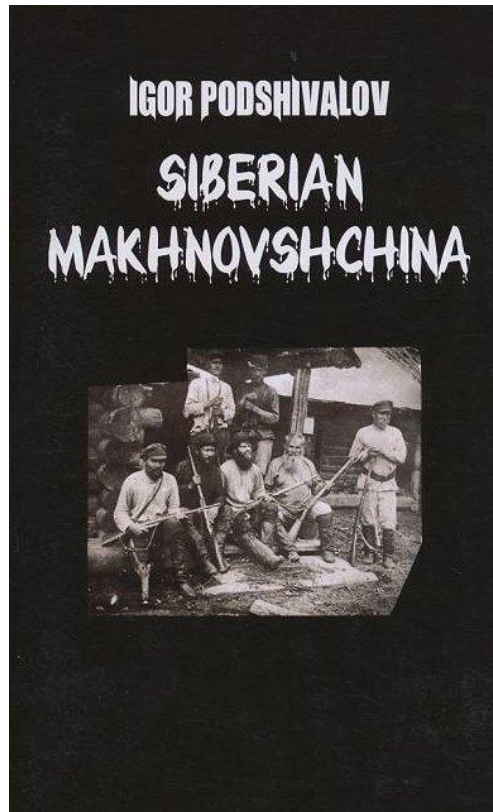


Siberian Makhnovshchina

Siberian Anarchists in the Russian Civil War (1918–1924)

Igor Podshivalov



2011

Contents

<i>About Igor Podshivalov</i>	3
<i>Translator's Introduction</i>	3
<i>Siberian Makhnovshchina</i> (main text)	4
The Beginnings of the Struggle	5
<i>Glossary</i>	20

About Igor Podshivalov

Igor Podshivalov was born in 1962 near the Russian city of Irkutsk, a descendant of Siberian Cossacks. As a schoolboy he began to consider himself an anarchist after reading a Soviet biography of Bakunin. While a student at the Irkutsk State University he published essays about anarchism in underground publications and even started an anarchist commune in 1981. For many years after graduating he, like other dissidents, could only find work as a casual labourer. At the end of the 1980s he became one of the leading figures in the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS) and contributed articles to various anarchist journals. He took part in militant demonstrations in Moscow and Irkutsk and organized the collection of funds and supplies for strike committees in the Kuzbas industrial region in 1991. Throughout the 1990s he was active in the anti-nuclear movement in Russia. Podshivalov worked as a journalist in postSoviet Russia for various newspapers and other publications in the Irkutsk region, while carrying on research on the history of Russian anarchism. On August 4 2006 he was struck by a hit-and-run driver near Irkutsk and died four days later.

Translator's Introduction

During the Russian Civil War (1918 through 1924) the peasants and miners of southwestern Siberia – the Altai region were confronted with one government after another – each one more oppressive than the last. The popular rebellions which developed under these conditions did not necessarily aim to replace one government with another – in many cases they aspired to eliminate government altogether! This movement, long suppressed in the historical literature, is the subject of “Siberian Makhnovshchina.”

The Ukrainian Makhnovist movement (1918–1921), the “Makhnovshchina” was distinguished by spectacular military successes which contributed mightily to the downfall of the reactionary Whites, as well as a number of ambitious attempts to put the anarchist social program into effect. In contrast the Siberian anarchists, although able to field armies that were huge by local standards, lacked the armaments and training to engage their enemies in pitched battles or a war of fronts. Nor did they ever enjoy the luxury of putting their social ideas into practice on a wide scale. In fact as one historian of the movement (Alexander Shubin) has noted, the Siberian anarchists “had a better grasp of what they did not want than what they were striving for.”

But the Siberians did have a couple of advantages over their Ukrainian counterparts. They had forests and they had mountains—the natural environment of a guerrilla movement. This made it very difficult for first the Whites, then the Reds, to eradicate the movement and explains why the Civil War in Siberia lasted much longer than in the rest of the country. Most of the heavy fighting between the Whites and Reds took place along the Trans-Siberian Railway, which bisects the region. The anarchist control of the hinterland must have made an important contribution to the White defeat, but this remains a largely unexplored subject.

The present essay was written by Igor Podshivalov as part of a much larger work, unfinished at his untimely death. Footnotes, illustrations, maps, and a glossary have been added for the English edition. The geography of the region is complicated in that administrative boundaries were changed while the Civil War was still in progress. In particular, in 1917 the old Tomsk *gubernia* (province), which encompassed most of the region dealt with in this work, was split into three

parts: a new Tomsk *gubernia* (northern part), Altai *gubernia* (southern part), and Semipalatinsk *gubernia* (southwestern part). There is the usual problem with multiple name changes of cities and towns: for example, the largest city of the region, Novonikolayevsk, was renamed Novosibirsk long ago, while Kolchugino is even today known as Leninsk-Kuznetsk. When World War I broke out railway construction in the region was in full swing, but was essentially put on hold for at least a decade.

A number of terms which would be familiar to a Russian readership but are awkward to translate have been typeset in italics and defined in the Glossary. This does not include words like “taiga” and “izba” which have made their way into the English language. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the word “Soviet” (literally “Council”), was understood quite differently by the Bolsheviks and anarchists. Under the Bolsheviks Soviets quickly evolved into appointed bodies with dictatorial powers while the anarchists used a variety of models for Soviets ranging from a delegate system to direct participation, but always with control exercised by the base of support.

One can only hope that Podshivalov’s research on Siberian anarchism will be continued. In the meantime we have his tribute to the unsung revolutionaries of the Altai.

Siberian Makhnovshchina (main text)

For many decades Soviet historians diligently suppressed the presence of non-communist forces in the partisan movement in the years of the Civil War. Left-communist forces, fighting against the Whites, were virtually deprived of recognition as revolutionaries on the basis that their conceptions of revolution and social justice differed from those of the communists. But the true story is otherwise. It was far from the case that all the workers and peasants fought for their rights under the red banner, or if they did so it was not always a communist symbol. The Socialist-Revolutionaries also had a red banner with the slogan: “In struggle you will gain your rights!” A considerable proportion of the toilers went into battle under the black banner of freedom, justice, and the memory of the victims of capital — the banner of the anarchists. The Reds were victorious not because the majority of the people went with them, but because the majority went against the Whites. In those years this was obvious even for many communists.

As early as October 1918 one of the leaders of the Siberian communists, A.A. Maslennikov, reported to the TsK RKP(b): “Unfortunately, the uprising is beginning without our leadership.”

Much had been written about Nestor Makhno, the leader and true symbol of the broad movement of South Russia and Ukraine. In recent years serious studies have appeared, clearing the reputation of this man from layers of filthy slanders, and demonstrating the real role of Batko Makhno and his peasant army in the Civil War.

But few are aware of the important armed uprisings of anarchists in Western Siberia on the territory of present-day Kuzbas¹, at that time part of Tomsk *gubernia*. In those years the Kuznetsk region resounded to the names of G.E. Rogov, I.P. Novosyolov, I.E. Sizikov, Anna Belokobilskaya, P. E Leonov, Tabashnikov, Maslennikov, and other anarchists; and also many popular rebels — natural anarchists such as P.K. Lubkov.

