The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army

By Marja Erwin

The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was by the largest and best-documented army of the Russian Civil War. Its history largely reflects the conditions which shaped the history of the other armies.

At first, the Red Army and Red Guards were volunteer forces with elected officers. Most units were local formations. In mid-late 1918, the Red Guards became part of the Red Army, and the Red Army became a conscript force with appointed officers and military specialists. Until mid-1919, several of the republics, including the Ukrainian Rada Republic and the Crimean Soviet Republic, maintained their own armies.

The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army grew from about 200,000 personnel in April 1918 to almost 5,500,000 personnel in November 1920, but they were never able to arm more than about 600,000 combat troops.

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (June 1918)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 141,000 bayonets
  - 8,000 sabres
  - 2,086 machine guns
  - ? artillery pieces
  - up to 200,000 combat troops in June

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (December 1918)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 203,000 bayonets
  - 25,000 sabres
  - 4,301 machine guns
  - 928 artillery pieces

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (June 1919)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 320,000 bayonets
  - 35,000 sabres
  - 7,263 machine guns
  - 1,810 artillery pieces

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (January 1920)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 255,000 bayonets
  - 49,000 sabres
  - 9,112 machine guns
  - 2,445 artillery pieces

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (July 1920)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 297,000 bayonets
  - 69,000 sabres
  - 10,122 machine guns
  - 2,168 artillery pieces

Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (October 1920)

- In the Armies and Fronts:
  - 338,000 bayonets
  - 72,000 sabres
  - 10,559 machine guns
  - 2,616 artillery pieces

- 594,000 combat troops in October

5,427,000 personnel in all units in November
The Southern Front & North Caucasus Military District, around October 1918

In the fall of 1918, the Southern Front included 6 divisions and the North Caucasus Military District another 9 divisions. In the following months, the fronts were divided into several armies, the divisions were reinforced, and new divisions were formed.

Southern Front (October 1918)
- 27,000 bayonets
- 4,000 sabres
- 630 machine guns
- 133 artillery pieces
- 2nd Orel Infantry Division
- 1st Kursk Infantry Division
- 2nd Kursk Infantry Division
- 1st Voronezh Infantry Division
- 3rd Voronezh Infantry Division
- Kikvidze's Infantry Division
- Special Brigade of the 5th Moskva Infantry
- Division Sabin's Special Brigade
- Zakharovich's Brigade
- Mironov's Brigade
- Separate Kamyschin Regiment

North Caucasus Military District (October 1918)
- 32,000 bayonets
- 6,000 sabres
- 535 machine guns
- 203 artillery pieces
- 1st Communist Infantry Division
- 1st Don Infantry Division
- 2nd Don People's Infantry Division
- 1st Morozovskaya Don Infantry Division
- 2nd Composite Cossack Division

North of the Manych
- up to 75,000 bayonets
- 4,000 sabres
- 225 machine guns
- 48 artillery pieces

South of the Manych
- up to 85,000 combat troops
- (probably between 20,000 and 40,000 combat troops)

The Origins of the Ukrainian Rada Army, December 1918 through February 1919

At the beginning of the war with the Directory, the Ukrainian Rada Army included 2 divisions and 1 separate brigade, deployed northeast of Ukraine in Orel, Kursk, and Voronezh provinces. Several Russian units were deployed in the same area, including Kozhevinikov's group and the border guards, but these were part of the Southern Front and were not available to the Ukrainian Front. In addition, the Ukrainian Rada Army counted on the support of pro-rada/sovyet partisan forces throughout Ukraine.

Ukrainian Army (December 1918)
- 13,000 bayonets
- 1,200 sabres
- ? machine guns
- 28 artillery pieces

- 1st Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades)
- 2nd Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades)
- 3rd Ukrainian Rifle Division (only 1st brigade; subsequently reassigned to the Southern Front)

Pro-Rada/Sovyet rebels throughout Ukraine (not listed above)
After the capture of Kyiv, the Ukrainian Army expanded to 3 1/3 divisions with 4 separate brigades. Of these, 2 2/3 divisions were Ukrainian regulars, 2/3 of a division were Ukrainian partisans, 2/3 of a division were Russian regulars, and 1/3 were international troops. 2 Russian brigades were reassigned to support the Ukrainian Front.

