companies. In the 1660's and 70's the *Vybrannye* regiments numbered 2,000 men each. Each regiment was divided in two groups known as "thousands", one of pikemen and the other of musketeers. The musketeers of the *Vybrannye* regiments wore blue and the pikemen wore green uniform. By the 1690's these regiments had been reduced to 1,000 men each and wore red coats.

There is a great deal which is unknown about the organization of the Conscripted regiments. Enlisted regiments in 1632 numbered 1,600 in 8 companies (960 musketeers & 80 pikemen). Later regiments were 1,600 soldiers in 8 companies also; but during the 1654-67 War, Conscripted regiments (1,600 men) were probably divided in 10 companies (according to Chernov). Russian historian Razin wrote that at the end of the 1680's regiments contained 6-10 companies. Regardless of the number of companies in regiment, each company was divided into the 3 *Kapralstvo* (a unit under a command of corporal).

In reality each regiment had between 1,200 and 1,500 men. For example, in June 1655 the Corps of Khitrovo had 5,379 men in 3 Regular regiments and 12 *Sotnia* (a unit of one hundred men) of feudal levy. The Regular regiments numbered 4,000 soldiers in 3 regiments, or about 1,300 men in each. This Corps was the vanguard of the main Russian Army, which in the summer of 1655 advanced from Smolensk to Vilnius. This shortage of soldiers was peculiar to regular regiments, especially by the end of war.

All regiments in Russian Army in the 17th Century were named after their colonels. For example, during the Swedish sally from Riga on 2 October 1659 four Regular regiments were defeated: Ziklert's, Nenart's, Angler's and Ungmann's. In this action 17 Russian colours were captured. It gives an idea about the number of colours in regular regiment. There were more than 17 (I believe some were not captured) colours in 36-40 companies. Probably each company had its own colour.

By the end of the 17th Century most *Datochnye* regiments lost their military efficiency because of 20 years peace. They lacked training and lost combat experience. In spite of this, there were 47 *Datochnye* regiments on the rolls at the beginning of the 18th Century. Some of them took part in the Azov campaign. As far as I know, they did not take part in the first actions of the Great Northern War, but were used in rebuilding the army following Narva. Some these regiments were converted to new infantry or garrison regiments, while others were broken up and the distributed among newly formed units. Peter did not use *Datochnye* regiments as field units because of their poor training.

## 4. Regular Cavalry

Before the middle of the 17th Century, Russian cavalry consisted of Feudal Levy and Cossacks. Feudal Levy was called *Pomestnaia* (estate). Every member of gentry having any estate had to serve in this levy during war with his servants. Their number depended on the size of levy. According ancient Russian laws, if father had 2 or more sons, inheritance was received only by eldest. The others received nothing. They were called *bezpomestnye deti boyarskie*. They did not have to serve in army. This changed in the May of 1654. By an ordinance they were called to the army as volunteers. The Government decided to form regular Reiter regiments from them. (the feudal levy was called up only during war). These new units were a kind of elite cavalry.

During the 1654-67 War, the composition changed. Sometimes, losses were replaced by using recruited serfs or non-gentry volunteers. For example, in 1659-60 in the Reiter regiments in Belorussia and the Ukraine three-quarters of the units' strength was non-gentry. After the war, all of these non-gentry units were converted to infantry and the Reiters again became an elite, gentry-based cavalry. In the middle of the 1670's in the 77 Russian garrisons on the Southern border there were 12,000 Reiters of which 10,658 were gentry. Reiters were equipped with a carbine and a pair of pistols. They also had sword or sabre. They were protected by cuirass and metal helmet. By an ordinance of 1660 these Reitar regiments consisted of 1,000 men. Each regiment consisted of a regimental staff and 10 companies each of 3 *kapralstvo*.