The Kuzbas is a mining district. It was controlled by anarchists during the period of White rule, and also during the years when Soviet power was being established. The miners and the peasant — *serednyaks* constituted the bases of the partisan popular army.

¹ Kuzbas is an abbreviation for Kuznetsk Basin, one of the largest coal mining areas in the world.

The Beginnings of the Struggle

The Civil War in Siberia began with the mutiny of the Czechoslovak corps, composed of former prisoners-of-war. In connection with the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and with the agreement of the Entente powers, on January 15 (28)² 1918 the corps was declared an autonomous part of the French army. This permitted a certain freedom of action of the Czechoslovaks in Siberia.

The mutiny of the White Czechs started in the Kuzbas, in the *uyezd* capital of Mariinsk, where a large detachment was stationed. The White Czechs received support everywhere from the White Guard underground and the Right SRs. During June-August 1918 Soviet power was overthrown throughout the whole of Siberia. Immediately after this turn of events, the situation was complicated and was known as the “democratic revolution.” Formally a democratic republic was proclaimed, and bourgeois-democratic governments sprang up: the Komuch,³ the Western-Siberian Commissariat, the Provisional Siberian Government, and, later, the All-Russian Directory. At first there was no banning of trade unions and no curtailing of democratic freedoms or even Soviets. But all the left-wing parties were smashed and declared illegal. In the prisons and concentration camps there were tens of thousands of communists, Left SRs, Maximalists, Social-Democratic-Internationalists,⁴ anarchists, and non-party supporters of Soviet power. Some of the leftist leaders were physically annihilated, and demonstrations by working people were regularly suppressed by the government authorities with the use of military force.

The peasants originally greeted the overthrow of Soviet power with indifference. In Siberia there had never been large estates, so the basis of the Bolsheviks’ influence in the countryside — the “Decree on Land” — had nothing new to offer the Siberian peasantry. At first they even helped to catch Red Army personnel who had gone into hiding. The coup had been supported only by the kulaks—the principal players in the Siberian grain trade. They were suffering from “fixed prices and the grain monopoly introduced by the Soviet government in the spring of 1918. This mainly affected the kulaks close to the cities and transportation routes. But then the “ship of the Siberian counterrevolution” veered noticeably to the right. Right-wing newspapers demanded an “iron fist” — a naked military-terrorist dictatorship. There was a rise in prices on White territory, and an outburst of speculation had a dire effect on broad strata of the urban and rural population, provoking general dissatisfaction. The collection of taxes going back several years was announced. In August compulsory mobilization into the Siberian Army was begun. The overwhelming majority of the peasants regarded this in a very negative way. In response the government inflicted repression on those who evaded mobilization and their relatives. Floggings, requisitions, and other acts of violence were applied even to the kulaks.

As a result of the coup in Omsk on November 18 1918, a dictatorship was established. The supreme ruler became the protege of England Admiral Kolchak, well known for his monarchist views. The Western historian-Sovietologist E.H. Carr back in the 1950s offered this objective evaluation: “Kolchak set all the Russian parties against himself, save for the right-wing ones, thanks to his mercilessness towards his political opponents and his barbarous punitive expeditions, undertaken for the suppression of peasant unrest.”

² In January 1918 Russia was still on the Julian calendar, 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar used elsewhere in the world.

³ Abbreviation for the “Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly.” Elections to the Constituent Assembly, intended to be Russia’s ruling body, were held in 1917, but the Constituent Assembly met for only 13 hours on January 18–19 1918 before being dissolved by the Bolsheviks.

⁴ A small, but influential, political tendency situated politically between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

In response to repression, the Siberian peasants and workers turned to partisan warfare on a widespread basis. Along with other left-wing tendencies and groups, substantial organizational and political support was rendered to the toilers by the anarchists.

The spontaneous anarchism of the Siberian peasantry was conducive to the activity of ideological anarchists in the villages. In struggling against Kolchak, the majority of the peasants were by no means fighting to re-establish Soviet power. They were fighting against any kind of government, and so it was natural that they came under the influence and leadership of ideological anarchists. There were anarchist detachments in all the regions of Siberia throughout the whole time of the struggle against the Whites.

One of the first such detachments in Siberia was organized by Peter Kuzmich Lubkov, a peasant of the village of Sviatoslavka, Mariinsk *uyezd*, Tomskgubernia. In the autumn of 1918 the partisans carried out their first operation—they struck a blow against an echelon of Czechs at Mariinsk Station, after which they withdrew to Antibes Station. In December 1918 a punitive detachment was dispatched to the village of Malopeschanka to wipe out the Lubkovists. In the resulting battle the commander of the punitive detachment, Kolesov, was killed, along with two soldiers. Later, in another battle near Sviatoslavka, a detachment led by Lieutenant Sokolovsky was wiped out by the partisans. The partisans themselves had losses. After getting the partisans drunk on samogon, kulaks reported about the detachment to punitive units in Novo-Kuskova and Voronova Pashnye. Subsequently the Lubkovists lost several of their number. In August 1919 the partisans on several occasions organized the destruction of Kolchak echelons in the vicinity of Izhmorskaya-Iverka Station.

The most active detachments in Western Siberia were those of G.F. Rogov and I.P. Novosyolov. Before the war, Grigory Fedorovich Rogov had a well-run peasant farm, worked as a government liquor store clerk, and also was a contractor for the building of churches.

During World War I he served in a railway battalion, returning home in 1917 with the rank of Regular Ensign. Soon the inhabitants of Mariinsky volost chose him to be their delegate to the Tomsk Congress of Soviets. And later he became a member of the Altai *gubernia* Land Committee.⁵ After the arrival of the White Guards, he hid out in the taiga and organized a partisan detachment. Towards the autumn of 1918 this detachment had grown to 5,000 strong and had liberated 18 volosts! But the Barnaul Bolshevik committee decided to bolshevize the detachment and, if that failed, to split off from it the “reliable” part. For this purpose they sent 12 communists, led by “Anatoly” (M.I. Vorozhtsov). Rogov resolutely opposed the intrigues of the communists and expelled them from the detachment. The communists were able to take with them a large section of the partisans and used them to form the Chumish Partisan Division.

In the autumn of 1918, in Kuznetsk *uyezd*, Tomsk *gubernia*, an underground peasant group was formed under the leadership of the anarchist I.P. Novosyolov, along with V.P. Shepelev and K. Kusnetsov (Khmelev), who were close to Novosyolov politically.

Ivan Panfilovich Novosyolov⁶ was born in the village of Buyerak, Kuznetsk *uyezd*, into a family of poor peasants (*bednyaks*). During the First World War he served at the front as a paramedic. He returned from the front a convinced anarchist. He brought back to his village a suitcase of

⁵ The Siberian Makhnovshchina took place mainly on the territory of what was in tsarist times Tomsk *gubernia*. In July 1917 the southern part of this huge territory was split off to form a new province — Altai *gubernia*, with its capital at Barnaul.

