

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

In the Military Districts:

17,000 bayonets
A few hundred sabres
? machine guns
? artillery pieces

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

In the Military Districts:

55,000 bayonets
2,000 sabres
277 machine guns
163 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

In the Military Districts:

not listed

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

In the Military Districts:

not listed

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

In the Military Districts:

not listed

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

In the Military Districts:

not listed

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

about 47,000 combat troops

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 Sablin's Special Brigade
Zakharovich's Brigade
Mironov's Brigade
Separate Kamyshin Regiment

North Caucasus Military District (October 1918)

North of the Manych

32,000 bayonets
6,000 sabres
535 machine guns
203 artillery pieces

about 51,000 combat troops

1st Communist Infantry Division
1st Don Infantry Division
2nd Don People's Infantry Division
1st Morozovskaya Don Infantry Division
2nd Composite Cossack Division

South of the Manych

up to 75,000 bayonets
4,000 sabres 225 machine guns
48 artillery pieces

up to 85,000 combat troops
(probably between 20,000 and 40,000 combat troops)

1st through 4th Infantry Divisions
(The Taman Army was the 3rd Infantry Division)

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 Kozhevnikov'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)

- 1st Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades of regulars)
- 2nd Ukrainian Rifle Division (2 brigades of regulars)
- 9ⁿ Rifle Division (only 1st Brigade present)

Trans-Dnipr Rifle Division (Grigoriev's partisan brigade, Dybenko's regular brigade, and Makhno's partisan brigade)
Belenkovich's Rifle Brigade (regulars)
3rd 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
1st Ukrainian Rifle Division

about 62,000 combat troops

2nd Ukrainian Rifle Division
Belenkovich'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

about 17,000 combat troops

1st Partisan Rifle Division
2nd Partisan Rifle Division
3rd Partisan Rifle Division
4th Partisan Rifle Division

8th Army, Southern Front (February 1919)

23,000 bayonets
1,000 sabres
402 machine guns
62 artillery pieces

about 34,000 combat troops

12th Rifle Division
13th Rifle Division
1st Moskva Rifle Division
1st Inza Rifle Division

9th Army, Southern Front (February 1919)

32,000 bayonets
7,000 sabres
730 machine guns
152 artillery pieces
14th Rifle Division

16th Rifle Division
23rd Rifle Division

Ural Rifle Division
Composite Rifle Division

about 56,000 combat troops

10th Army, Southern Front (February 1919)

32,000 bayonets
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
1st Kamyshin Rifle Division
Separate Cavalry Division

about 61,000 combat troops

11th Army, Caspian-Caucasian Front (February 1919)

19,000 bayonets
7,000 sabres
847 machine guns
159 artillery pieces

In retreat; later consolidated into 32nd Rifle Division

about 47,000 combat troops

12th Army, Caspian Front (February 1919)

9,000 bayonets
A few hundred sabres
259 machine guns
19 artillery pieces

In retreat; later consolidated into 33rd Rifle Division

about 16,000 combat troops

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)

21,000 bayonets
2,000 sabres
441 machine guns
94 artillery pieces

about 34,000 combat troops

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)

12,000 bayonets
2,000 sabres
159 machine guns
53 artillery pieces

about 17,000 combat troops

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

Crimean Army, Ukrainian Front (June 1919)

9,000 bayonets
1,000 sabres
46 machine guns
25 artillery pieces

about 11,000 combat troops

1st Crimean Rifle Division
2nd Crimean Rifle Division

2nd Ukrainian Army, Southern Front (June 1919)

10,000 bayonets
1,000 sabres
22 machine guns
7 artillery pieces

about 12,000 combat troops

7th Ukrainian Rifle Division
(The 1st Insurgent Rifle Division had been merged into the 7th)

13th Army, Southern Front (May 1919)

17,000 bayonets
1,000 sabres
493 machine guns
135 artillery pieces

about 30,000 combat troops

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
2,000 sabres
724 machine guns
149 artillery pieces

about 36,000 combat troops

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
3,000 sabres
388 machine guns
82 artillery pieces

about 20,000 combat troops

14th Rifle Division
23rd Rifle Division

10th Army, Southern Front (June 1919)

8,000 bayonets
6,000 sabres
492 machine guns
111 artillery pieces

about 26,000 combat troops

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
1,000 sabres
159 machine guns
29 artillery pieces

about 11,000 combat troops

34th Rifle Division
Kalmyk Division (brigade-sized)
7th Cavalry Division

In the Rear Areas, Southern Front (June 1919)

16,000 bayonets
4,000 sabres
578 machine guns
79 artillery pieces

about 34,000 combat troops

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	about 44,000 combat troops
2,000 sabres	
611 machine guns	
136 artillery pieces	
44 th Rifle Division	
47 th Rifle Division	
58 th Rifle Division	
60 th Rifle Division	
9 th Cavalry Division	

14th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)

20,000 bayonets	about 45,000 combat troops
5,000 sabres	
809 machine guns	
182 artillery pieces	
7 th Rifle Division	
41 st Rifle Division	
46 th Rifle Division	
57 th Rifle Division	
Latvian Rifle Division	
Estonian Rifle Division	
Sablin's Group (division-sized)	
Pavlov's Brigade	
Red Cossack Brigade	
11 th Cavalry Brigade	
14 th Cavalry Brigade	

13th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)

26,000 bayonets	about 35,000 combat troops
2,000 sabres	
290 machine guns	
96 artillery pieces	
3 rd Rifle Division	
9 th Rifle Division	
42 nd Rifle Division	
55 th Rifle Division	
Svechnikov's Composite Rifle Division	
Stankevich's Group (division-sized)	
Separate Rifle Brigade	
13 th Cavalry Brigade	

8th Army, Southern Front (October 1919)

31,000 bayonets
8,000 sabres
639 machine guns
174 artillery pieces

about 55,000 combat troops

12th Rifle Division
13th Rifle Division
15th Rifle Division
16th Rifle Division
31st Rifle Division
33rd Rifle Division
Fabritsius' 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
3,000 sabres
173 machine guns
46 artillery pieces

about 16,000 combat troops

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

9th Army, Southeastern Front (October 1919)

32,000 bayonets
2,000 sabres
614 machine guns
174 artillery pieces

about 49,000 combat troops

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
5,000 sabres
621 machine guns
127 artillery pieces

about 39,000 combat troops

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
3,000 sabres
318 machine guns
45 artillery pieces

about 21,000 combat troops

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
1,000 sabres
771 machine guns
121 artillery pieces

about 44,000 combat troops

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

14th Army, Southwestern Front (February 1920)

15,000 bayonets
1,000 sabres
474 machine guns
117 artillery pieces

about 28,000 combat troops

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

13th Army, Southwestern Front (February 1920)

7,000 bayonets
3,000 sabres
311 machine guns
48 artillery pieces

about 18,000 combat troops

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

In the Rear Areas, Southwestern Front (February 1920)

12,000 bayonets
a few hundred sabres
251 machine guns
58 artillery pieces

about 19,000 combat troops

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

about 33,000 combat troops

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

about 15,000 combat troops

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

about 27,000 combat troops

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

about 23,000 combat troops

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

about 37,000 combat troops

Expeditionary Corps (division-sized)

34th Rifle Division

49th Rifle Division

50th Rifle Division

7th Cavalry Division

Moskva Cavalry Division

Major Sources

- Krivosheev, *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century*.
- Khromov et al., *Entsiklopediya Grazhdanskaya Voina i Voennaya Interventsiya v SSSR*.
- *Direktivny Komandovaniya Frontov Krasnoy Armii. (1917-1922 gg.)* (Vols. I, II & IV)