Besides the Reiters, another type of regular cavalry was the Lancers. They appear in the Reiters regiments, and were a copy of Polish pancerni cavalry. They formed a separate company in each Reiter regiment. The difference between Lancers and Reiters was in equipment. Lancers were equipped with a short lance (spear) and pistol. He was protected by a cuirass and helmet. In combat the Lancers were the shock troops in assault and protected the Reiters in close combat.

As separate units, Lancers appear by 1662 in the Belgorod Corps (on the southern border of Russia). Two regiments were converted from Reiters to Lancers. These regiments consisted of 5 companies, each of about 100 men. One company in each lancer regiment was Reiter.

In contrast to southern units, in the Novgorod Corps (Northwest) a separate Hussar regiment was formed. It had different history from the lancers. The hussars were formed as a close combat unit in Reiter regiments. Russian hussars were a copy of Polish Hussars, but without "wings" and shields (I'm not sure in it, but I have not found any mention of wings and shields in this regiment). In 1662 a separate Hussar regiment was formed under Colonel Nikifor Karaulov. In consisted 20 officers and 350 hussars in five companies. In 1673 this regiment numbered 417 men, and 465 men in 1679.

Hussars were armed with a lance (not spear) and pistols. They were protected by a light cuirass and *Naruchnik* (an armour protecting the hands). In the middle of 1670's Lancer companies were added to Reiters regiments in Novgorod corps too, but a separate Hussar regiment was retained.

In 1680-90's regular cavalry, as well as regular infantry, lost their military efficiency. In contrast to the *Datochnye* infantry all cavalry units were disbanded by Peter the Great because he did not trust the old Russian gentry. New Russian cavalry (dragoons and horse grenadiers) were formed from recruited serfs.

## **Tactics**

The main notes about Russian cavalry tactics are about reiters. The tactics of Spearmen and Hussars are clearer. They fought in the Polish Hussars style. The reiters tactics do not have a single meaning.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any specific information concerning Russian cavalry tactics. During wars of 1654-67, the Russian Reiters used a translation of the Dutch reiter regulations adopted in 1650. I believe they were similar to the Swedish style of cavalry tactics (fast charge to contact with the pistols used just before contact). There are some arguments in favor of this view.

First of all, German style tactics (caracole) needed a great deal of training; however, Russian regular cavalry fought all the year in field, except during the winter when they were dismissed until spring. In this situation there were no time for regular training.

Secondly, the tactics of the Polish Hussars and Tartars had a huge influence on Russian Army. They both used rapid, massive cavalry charges as a main element of tactics. In this situation German style cavalry tactics, would have resulted in being carried away from battlefield by the enemy, like tornado. As far as I can judge from battle descriptions in Russian sources, Russian regular cavalry were used as battle cavalry closing on the enemy with cold steel (vanguard and guard duty were performed by Cossacks and Feudal Levy). For this rapid movement and individual training are more necessary then shooting in ranks.

Finally, the availability of a Spearmen company in each of the Reiter regiments, and the fact that both Spearman and Reiters wore protection for close combat, indicates that the normal tactic was to close with the enemy. Meeting an enemy attack by firing undoubtedly would have been fatal, especially if the attackers were Polish Hussars or Tartars. I believe, Russian cavalry met enemy attacks by counter-charging, and the Spearmen were in the first rank of these charges.

In the battle of Tinkovichy on 29 August 1655 (15 kilometres from Kletsk) a Russian detachment of 2 Reiter regiments and some Feudal Levy, moving in vanguard, met superior in numbers Polish Hussars. They fought for two hours until Russian infantry arrived. Then Polish Hussars were defeated and were pursued by Russians. A two-hour



cavalry fight clearly points to close combat, which would have been impossible, if the Russian Reiters had used German style tactics.