⁶ It is symptomatic of the neglect of the study of the anarchist movement in Siberia that no image of this seminal figure exists.

books by Bakunin, Proudon, and Kropotkin. He organized a village commune called “Anarchiia” and became the office manager of the workers’ Soviet at the Gurevsky metallurgical plant. In the spring of 1918 he made contact with the Tomsk Union of United Anarchists and collaborated on their newspaper “The Rebel.”

As a delegate to the 1st Kuznetsk Congress of Soviets in 1918, he was already dissociating himself from active support of Soviet power. The short, stocky Novosyolov got up and declared: “I’m participating in this congress as an anarchist. There’s a lot of stuff about which I’m not in agreement with Lenin and Trotsky and with the Bolsheviks in general. We need anarchy right now – the complete destruction of everything.” Soviet power at the time regarded the anarchist Novosyolov with indifference, but the Whites were not inclined to tolerate such freethinking.

After Soviet power was overthrown, the commune was destroyed by a punitive squad augmented by local kulaks; the members of the commune were tortured, including close relatives of Novosyolov: his wife, brother, mother, and aunt. Novosyolov himself was arrested and spent eight days on death row in the Tomsk prison. During the transport of prisoners at night from Tomsk to Novonikolayevsk (today Novosibirsk), between the stations of Yurga and Bolotnoye, Novosyolov jumped from a window of the train when it was going at full speed. Despite being shot at by the escort guards, he managed to conceal himself. Returning to his village, he knocked together a group of former members of his Anarchiia commune, about ten people in total. Initially the group hid in the taiga, building up its strength, without engaging in active operations.

Soon similar groups appeared at other locations. In the Altai a detachment commanded by the anarchist Zachar Voronov (Truntov) was active. It’s interesting that this anarchist was not only a well – off peasant, but also the choir director at a local church. Another peasant partisan leader – Ivan Garagulin – had taken part in the 1905 Revolution and was a former political exile. In Gorny Altai⁷ the anarcho-syndicalist I. Ya. Tretyak was active organizing resistance to Kolchak. He arrived in Siberia in the autumn of 1918 from the U.S.A., where he had been living as an emigrant since 1908 and had been a member of the Union of Russian Workers. In 1919 I. Ya. Tretyak became one of the most famous partisan leaders in Siberia.

Already at the beginning of 1919 the anarchists created and led 15 large partisan detachments in Tomsk, Altai, Yeniseisk, and Irkutsk gubernias as well as in the Zabaikalsk region. Novosyolov’s group also shifted to active operations. At the end of 1918 it had 12 members. As a starting point the partisans routed a *kulak* band which had tracked them down to their lair, then fought their way across the *uyezd*, making short work of Kolchak’s officials and their *kulak* supporters. Along the way they picked up more and more personnel and weapons. At the end of April 1919 Novosyolov linked up with the small detachment of V.P. Shepelyev at the Draga Mine. The combined force tried to capture the Tsentralny Mine, but suffered defeat and withdrew to the taiga. In May the detachment fought its way into Mariinsk *uyezd*. Soon the detachment’s strength reached 300 partisans. In June the detachment captured the Tsentralny Mine, and then moved on to Kuznetsk *uyezd*. Later, in Barnaul *uyezd*, the partisans united with the detachment of the Left SR G.D. Shuvalov (Ivanov), who was a firm supporter of the Soviet platform. Novosyolov remained the commander. In a series of battles, the detachment inflicted several defeats on the Whites but, under the pressure of the enemy’s superior strength, retreated to the Prichernsk region (at the intersection of Barnaul and Biysk *uyezds*), where at the beginning of June it joined

⁷ The mountainous southern part of Altai *gubernia*.

the small detachment of G.F. Rogov. By July the combined detachment had a complement of 600 partisans. It was composed of three regiments under the command of Shevelev, Shuvalov (Ivanov), and Kuznetsov (Khelyov). Novosyolov remained commander-in-chief, which testifies to his authority and influence among the partisans, for his position was elected at a general assembly of the partisans.

The theme song of the detachment became the “March of the Anarchists” which the combined detachment inherited from Novosyolov’s bunch:

We sing our song under thunder and fury,
Under bullets and shells, under blazing fires,
Under the black banner of titanic struggle,
Under the sound of the trumpet call!

We’ll capture palaces and destroy idols,
Cast off chains, smash marble tiles.
An end to shame and base servitude,
We will drown the people’s sorrow in blood.

The People’s Will has awakened and risen
To the lament of the Commune, to the call of Ravachol,
To the cries for vengeance of people who died
Under the weight of the bourgeoisie, under the weight of chains.

We sing of the uncounted, forgotten by fate,
Tortured in prisons, killed on the block.
They fought for truth, they fought for you,
And fell in heroic, inequitable struggle.

Their cries resound under the Russian sky,
Like the roar of some primordial force,
They’re heard in Siberia, mired in bondage,
And urge us forward to the valiant fight.

The detachment had two banners: a red one, which Shuvalov insisted on; and a black one, which Novosyolov’s unit demanded. This compromise was agreed on. The combined detachment tried straight away to capture Kuznetsk (today Novokuznetsk) in order to free the political prisoners held there, but was forced to retreat in the face of the superior forces of the Kolchakites. Differences of opinion resulted in the detachment eventually dividing into three groups. Novosyolovs group acted independently during September, not coordinating with the other groups. In the middle of October Novosyolov, with 100 partisans, again appeared in the Prichernsk region, and immediately reinforced Rogov’s detachment in a battle for the village of Sorokino, thereby turning the tide in favour of the partisans. “We were glad to see this detachment,” witnessed the partisan Golkin. “As a soldier, Novosyolov was a brave fellow, quite decisive and, it must be said, had a better understanding of strategy than the rest of us.” Together with Rogov, Novosyolov fought against the Whites until the arrival of the Red Army.

Novosyolov was a naturally-gifted orator and, along with his supporters, carried out agitational work in the villages and towns. He arranged public debates with communists and was even able to win over his own military colleague Rogov. The theme song of the combined detachment remained “The March of the Anarchists,” and at the front streamed a black banner with the motto “Anarchy is the Mother of Order!” For the year of its existence, the detachment carried out raids several thousands of kilometres in length throughout the Altai and Kuzbas regions, engaging the Whites in dozens of battles.

Expounding his program to the peasants in a popular fashion, Novosyolov said: “Let’s get rid of the rich people and the bourgeoisie, and then everyone else must organize themselves into labour federations. The products of the factories will be exchanged for products from the communes which are needed by the factories. Money is not required for this exchange and will quite possibly fall into disuse. When Barnaul falls to us, the Russians will show up, but we won’t stop – we will go further.” To the question: “To fight for what? The power of the Soviets will already be achieved, will it not?” Novosyolov replied: “No, we won’t stop, we’ll keep going – to anarchy. Any kind of government is oppressive, and Soviet power is no exception. Let those who want to fool around with it do so somewhere else. In the spring we will rise in revolt and slaughter the revkoms and the komcells.” Novosyolov really was a knowledgeable anarchist and saw the future clearly.