**Ukrainian Army (February 1919)**
- 1° Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades of regulars)
- 2° Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades of regulars)
- 9° Rifle Division (only 1st Brigade present)

Trans-Dniper Rifle Division (Grigoriev's partisan brigade, Dybenko's regular brigade, and Makhno's partisan brigade)
- Belenkoivich's Rifle Brigade (regulars)
- 3° Border Guard Brigade (regulars)
- International Brigade (regulars; forming)

**The Ukrainian & Southern Fronts, around February 1919**

When the Ukrainian Rada Army captured Kyiv, the Ukrainian Front included 2 divisions, 3 separate brigades, and partisan allies; the Southern Front included 4 armies and 1 divisions, while the Caspian-Caucasian Front included only the remnants of 2 more armies.

**Ukrainian Front (February 1919)**
- 44,000 bayonets
- 4,000 sabres
- 606 machine guns
- 124 artillery pieces
- 1° Ukrainian Rifle Division
- 2° Ukrainian Rifle Division
- Belenkoivich's Brigade
- Dybenko's Brigade
- International Brigade
- Border Guards

Makhnovist rebels in negotiations with the Red Army

**Donets Group, Southern Front (February 1919)**
- 13,000 bayonets
- a few hundred sabres
- 150 machine guns
- 26 artillery pieces
- 1° Partisan Rifle Division
- 2° Partisan Rifle Division
- 3° Partisan Rifle Division
- 4° Partisan Rifle Division

**8° Army, Southern Front (February 1919)**
- 23,000 bayonets
- 1,000 sabres
- 402 machine guns
- 62 artillery pieces
- 12° Rifle Division
- 13° Rifle Division
- 1° Moskva Rifle Division
- 1° Inza Rifle Division
9th Army, Southern Front (February 1919)
- 32,000 bayonets
- about 56,000 combat troops
- 7,000 sabres
- 730 machine guns
- 152 artillery pieces
- 14th Rifle Division
- 16th Rifle Division
- 23rd Rifle Division
- Ural Rifle Division
- Composite Rifle Division

10th Army, Southern Front (February 1919)
- 32,000 bayonets
- about 61,000 combat troops
- 10,000 sabres
- 758 machine guns
- 220 artillery pieces
- 1st Rifle Division of the 10th Army
- 2nd Rifle Division of the 10th Army
- 3rd Rifle Division of the 10th Army
- 4th Rifle Division of the 10th Army
- Kamyshin Rifle Division
- Separate Cavalry Division

11th Army, Caspian-Caucasian Front (February 1919)
- 19,000 bayonets
- about 47,000 combat troops
- 7,000 sabres
- 847 machine guns
- 159 artillery pieces
- In retreat; later consolidated into 32nd Rifle Division

12th Army, Caspian Front (February 1919)
- 9,000 bayonets
- about 16,000 combat troops
- A few hundred sabres
- 259 machine guns
- 19 artillery pieces
- In retreat; later consolidated into 33rd Rifle Division
### The Ukrainian & Southern Fronts, around June 1919

As the Armed Forces of South Russia began their offensive, the Southern Front included 6 armies and 24 divisions. It soon received extensive reinforcements from the Ukrainian and Eastern Fronts. At the same time, the Ukrainian Front had 3 armies and 7 divisions. In order to shore up the Southern Front, units were rushed from the Ukrainian and Eastern Fronts; many arrived piecemeal and were reorganized into new divisions. Shortly thereafter, the Ukrainian Front was abolished. Its forces were divided between the 12th Army of the Western Front and the 14th Army of the Southern Front.

**1st Ukrainian Army, Ukrainian Front (June 1919)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabres</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine guns</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery pieces</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 1st Ukrainian Rifle Division
- 2nd Ukrainian Rifle Division
- 3rd Border Rifle Division
- Separate Bessarabian Rifle Brigade
- 1st Separate Cavalry Brigade

**3rd Ukrainian Army, Ukrainian Front (June 1919)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets</td>
<td>12,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabres</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine guns</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery pieces</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 5th Ukrainian Rifle Division
- Belorusian Rifle Brigade
- Partisan Otryad
  (The 6th Ukrainian Rifle Division had mutinied)

**Crimean Army, Ukrainian Front (June 1919)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets</td>
<td>9,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabres</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine guns</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery pieces</td>
<td>25</td>
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- 1st Crimean Rifle Division
- 2nd Crimean Rifle Division