## **G. Cossacks.**

In 17th Century the word Cossack had two meanings. The first is an Ukrainian military man. They were professional soldiers and had to mobilize by the first call. During peacetime they lived as they wish. They were not taxed and their only duty was military service during war. Cossacks were grouped in regiments which were settled in the same districts (Poltava Regiment was formed or settled in the Poltava district). The population of *Polk* consist of two parts: Cossacks (military men) and *podpomoshnik* who supported the Cossacks. Each Cossack had from 2 to 8 supporters who equipped him and paid him money. For example, at the end of 17th Century in the Kharkov district there were about 4,000 peasant homesteads and 850 Cossacks. The latter formed Kharkovskyi regiment. All Cossacks were listed at the *reestr* in English this word means register. So these Cossacks were called registered or *reestr* Cossacks.

The second meaning was free people on the border of Russia. These free men settled on vacant lands between Russia and Turkey. They did not belong to any state. They lived in a kind of community. All questions were solved at meetings. They elected the leader - ataman. At the end of 17th Century these Cossacks lived along the Don, Dnepr (*Zaporozhskaya Sech*), Yaik and in Siberia. These Cossacks lived by fishing and hunting. They also pillaged Turkish and Tartar lands.

### **1. Free or Unrestricted Cossacks. (In preparation)**

### **2. Gorodovye Cossacks. (In preparation)**

### **3. Slobod Cossacks (1651-98)**

As Russian settlements moved further south their protection became more and more necessary. The experience with the settled regiments showed the problems associated with these units. At the same time Russia could not maintained large regular forces for long periods of time. So Russian government tried to find another solution for the protection of the border area. As a result the *Slobod* Cossacks appeared.

*Sloboda* means the outskirts of the town, in the 17th Century it also meant houses built around small strongholds. Slavs, who fled from Poland and Turkish lands where they were oppressed for their religion, settled in these regions. They occupied the unoccupied lands on the Southern border of the Russia. Their settlements appeared around Russian

border strongholds, and the population was on the military service in the case of the Tartars raids. Gradually they were organised after the Ukrainian Cossacks. These *Slobods* were grouped into *Polks* (an administrative and military division like that of the Ukraine.

There were 5 such *Polks*:

- Sumskiy (in Sumy) - 1658
- Izumskiy (Izum) - 1685
- Akhtyrskiy (Akhtyrsk) - 1657
- Kharkovskiy (Kharkov) - 1659
- Ostrogozhsky (Ostrogozhsk) - 1652

The date indicates when the *Polk* was finally formed as an administrative and military unit, and received a colour from Tsar. There were also some small *Slobod* regiments (Voronezh, Bulykeiskiy, Polatovskiy, etc.), later they were incorporated in the regiments above.

Population of the *Slobod Polk* was divided into the two parts:

- Registered Cossacks, they were on the state military service;
- Rural population called *Podpomoshnik* (assistant or helper), 2-8 for each Cossack.

Registered Cossacks did not receive payment from the state and they lived off the *Podpomoshnik*. Supplying and providing for the registered Cossacks was the only duty of slobods rural population. *Slobods* were free of any taxes and had their own administration.

The administrative and military organization of Cossacks was as follows:

Each *Polk* consisted of several (7-15) *Sotnia* (a hundred), each between 70-150 registered Cossacks. The number of *Sotnia* depended on the number of available Cossacks.

The staff of a *Polk*, called *Polkovaya Starshina*, consisted of:

- *Polkovnik* (colonel)
- *Oboznyi* (the man who is the head of train). He was the head of *Polk* train, artillery and fortresses.
- *Sudia* (judge). The Cossacks had their own legal proceeding.
- *Yesaul*. He was the assistant of Polkovnik.
- *Khorungyi*. He was the commander of Polk guard (Khorungyvye Cossaks) and looked after the polk flag.
- Clerks.

*Sotnya* staff consisted of:

- *Sotnik*
- *Sboznyi* (the man who is the head of train): He was the head of *Sotnya* train, artillery and outposts.
- *Sudia* (judge): The Cossacks had their own legal proceeding.
- *Podyesaul*: he was the assistant of Sotnyk.