During the night of December 2 through 3 1919, local military units revolted in the city of Kuznetsk. Some officers were murdered, and the “insurgents” dispersed. Power in the city was seized by a Revkom, but its situation was very shaky—punitive units were heading for the city. The Revkom appealed for help to the anarchist partisans.

On December 12 the 2,000-strong detachment of Rogov and Novosyolov entered Kuznetsk. The partisans immediately put a cordon around the city and disarmed the formations of the self-appointed revkom. For three days the infamous “Rogov purge” took place. Death sentences were meted out to officials who had served in the governments of 1918 through 1919, to Kolchakite officers, and to anyone denounced by the population. As a matter of course the local clergy, merchants, and kulaks were sabered – about 300 people in total. At the same time the detachment carried out routine requisitioning. Rogov approved: “My partisans, make use of the people’s wealth. The people rose up, the people killed, the people will rise up even higher!”

Rogov paid a visit to the Revkom, which was expecting him. He said: “Even though I’m here, that doesn’t mean I’m your servant. I’ve been mercilessly slaughtering the enemies of the toilers, and I will continue to slaughter them. I will also struggle against Lenin and Trotsky... Any kind of government is a burden for the workers... Let’s extend the Revolution, let’s not let it be stifled; we’ll set the world on fire under the black banner of anarchy!”

Shortly afterwards, Rogov’s detachment moved north towards Kolchugino (today Leninsk-Kuznetsk) and Shcheglovsk (today Kemerovo). Shcheglovsk was captured in a flash. It was in this region that the Rogovists made contact with units of the Red Army.

Up until September 1919 Novosyolov’s detachment included his closest associate Kornil Kuznetsov (Khmelyov). Then Kuznetsov acted independently, later joined Lubkov’s detachment, and later still the Tomsk Partisan Division (December 1919). In this division (which was also known as the “Army of the Three Uyezds”) he held the position of chief-of-staff.

In Gorny Altai a powerful partisan movement developed, marked by the formation of a large partisan detachment under the command of I. Ya. Tretyak.

A small group of anarchists were also active in Kolchak's capital — Omsk. It took shape in the spring of 1919 and operated in close contact with the Bolshevik underground. In April 1919 the anti-Kolchak underground devised a plan for carrying out expropriations in order to finance its activities. For this purpose outside help was brought to Omsk: the anarchist-communist Losin (Aleksandrov) from Irkutsk; the anarchists Permyakov, Kutayenko, and Kostin from Chelyabinsk; and the anarchist Vasilyev from Tara. On the night of May 31–June 1 1919 they carried out an “ex” at the office of “Prodput” (railroad company), removing the sum of 400,000 rubles. In documents of the Kolchakite secret service it is reported: “... the thieves did not take the personal money of the employees, since they were ideological anarchists, and when they were asked to leave a receipt for the stolen money to the amount of 258,000 rubles, the leader of the gang declared that there were plenty of witnesses and because the money was taken for a good purpose a receipt was unnecessary.” Despite the success of this operation, on June 2 Permyakov and Losin (Aleksandrov) were arrested. They got involved in a drunken brawl in a tavern, fired shots in self-defense, tried to hide, but were seized by the militia. Under interrogation they admitted their own participation in the robbery, but categorically refused to give up their comrades.

In Ye.M. Mamontov's partisan army, anarchists were found in the Zskeyimin and Kamensky detachments; there were also anarchists in the 4th Peasant Corps of M.V. Kozir. The political views of Kozir himself were rather vague, and he presented himself as somewhere between the Left SRs and the anarchists, but many of the commanders and even commissars in his corps were anarchists.

Among the leaders of the revolt which flared up in the Ziminsk district in 1919 were two anarchists, one of whom—I.I. Tsaryov—joined the staff of the insurgents. In the words of the communists, the insurgents had “strongly assimilated anarchist democratism” in the Altai partisan detachment of P.K. Chauzov. As goals of the struggle, the leaders of the Altai partisans named “freedom, equality, and fraternity,” which, from the point of view of the Bolsheviks, were a “perversion of political slogans.”

In southern Pribaikal the organizer of the first Buryat⁸ partisan detachment was the anarchist P.S. Baltakhinov.

In the northern sector of E.M. Mamontov's partisan zone, a group was active whose members were supporters of an organizer of the partisan movement, the anarchist Z.S. Voronov (Truntov), chief-of-staff of the Northern Front.

During the period of struggle against the Whites the goals of the anarchists were utterly clear and concrete: resistance to the White Guard regime; the organization with this goal of the partisan movement and the underground; and the overthrow of the Kolchak regime or co-operative action with the Red Army in bringing about the downfall of this regime. The majority of anarchists of Siberia fought for these goals without any direction, adapting themselves to the real circumstances and following the dictates of their revolutionary consciences. But then the problem of what to do after the victory over Kolchak was fraught with difficulties and disagreements. Most of the anarchists and the insurgents under their influence rejected any state power as a form of oppression. Thus their conception of Soviets differed from that of the communists: they viewed Soviets as non-statist organs of local self-management of independent associations of working people — as “free Soviets.” The wish of the majority of the Siberian peasants was: “Neither Lenin,

⁸ The Buryats are of Mongolian origin and constitute the largest ethnic minority in Siberia.

nor Kolchak!” Such views were shared by several tens of thousands of Siberian partisans of the 140,000-strong partisan armed forces.

At the beginning of 1920 Soviet rule returned to Siberia along with the Red Army. But now this rule was now even more cruel, centralized, and mono-party in practice. In connection with this disagreements immediately surfaced between the Bolsheviks and the anarchists.

By order of the Siberian Field Revkom, all Soviets which had been formed in partisan territory were required to dissolve. In their place revkoms were appointed until elections to new Soviets. In these revkoms representatives of parties other than the Bolsheviks were not allowed. The Bolsheviks also demanded the disarming of partisan units, the liquidation of their independence, and the replacement of elected commanders by appointed ones. Detachments which did not submit, and especially members of their command staff, were to be punished without mercy. The main author of this order was the chairman of the Revvoyen Soviet [Revolutionary Military Council] L.D. Trotsky. The Bolsheviks did not take into account that most of the partisan leaders were anarchists, and during the year of war the peasants had become firmly converted to “anarchist democracy.” Already at the end of 1919 the commander of the 4th Peasant Corps, M. Kozir, from his base in Semipalatinsk, put forward the slogan “For Soviets Without Communists! Long Live Free Labour!” The Reds knew there were many anarchists in Kozir’s entourage, which is why they dismissed him from his command post. He refused to submit, arrived in Ust-Kamenorgorsk with part of his corps, and urged the peasants to disobey the revkoms. A meeting of the garrison took place, at which the following anti-communist resolution was adopted: “We shall devote all our forces to the creation of a genuine worker-peasant Socialist Soviet regime! The peasant army firmly declares that it will not allow anyone to infringe on its rights, in particular to its right to independently arrange its own way of life. For us, peasants, no sort of government is necessary, all we need is people’s rights!” The conflict did not escalate to armed conflict — the partisans and the Red Army soldiers still regarded each other as brothers-in-arms. But dissatisfaction remained, constantly exacerbated by the systematic miscalculations of the Bolsheviks. For example, in many revkoms the Bolsheviks appointed kulaks to leadership positions — people who had helped the Whites against the partisans during Kolchak’s rule. In many units the commanders appointed by the Reds more often than not turned out to be former Kolchakites, and even worse — former specialists in punitive actions! For example, in Semipalatinsk command positions were filled by former officers who had suppressed the insurgent movement in Slavgorod *uyezd*. And in Minusinsk as commander of a cavalry reserve unit was appointed one Cherkashin, well known to the partisans as a sadistic butcher. Dissatisfaction also arose among the partisans and the Red Army rank-and-file due to the high rates of pay established for commanders and, especially, for commissars.