**2nd Ukrainian Army, Southern Front (June 1919)**

<table>
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<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sabres</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine guns</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery pieces</td>
<td>7</td>
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- 7th Ukrainian Rifle Division
  (The 1st Insurgent Rifle Division had been merged into the 7th)

**13th Army, Southern Front (May 1919)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabres</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine guns</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery pieces</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 7th Rifle Division (only 2nd Brigade present)
- 9th Rifle Division 42nd Rifle Division
- Separate Ukrainian Rifle Brigade
8th Army, Southern Front (May 1919)
16,000 bayonets  about 36,000 combat troops
2,000 sabres
724 machine guns
149 artillery pieces
12th Rifle Division
13th Rifle Division
15th Rifle Division
16th Rifle Division
33rd Rifle Division (only 2 brigades present)
1st Moskva Workers’ Division

9th Army, Southern Front (June 1919)
7,000 bayonets  about 20,000 combat troops
3,000 sabres
388 machine guns
82 artillery pieces
14th Rifle Division
23rd Rifle Division

10th Army, Southern Front (June 1919)
8,000 bayonets  about 26,000 combat troops
6,000 sabres
492 machine guns
111 artillery pieces
32nd Rifle Division
37th Rifle Division
38th Rifle Division
39th Rifle Division
4th Cavalry Division
6th Cavalry Division

11th Army, Southern Front (June 1919)
5,000 bayonets  about 11,000 combat troops
1,000 sabres
159 machine guns
29 artillery pieces
34th Rifle Division
Kalmyk Division (brigade-sized)
7th Cavalry Division

In the Rear Areas, Southern Front (June 1919)
16,000 bayonets  about 34,000 combat troops
4,000 sabres
578 machine guns
79 artillery pieces
33rd Rifle Division (only 2nd Brigade present)
Expeditionary Division of the 8th Army
Expeditionary Division of the 9th Army
### The Southern & Southeastern Fronts, around October 1919

After the Armed Forces of South Russia broke through Southern Front, the Stavka transferred forces from the other fronts. In August 1919, the Southern Front counterattacked, but the Armed Forces of South Russia again defeated it. In September, it was divided into the Southern and Southeastern Fronts.

During the Battle of Orel and the pursuit of the Armed Forces of South Russia, the Southern Front included 3 to 5 armies. The 12th Army was reassigned from the Western Front that October, and the Horse Corps became the 1st Horse Army in November. In the same period, the Southeastern Front included 2 to 3 armies. The 11th Army was reassigned back from the Eastern Front.

#### 12th Army, Southern Front (November 1919)
- 27,000 bayonets
- 2,000 sabres
- 611 machine guns
- 136 artillery pieces
- 44th Rifle Division
- 47th Rifle Division
- 58th Rifle Division
- 60th Rifle Division
- 9th Cavalry Division

#### 14th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)
- 20,000 bayonets
- 5,000 sabres
- 809 machine guns
- 182 artillery pieces
- 7th Rifle Division
- 41st Rifle Division
- 46th Rifle Division
- 57th Rifle Division
- Latvian Rifle Division
- Estonian Rifle Division
- Sablin's Group (division-sized)
- Pavlov's Brigade
- Red Cossack Brigade
- 11th Cavalry Brigade
- 14th Cavalry Brigade

#### 13th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)
- 26,000 bayonets
- 2,000 sabres
- 290 machine guns
- 96 artillery pieces
- 3rd Rifle Division
- 9th Rifle Division
- 42nd Rifle Division
- 55th Rifle Division
- Svechnikov's Composite Rifle Division
- Stankevich's Group (division-sized)
- Separate Rifle Brigade
- 13th Cavalry Brigade
8th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)

31,000 bayonets  about 55,000 combat troops
8,000 sabres
639 machine guns
174 artillery pieces

12th Rifle Division
13th Rifle Division
15th Rifle Division
16th Rifle Division
31st Rifle Division
33rd Rifle Division
Fabritius's Group (division-sized)
Skudra's Group (division-sized)
3rd Separate Rifle Brigade
4th Cavalry Division
6th Cavalry Division
11th Cavalry Division
56th Cavalry Brigade