- *Podkhorungyi*: He was the commander of *Sotnya* guard (*khorungyvye Cossacks*) and looked after *Sotnia* flag.
- Clerks.

The *Polkovnik* was elected by the Cossacks, but later was appointed by the Tsar. He had full military, administrative and legal power on the territory of the *Polk*. His orders had a power of a law. *Polkovaya Starshina* elected the *Sotnik*, and the *Sotnik* designated the *Sotnia* staff.

In the 1730's the *Slobod* regiments received a stable military organization and in 1765 were transformed to regular cavalry:

<b>Slobod Regiment</b>	<b>Regular Cavalry Regiment in 1914</b>
Sumskiy	1 Sumskiy gen. Seslavina Hussar Regiment (1 Cav. Div., Gren. Corps, Colonel Groten)
Izumskiy	11 Izumskiy gen. Dorokhova Hussar Regiment (11 Cav. Div., 11 Army Corps, Colonel Mirbah)
Kharkovskiy	11 Kharcovskiy Dragoon Regiment (11 Cav. Div., 11 Army Corps)
Akhtyrskiy	12 Akhtyrskiy gen. Davydova Hussar Regiment (12 Cav. Div., 12 Army Corps, Colonel Tringam)

An additional *Slobod* regiment was the *Chuguevskiy*. It had different history than the other *Slobod* Cossacks. In contrast to other *Slobod* Cossacks who were Ukrainian, the *Chuguevs* were Russian. The first Russians appeared on the River Severnyi Donez in the 1620's. On 26 February 1626 the fortress of Chuguev was found. It was the most southern outpost of Russian State against Crimean Tartars. The basis of Chuguev population was the Russian garrison, which consisted of *streltsy* and *gorodovye* Cossacks. In 1638 some Ukrainian Cossacks settled near fortress, but later they moved away after a quarrel with the Russian *Streltsy*. The reduction of military funds in the 1640's led to the reorganization of the Chuguev garrison to settled units. Instead of payment, the *streltsy* and the *gorodovye* Cossacks received plots of land and were released from taxes. Russian government also supplied them with weapons and powder. As a result, the *Chuguev* Cossacks alone had to protect southern border of the State. They were called *tsarskie kormovye Cossack* (Cossacks supplied by Tsar) and were directly under the *voevoda* (general) of Belgorod prikaz. In contrast to other *Slobod* Cossacks, *Chuguevs* always were considered a part of Russian army. They were organized in a "polk", but they did not have administrative and legal autonomy, and the Tsar directly appointed the *polkovnoik* (colonel). As a part of the Russian Field Army they took part in actions in Belorussia in 1658. It is known, that they had own banner (crimson with St. Dmitriy Solunskiy and St. George). This indicates that they were a separate regular regiment.

## H. Artillery

Artillery appears as a separate unit in Russian army in the beginning of the 15th Century and was called *Nariad*. As a separate, regular unit, the artillery had its own flag called a *prapor*. The artillery was a kind of a corporation or guild like the *Streltsy*. The *Pushkarsky* (Gunner) *prikaz* managed the entire life of the Russian artilleryman, including legal proceedings. They lived according to Russian State law, but were under the jurisdiction of their *prikaz*. Service in the artillery was for life, and service in the artillery was inherited. Because of losses during the Time of Troubles, at the beginning of the 17th Century enlisted volunteers were used; however, by the 1630's artillerymen were recruited from the relatives of current *pushkary*. *Pushkary* settled in separate *sloboda* near the walls of fortresses. These *sloboda* were restricted only to *pushkary*. No one other than *pushkary* could settle there or even remain in the *sloboda* after nightfall.