Also arousing indignation was the tyranny of the Cheka, which persecuted anyone unhappy with the new regime. In an attempt to separate recognized leaders from the basic mass of partisans, the Bolsheviks tried to bribe them with high positions in the state apparatus, which generally involved relocating to a different region. But the peasant leaders didn’t take the bait. Rogov, Mamontov, Lubkov, Tretyak, and others refused these proffered honors, referring to their poor health. The fact of the matter was that these popular leaders did not want to collaborate with oppressors — the Red commissars. At that time the peasants formed an impression about the new authorities: “These are not Bolsheviks, but wolves in sheeps’ clothing. These are agents of Kolchak!”

Because they maintained their own opinions and the respect of the masses, and because they protested constantly against arbitrary rule, the partisan leaders were frequently subject to arrest by the Cheka. Thus, in 1919–1920, G.F. Rogov, I. P. Novosyolov, P.K. Lubkov, A.D. Kravchenko, E.M. Mamontov, and I.Ya. Tretyak were all arrested. This led to discontent and often to open protest on the part of the rank-and-file partisans.

At the end of December 1919 Rogov and Novosyolov were arrested for refusing to obey the orders of the commander of the 35th Division Neiman. They were sent under guard to Kuznetsk and the 1st Tomsk Partisan Division disarmed their detachment — their own comrades in arms — just outside the village of Barachata. At the beginning of January 1920 Rogov and Novosyolov were to be transferred from Kuznetsk to Novonikolayevsk. But en route Novosyolov was able to come to make a deal with his guards — former partisans — and escaped along with them. Rogov, after being beaten in the Novonikolayevsk prison, was released by the court thanks to the massive protests of his former troops.

In February 1920 Lubkov was arrested in Mariinsk *uyezd*. The rationale for his arrest was the refusal of Lubkov and some of the partisans to surrender their weapons and their attempt to preserve the detachment as a distinct military unit. For this he was sentenced to five years at forced labour with the sentence being deferred for six months. One must assume that this “light” sentence was a sort of “appreciation” by the communists of Lubkov’s struggle against Kolchak.

The end result of all this was that in 1920 anti-Soviet mutinies began to flare up one after another all across Western Siberia. Former partisans made up the nuclei of the formations of G.F. Rogov, I.P. Novosyolov, P.K. Lubkov, and F.D. Plotnikov — the same partisan commanders who were active during the period of struggle against the Whites.

The first uprising occurred in the Prichernsk region. This insurrection was prepared by a group of well known partisan anarchist commanders: G.F. Rogov, I.P. Novosyolov, I.E. Sizikov, and P.F. Leonov.

Then, at the end of June, the settlements of the Altai steppe rose up. Later the “Kolivan Mutiny” took place and an uprising in Ust-Kamenogorsk. In the last week of September there was a revolt in Mariinsk *uyezd* (Peter Lubkov).

In contrast to other peasant uprisings during the Civil War, the majority of these mutinies were not provoked by the food requisitioning policies of the Bolsheviks. At that time the Soviet government in Western Siberia was still rather weak. The revkoms were semi-paralyzed and apparently did not dare apply food requisitioning on a broad scale. In the volosts which provided the starting point for Rogov’s rebellion, for example, grain requisitioning had either not started or had been carried out only to a limited extent. The uprising was a reaction to the forced disarming and disbanding of the partisan detachments of the Prichernsk region, and also to the creation of appointed-from-above revkoms instead of elected Soviets, as well as the employment in the revkoms and the army of bourgeois specialists — former Kolchakites and leaders of punitive squads. Added to this was the reluctance of the partisans to serve in the Red Army (which might involve being sent to fight on the Soviet-Polish front) and the refusal already to accept food requisitioning.

Prior to the mutiny the anarchists, led by Novosyolov, carried out elaborate preparations. Fleeing from the Novonikolayevsk Cheka, Novosyolov made his way through the villages of the Prichernsk region, addressing assemblies with severe criticisms of the communists.

Here he found many who were ready to help him. “The Revolution is not over, and we shall not stop halfway,” said Novosyolov. As a consequence of the activities of the anarchists in Mariinsk

volost, not one *komcell* was created, the volost revkom was paralyzed, and a significant part of the population was infused with anti-Soviet and anti-communist sentiments. Before the uprising commenced Novosyolov created the Federation of Altai Anarchists (FAA) to provide ideological guidance for the movement. The core group of the FAA included, along with Novosyolov, the partisan commanders Leonov, Sokolov, Nekrasov, Gabov, Murzin, Vozilikin, and Sizikov. Rogov also took part in the Military Committee of the FAA. Around them were grouped hundreds of veterans of the anti-Kolchak struggle and even the better-off strata of the villages.

The slogans of the FAA were: “Anarchism—is the mother of order!” “Down with government!” “Beat the bastards!” By “bastards” were meant all oppressors of working people—from the Kolchakites to the Communist Party. The communist Party was accused of staging a bourgeois revival, and of pillaging and shooting peasants, including former Red partisans.

The FAA had sympathizers and agents in the local Soviet and Party apparatuses, in the Army, in the Cheka, and in the Militia. The latter was often staffed with former Rogovist partisans. In the course of the insurrection many militia personnel joined the Rogovists.

Military actions commenced on May 3, 1920. After a few days the insurgents had occupied the villages of Kitmanovo, Togul, Uksunai, and a number of others. Everywhere they dispersed the revkoms and Soviets, and routed militia units. The most odious representatives of the government were annihilated. Also subject to repression were former members of Kolchakite punitive squads, priests, and speculators. In the first days the number of insurgents was around 1,000. Some of the village communists even took part in the movement.