In the Rear Areas, Southern Front (October 1919)

9,000 bayonets  about 16,000 combat troops
3,000 sabres
173 machine guns
46 artillery pieces

45th Rifle Division
54th Rifle Division (only 3rd brigade present)
11th Cavalry Division

9th Army, Southeastern Front (October 1919)

32,000 bayonets  about 49,000 combat troops
2,000 sabres
614 machine guns
174 artillery pieces

14th Rifle Division
21st Rifle Division (only 1st brigade present)
22nd Rifle Division
23rd Rifle Division
36th Rifle Division
40th Rifle Division
56th Rifle Division

10th Army, Southeastern Front (October 1919)

19,000 bayonets  about 39,000 combat troops
5,000 sabres
621 machine guns
127 artillery pieces

20th Rifle Division
28th Rifle Division
32nd Rifle Division
37th Rifle Division
38th Rifle Division
39th Rifle Division
Dumenko's Cavalry Corps (division-sized)
11th Army, Southeastern Front (October 1919)
10,000 bayonets about 21,000 combat troops
3,000 sabres
318 machine guns
45 artillery pieces

34th Rifle Division
50th Rifle Division (without its 1st Brigade)
7th Cavalry Division
Moskva Cavalry Division
Garrison/Security Forces

The Southwestern & Caucasus Fronts, around February 1920

At the beginning of 1920, the Red Army reorganized its forces. Their forces opposite Odesa and Crimea became the new
Southwestern Front, while their forces at Rostov and opposite the Caucasus became the new Caucasus Front. The Southwestern
Front included 3 armies with 14 divisions; 3 to 5 divisions were separated from the field armies to fight the Makhnovists and other
partisans. The Caucasus front included 5 armies with 31 divisions.

12th Army, Southwestern Front (February 1920)
23,000 bayonets about 44,000 combat troops
1,000 sabres
771 machine guns
121 artillery pieces

44th Rifle Division
47th Rifle Division
58th Rifle Division
60th Rifle Division
Separate Cavalry Brigade

14th Army, Southwestern Front (February 1920)
15,000 bayonets about 28,000 combat troops
1,000 sabres
474 machine guns
117 artillery pieces

41st Rifle Division
42nd Rifle Division
45th Rifle Division
Latvian Rifle Division

13th Army, Southwestern Front (February 1920)
7,000 bayonets about 18,000 combat troops
3,000 sabres
311 machine guns
48 artillery pieces

3rd Rifle Division
46th Rifle Division
8th Cavalry Division
13th Cavalry Brigade

In the Rear Areas, Southwestern Front (February 1920)
12,000 bayonets about 19,000 combat troops
a few hundred sabres
251 machine guns
58 artillery pieces

7th Rifle Division
57th Rifle Division
Estonian Rifle Division
8th Army, Caucasus Front (February 1920)
9,000 bayonets
4,000 sabres
799 machine guns
157 artillery pieces

9th Rifle Division
13th Rifle Division
15th Rifle Division
16th Rifle Division
31st Rifle Division
33rd Rifle Division
40th Rifle Division
16th Cavalry Division

1st Horse Army, Caucasus Front (February 1920)
a few dozen bayonets
9,000 sabres
238 machine guns
19 artillery pieces

4th Cavalry Division
6th Cavalry Division
11th Cavalry Division

9th Army, Caucasus Front (February 1920)
12,000 bayonets
2,000 sabres
515 machine guns
144 artillery pieces

12th Rifle Division
14th Rifle Division
21st Rifle Division
22nd Rifle Division
23rd Rifle Division
36th Rifle Division
9th Army Cavalry Division

10th Army, Caucasus Front (February 1920)
8,000 bayonets
4,000 sabres
477 machine guns
127 artillery pieces

20th Rifle Division
28th Rifle Division
32nd Rifle Division
37th Rifle Division
38th Rifle Division
39th Rifle Division
1st Caucasus Cavalry Division
Don-Stavropol Cavalry Brigade
11th Army, Caucasus Front (February 1920)

- 18,000 bayonets
- 3,000 sabres
- 632 machine guns
- 86 artillery pieces

Expeditionary Corps (division-sized)
- 34th Rifle Division
- 49th Rifle Division
- 50th Rifle Division
- 7th Cavalry Division
- Moskva Cavalry Division

**Major Sources**

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