Russian artillery in the 17th Century did not have fixed organization. The number of gunners depended on the available guns and finances. Artillerymen in Russia were officially called *ludy pushkarskogo china* (people of cannon rank). This title was shortened to *pushkary*. The artillery corps consisted of:

- *puskary* - means gunner. These served large and medium caliber guns. The word *pushkar* has two meanings: gunner and artillerian in general.
- *zatyshchyky* - means instigator. These served small caliber guns which were generally used at the beginning of a battle.
- *vorotniki* - means a man guarding a gate. These guarded the gates of settlements and outposts.
- blacksmiths and carpenters.
- armorers and gunsmiths.

The *pushkary* were divided into two parts:

- Moscow *puskary*.
- *Gorodovye pushkary*.

Unfortunately, there is no specific breakdown of the strength of the Moscow and *Gorodovye* gunners. Only the following is available:

- In 1651 Russian artillery numbered 4,250 gunners,
- In 1680 - about 7 000 gunners.

This growth was the result of the increase in the number regimental artillery pieces.

The Moscow gunners were an elite unit and served in the field artillery. They were called "Moscow" because they lived in Moscow in a separate *sloboda* (district) of old Moscow. Military forces stationed in Moscow were the core of the Russian Field Army. In war the Moscow *pushkary* formed the basis for the field and siege artillery. As a rule, they were assisted by attached *Gorodovye pushkary*.

*Gorodovye* (town) gunners were stationed in numerous garrisons and fortresses throughout the Russia. As a rule, during war *Gorodovye* gunners joined the field artillery as assistants to the Moscow gunners. In contrast to Moscow gunners, the service of *Gorodovye* gunners was hard duty, especially in the border garrisons. It is possible to distinguish two main duties of the *Gorodovye pushkary*:

- service in towns (*nariad*)
- service in field units

The major duty of the *Gorodovye pushkary* was service in a town's *nariad* (artillery). Each frontier town and settlement in the west and especially in the south was fortified and protected by cannon (usually not less than 20-30 pieces). Each cannon was attended by 2 gunners who served in rotation. *Pushkary* also guarded the powder magazines.

From the middle of the 17th Century field duty for *Gorodovye pushkary* appears. This duty was tied to the growth in the number of regular infantry regiments. During the 1654-67 war each Soldier and *Streltsy* regiment had 5 to 10 medium caliber cannons served by *Gorodovye pushkary*.

In addition to military duties, *pushkary* also were assigned police and administrative duties. They guarded prisons, convoyed prisoners to Siberia, looked for robbers, etc. Quite often they gathered *Datochnye* recruits and members of the Feudal Levy. *Pushkary* also produced ammunition, and built outposts and fortresses.

The information below on the uniform of Russian *pushkary* is based on the article by Palasios-Fernandes in *Zeughaus* magazine. He describes the Moscow pushkary in the second half of the 17th Century. The article is well illustrated and recommended.

The cut of the coats of artillerymen was the same as the infantry. Usually, gunners' coats were red or blue. These colors (red-blue) were preserved in Peter's army. His gunners wore red coats with blue facings. Only in 1731 were facings changed to black. The author also stated that in the 17th Century green coats also were available for gunners.

The distinguishing feature of gunners in the 17th Century was metal armor. This was a kind of metal cuirass. There were two variants: *Alam*, used for parade purposes, and *Zertsalo*, a plain variant for duty. This armor consisted of 2 metal (tin/pewter or copper) circles connected by straps. *Alam* was a decorated variant with stamped eagles and lions, but for everyday use the variant of this cuirass called *Zertsalo* (a word meaning mirror) was used. Gun carriages and ammunition wagons were painted red.

Another interesting detail of gunners' equipment was the *palnits* (from the words to fire and to scorch, it means something that is scorching/burning). It was a kind of pike with fastenings for fuses on the top. The *palnits* could be used also as a pike.

The uniform of the *Gorodovye pushkary* is less well known. According to A.K. Levykin, *Russian Pushkary in the 2nd Half of the 17th Century*, they wore a light blue coat and a red cap. They were also equipped with the *zertsalo* and a metal helmet called a *shishak*.

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