The communists reacted to the uprising in standard mode. On May 8 the Altai gubrevkom [provincial revolutionary committee] issued an order “Concerning the Struggle with Novosyolov’s Bands.” In it the leaders of the insurrection were declared traitors and White Guards. All possible measures were applied to liquidate the uprising. In Kuznetsk a Soviet punitive battalion arrived; one of its regiments was composed of Chinese soldiers who were reputedly the most vicious punitive specialists of the Civil War. Divided into three columns, the battalion set out to meet the insurgents.

The insurgents constantly declined to engage the enemy. This is understandable both because of the relative military weakness of the rebels, and by their reluctance to shed the blood of their former companions in the struggle. Moreover, many Red Army soldiers sympathized with the uprising, and the gubrevkom was simply afraid to send them into battle as they might defect to the insurgents.

At the end of May the detachments of Novosyolov and Rogov united and began to act together. In several battles in June the detachment was broken up into small groups, but the struggle did not end. On June 20 a detachment of Reds caught up with one of these groups, which included Rogov and his wife. In the shooting Rogov’s wife was killed, but the wounded Rogov was able to get away with some of his comrades. However on June 3 a *kulak* from the village of Yevdokimovo betrayed the location of the insurgents to the authorities. In an exchange of fire with a ChON unit, Rogov received two more wounds. Not wishing to surrender, he shot himself. It’s true that there’s another version, according to which he was shot on the spot by the chairman of the local volost revkom.

After the loss of Rogov, the insurgents went on fighting under Novosyolov until the spring of 1921.

The largest of the 1920 uprisings outside the boundaries of the Altai region was the one at Kolivan. On July 6 insurgents captured the city of Kolivan in Tomsk *gubernia* (today Novosibirsk

oblast), where they set up an “Insurgent District Provisional Executive Committee.” Setting up raion and volost headquarters, the Executive Committee carried out a mobilization: 18- to 45-year-old peasants for the military formations, 46- to 60-year-olds for garrison duty. As many as 6,000 people participated in the movement. As in other insurgencies, komcells were extirpated, and Soviets were purged of communists. Attempts were made to disrupt transportation arteries — the insurgents succeeded in disrupting steamboat commerce on the Ob River. On July 10 units of the Red Army recaptured Kolivan and the members of the Executive Committee were taken prisoner. After this the leadership of the revolt passed into the hands of the peasant “Viuni Committee” in the village of the same name. This committee was able to hold out for only 10 days. After the defeat, a large part of the insurgents went home, but the leaders disappeared into the taiga.

News about the imposition of a new grain requisition of 30 million poods incited the villages of the Altai to revolt. In August 1920 the detachments of Novosyolov, Plotnikov, and Smolin revived and picked up strength.

Novosyolov carried out a daring raid from the taiga to the Biysk railroad branch line and back.

Plotnikov and Smolin got bogged down in clashes with members of village komcells and were killed at the end of October 1920.

In October 1920 Novosyolov made an attempt at reconciliation with the Soviet government. He held negotiations about surrendering and being sent to the front, but, after learning about the persecution of those who had already laid down their weapons, he decided not to give himself up.

Continuing the fight, in January 1921 Novosyolov organized a new uprising in the Zhulanikh region—a former epicentre of the anti-Kolchak struggle. Soon the uprising spread to 16 volosts of Altai province. After disarming the 26th Cavalry Regiment and the 26th Rifle Division without firing a shot, the insurgents advanced towards the Barnaul-Biysk railway line. The staff of the insurgency set up headquarters in the village of Sorokino (hence the name — “Sorokino Mutiny”). Soon the number of the insurgents increased, according to various estimates, to from 5,000 to 10,000 men. But they were very poorly armed. In one of Novosyolovs detachments, for example, there were only 25 rifles for 700 partisans; the rest were armed with hunting pieces, pikes, sabres, and pitchforks. This peasant host hurled itself on the machine guns and artillery of the Reds and perished to the last man.

At that time in Novosyolovs staff, besides anarchists, there were also Right SRs. They played a key role in drafting the political program of the insurgency — the program of the “Siberian Peasant Union.” At that time all the tendencies unhappy with the war — communist dictatorship,⁹ even monarchists, clustered around the peasant union movement. In a number of cases the anarchists also joined these unions.

In an alliance with the Right SRs, the Federation of Altai Anarchists put forth the slogans “Soviets Without Communists” and “Pure Soviet Power Without Communists.” Novosyolov justified his own alliance with right-wing forces as follows: “This is a political manoeuvre on my part. Let the monarchists help us now, and later I will pay them back in my own way. I can settle with them in a jiffy and then re-establish anarchy.” But the influence of White Guards, kulaks, and

⁹ “War communism” refers to the regime in effect in the Soviet Union in 1918–1921 during the most intense period of civil war. Its features included strict discipline for workers (strikers could be shot) and forced requisition of agricultural produce from the peasants.

criminals among the insurgents continued to grow. The actions of the partisans more and more acquired the character of a White Terror and of pogroms. Because of this apparent link with White Guards many veteran partisans and *serednyaks* became alienated from the movement.

Engaging in encounter battles¹⁰ and constantly increasing their strength, the communist units were able to halt the numerically superior forces of the insurgents, preventing the revolt from spreading south of the Chumish River. When their forces had grown to two regiments and a cavalry division, the Reds launched a counter-attack on Sorokino. On January 23 1921 they drove the insurgents from the village and dealt them a heavy defeat. The insurgents lost nearly 400 killed. At the end of January, after a campaign by units of the 26th Division, the insurgents were finally routed, with 3,000 of them taken prisoner. But units led by Novosyolov were able to avoid destruction. Soon after this Novosyolov delivered a speech to his fighters in which he admitted that their cause was lost. He proposed breaking up into small groups which would disperse to their homes. He himself decided to disappear into the taiga with a small group of his most loyal followers. But the majority did not agree with their commander and continued to follow him.

In the summer of 1921 Novosyolov's detachment fought its way to the south of the Kuzbas into Verkho-Kondomsk *oblast*. In the village of Kondom they killed the deputy chair of the volost ispolkom Solovyev and the volost voenkom Shmakov. Novosyolov was able to attract the local indigenous population – the mountain Shortsi people – to his side, with the help of whom Novosyolov hoped to maintain himself until better times. But the GPU was on his trail. Novosyolov and his secretary were surrounded one night in an *izba*. In the resulting gunfight, the secretary was killed, but Novosyolov was somehow able to get away.

In the autumn of 1921 Novosyolov tried to bring an end to the struggle and surrender. But just at that time the anarchist Sizikov, who had stopped fighting earlier, became the victim of “Red bandits” – a group of communists who secretly annihilated undesirables. Fearing that the same thing would happen to him, Novosyolov was forced to renounce his intention. Novosyolov clearly understood the hopelessness of continuing the struggle, but he continued it with the stubbornness of the damned. In September 1921 his detachment liberated the village of Kartagol from the Bolsheviks. In response to denunciations made by the local peasants, the detachment executed Suvorov, the secretary of the village Soviet, and Sarikov, a policeman from the settlement of Ust-Kabirz.

In October Novosyolov expanded his influence to nine volosts in the southern part of Kuznetsky *uyezd*. Carrying out a mobilization, Novosyolov brought the level of his detachment to 1500 men. Then the Novosyolovists were routed by ChON detachments. Novosyolov with the remnants of the detachment fled into the taiga. In January 1922 only nine people remained with him. Dismissing the partisans, Novosyolov disappeared without a trace. There is a suggestion that he went to Mongolia. There are also unconfirmed reports that he returned to his native land in the 1960s and tried to obtain the rehabilitation of his dead comrade G.F. Rogov. All this time Novosyolov had been living under a false name.

Elements of anarchism also existed in the peasant movement headed by the former partisan commander P.K. Lubkov. It arose in Mariinsk *uyezd*, Tomsk *gubernia*, in September 1920 under conditions of increasing stress due to the spread of the food requisitioning system (*prodrazvy-*

¹⁰ Encounter battles are engagements where the opposing sides collide in the field without having prepared an attack or defense.

orstka) in Western Siberia. Afraid of being arrested again, Lubkov switched to a semi-legal situation where he began to gather around himself former partisans and anyone who was unhappy with the war-communist dictatorship. In September 1920 Lubkov and his associates spoke out at a mass meeting at Taiga Station. They called upon the Red Army men to refuse to go to the Polish front, and demanded free elections (banned by the communists) to local Soviets, the abolishment of *prodrazvyorstka*, and the re-establishment of free trade. "Down with the communists, long live Soviet power!" was the basic slogan of the Lubkovists. A peasant People's Army began to form in the villages of Pochitanka, Kolyun, Tyoplaya Rechka, and Nizhegorodka. The staff of the army distributed a proclamation in which Peter Lubkov was referred to as the Chairman of the Provisional Soviet Government of the People's Army.

In short order the developing insurgency embraced five volosts. The insurgents numbered between 2,500 and 3,000. As in the period of struggle against the Whites, Lubkov removed grain from the kulaks and distributed it to the peasants. This happened, as a rule, without bloody excesses. The insurgents carried out a mobilization into their units of 18- to 28-year-olds. The *ispolkoms*, militias, and their non-communist personnel remained in place. On September 22 a 1,000-strong detachment suddenly captured Izhmorskaya Station, cutting the Trans-Siberian main line. The insurgents did not want unnecessary blood-letting. Already two days after the start of the uprising, they offered to negotiate with the Red command. Lubkov himself sent a letter to the government in which he proposed to settle the conflict peacefully. However the provincial leaders and the field commander Gritsman did not follow up contacts with the insurgents. The government behaved in standard fashion. Red Army units, supported by an armoured train and the ChON, were sent against the insurgents. In three days of battles at the village of Mikhailovka, Ziryansk volost, the insurgents suffered total defeat. More than 500 of the poorly armed peasants of the Peoples Army were killed, and around 200 were taken prisoner. Only a few of the Red Army soldiers were killed. Lubkov with a small detachment was able to throw off his pursuers and take refuge in the taiga. The Chekists hunted him without respite. Five groups of secret agents, which acted independently of one another, were put on his trail. In addition, by means of blackmail and threats of indiscriminate slaughter the Chekists were able to get help from some of Lubkov's former partisans. Finally, after more than six months of exertions, in the night of June 23 1921, P.K. Lubkov was killed by Cheka agent S. Pervishev, who had gained his trust. Lubkov's corpse was transported around the villages for quite some time in an effort to convince the peasants of the death of the renowned peasant leader.

In 1920 through 1921 at the boundary between Tomsk and Altai provinces, the detachment of a former Red partisan, the anarchist Tabashnikov, was active. At the beginning of 1921 this detachment was routed by ChON forces, but was not completely annihilated. In 1921 Tabashnikov remained in the field in Kuznetsk *uyezd*. With a strength of up to 150 men, his detachment was well armed and had a black banner with the word "Anarchy." By September 1921 the number of partisans in the unit had shrunk to 10. They operated on the territory of Kondom volost, Kuznetsk *uyezd*. In October 1921 Tabashnikov's detachment was destroyed by ChON personnel.

In the region of the Prokopev Mine of the Kuzbas, an anarchist detachment led by Anna Belokobilsкая took the field. Belokobilsкая was able to pull together remnants of the dead Rogov's detachment. She defended the local population from Bolshevik tyranny, punished communist activists, and organized arson and bombings. Her detachment was wiped out with the active participation of the militia man Viktor Kaigorodov, who in turn was killed by a peasant bullet in 1924.

The continuation of the “Siberian Makhnovshchina” under new conditions, when the insurgent movement was replaced by a guerilla movement, became the phenomenon called by the authorities “anarcho-banditism.” This was, in essence, a partisan, anti-Soviet, anti-communist movement with an associated underground. In part this was the response of the peasantry to Red banditism and the tyranny of the local authorities. At a plenum of the Tomsk provincial committee in 1921 the question was raised about the tyrannical behaviour of the Tomsk Provincial Cheka and the local (*uyezd*) Chekas. At issue were cases of drunkenness, robbery, provocation, brutality, and reprisals. The response provoked by this behaviour included hard-hitting anti-Soviet agitation, expropriations (confiscations and requisitions carried out by “anarcho-bandits”), and individual acts of terror against representatives of the government (the murder by anarchopartisans of Soviet and Party employees, food requisitioning agents, and militia men). In the autumn of 1921 conspirators with anarchist sympathies in Kuznetsk planned an uprising which would include the liquidation of several appointed commissars and specialists (*spetsi*). The goal of the “League of the Red Flower” (Shcheglovsk *uyezd*, spring of 1921) was declared to be terror against Soviet and Party workers.

Until as late as 1922 the political situation in the Kuzbas remained tense. First here, then there, peasant detachments of insurgents appeared. The military – political leadership of the province was in a constant state of nervousness caused by peasant resistance. Until the end of 1920 martial law was in force throughout the whole of Siberia, and in January 1921 it was introduced again in Tomsk province. By September 1921 the military contingent in that province numbered 45,000.

As the armed movement faded, political “Red banditism” began to flourish. The Bolsheviks became bandits themselves, secretly annihilating their political opponents and dissidents. Members of the Kaurak volost party cell of the RKP(b) (Novonikolayevsk Province) in 1920 through 1921 physically annihilated, by their own admissions, seven (according to the Cheka-nine) counter-revolutionaries and kulaks, supposedly connected with White bandits. In various parts of Siberia there were dozens, if not hundreds, of such komcells acting similarly. Dating from the spring of 1920 Red banditism had embraced all the *uyezds* of Tomsk Province. Relying on politically-active, lumpenized strata of the population, one faction of the communist ruling stratum – Soviet employees, militia men, and Chekists – created numerous terrorist groups which were responsible for lynchings and other forms of violence directed against the better-off peasants, church officials, intelligentsia, and specialists. Such organizations were active at Topki Station, Anzherka, Sudzhensk, Kolchugin, Prokopyevsk, and other settlements. Red banditism reached its greatest amplitude in Mariinsky *uyezd*. There almost all the komcells participated in terror. The government was even compelled to make some of the terrorists accountable. In January 1922 in only one so-called “Mariinsk affair” 22 people were involved of whom eight were sentenced by the Tomsk military tribunal to the highest measure of punishment.

Just how many people were annihilated by them will likely never be known.

A region where anarchist influence was strong and the anarcho-partisan movement flourished in 1921 through 1923 was the Prichernsk district. After the suppression of the Sorokino uprising, separate groups of its participants joined together to form a partisan detachment led by the brothers P. and S. Murzin, D. Barishnikov, and Kryuchkov. They all based themselves on the support and sympathy of certain sections of the peasantry, in particular, the *serednyaks*. Especially strong were the positions of the anarchists in NovoKhmelevsk and Mariinsk volosts. Here in 1920 through 1922 there was virtually no Bolshevik government, and no komcells.

There were murders of local Soviet employees. Among the population “Rogov-Novosyolov anarchism persisted for a long time.” A broad network of peasants sympathetic to the anarchists provided the partisans with intelligence information, supplied them with necessities, and concealed them in case of danger. In the villages the anarchists carried on propaganda and agitation against the numerous shortcomings and tyrannous behaviour of the authorities.

The Prichernsk partisan — anarchists were linked mainly with the toiling strata of the villages and had a hostile relationship to the *kulak* layer. But even so the kulaks still supported the partisans to some extent — for practical considerations. “The wealthy muzhiks,” commented one communist, “are covering up for the bandits [the insurgent movement-I. P.] by fulfilling their quotas for timber harvesting. In fact they are not only providing passive assistance to the bandits, but are actively helping them as well.”

In 1922 in the region of the villages of Sorokino and Zhulanikh appeared a “band” led by the brothers Murzin. One of them had been a partisan unit commander under Rogov during the struggle against Kolchak, and in 1920 was on the Military Committee of the Federation of Altai Anarchists. After the downfall of the “Rogovshchina” the brothers went into hiding. In March 1922 their group consisted of four to six people. In April it was practically wiped out, as Pavel Murzin was killed and his brother Semyon was heavily wounded, but managed to escape. At the beginning of July S. Murzin’s group again suffered disaster: Murzin himself was killed, but his companions found shelter in the taiga.

In 1920 through 1923 in the Prichernsk district there operated periodically the “band” of D. Barishnikov — a local *bednyak* and a veteran of both the “Rogovshchina” and the Sorokino Mutiny. The strength of his group varied from four to ten persons.

In the spring of 1922, after a quiet spell, an anti-communist partisan movement flared up in the Kuzbas again. Along with the White Guard group of Colonel Zinoviev and the band of the “Emperor of the Whole Taiga” Solovyov, the anarcho-peasant detachment of T. Novosyolov — a *serednyak* and former Red partisan — was active. At the end of April there were 35 men under his command, based in Kuzyedeyevsk volost of Kuznetsk *uyezd*. According to ChON intelligence: “The mood of the population... is openly hostile to Soviet power, and after sowing is finished one can assume that the bandit movement will be strengthened at the expense of the local inhabitants.” The detachment of T. Novosyolov had stockpiled weapons, provisions, and clothing. The population was sympathetic towards them. In June the detachments strength had grown to 100, but they were poorly armed. In the summer of 1922 Novosyolov planned, after joining forces with the detachments of Zinoviev (up to 250 men) and Solovyov (up to 500 men), to raise a rebellion in Kuznetsk *uyezd*. But the ChON command decided to disrupt this plan. The territory of the *uyezd* was declared under martial law. In battle with the ChONists, Novosyolov’s detachment suffered losses but was able to avoid complete destruction. By October the detachment had shrunk to 12 men. On November 28, after a battle with ChONists under the command of Maltsev, the four surviving partisans, led by Novosyolov, fled to Barnaul *uyezd*, Altai *gubernia*. On December 29 1922 while staying for the night in Alambai, T. Novosyolov and a companion were murdered by a peasant whose only motive, it seems, was robbery. Soon all the surviving partisans were arrested and the detachment ceased its existence.

In July 1922 in Khabarovsk volost (Slavgorod *uyezd*, Omsk *gubernia*) a detachment of 20 men under the leadership of Kovalenko took the field. In documents of the GPU Kovalenko is identified as a former secretary of the Khabarovsk volispolkom and a “Makhnovist agent.” In August they intended to combine with other groups in Pavlodarsk *uyezd* and undermine the collection

of the tax-in-kind. After a series of raids and acts of sabotage the detachment disappeared for a time, but reappeared in February 1923. In March 1923 the GPU uncovered an underground organization, scattered throughout a number of villages, led by Kovalenko. More than 80 people belonged to it. A general uprising was being prepared for the spring. The organization was in touch with many districts where there was a strong anarchist influence — in particular, Semipalatinsk *gubernia*, and Barnaul and Kamensk uyezds of Altai *gubernia*. Little more is known about this organization.

Besides peasant uprisings supported and led by anarchists, in the 1920s there were also active anarchist groups in the cities. It is well-established that in 1922 there were substantial anarchist organizations in 11 cities of Russia. In Siberia the most important urban centres of anarchist activity were Omsk and Irkutsk.

An Omsk Federation of Anarchists was formed in September 1920. Around the core group (Tkachyov, Yefimov, Shamrakov, Gorokhov, Pepelyayev, Paramonov, Koshkarov, Kuzminykh, Klyuyev, and Sushkov) an organization quickly formed which by the end of the year numbered 130 members: 30 activists, the rest sympathizers. The highest organ of the Federation was the General Meeting of all the anarchists of the city. It elected a secretariat (a maximum of 10 people) which supervised the work of the club library, the Black Cross committee, the anarchist cells, and the group of sympathizers. The Federation was linked with the anarchists of Moscow, Petrograd, Kharkov, Irkutsk, and Vladivostok. Members of the Federation included anarchists of different tendencies: anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, universalists, individualists, and Tolstoyans. Common to all of them was: the struggle against state socialism and resistance to the intensifying stratification and bureaucratizing of society. The majority of members of the Federation were more or less loyal to the Soviet government; however, a small group of the most active members (N. Gorokhov, P. Ivanov, and others) not only occupied a contrary position but carried on the corresponding propaganda in the city. Being invited to military courses as a lecturer on art, Gorokhov “used his own position with the goal of discrediting communist ideas.” Gorokhov frequently and skillfully proved that the Soviet government was different only in name from the governments of Nicolai II and Kolchak. Gradually the anarchist club became a place for legal anti-communist and anti-Soviet agitation. The critique of the deformation of Soviet power began to give way to its repudiation and calls for its overthrow.

When the vast West Siberian anti-communist uprising unfolded, the policies of the Soviet government became harsher. On April 10 through 11 1921 the Cheka arrested a dozen leaders and activists of the Federation (not including Gorokhov, who had gone into hiding). And although, after a month-long investigation, they were released, the Federation was banned and continued its activity on a semi-legal or illegal basis.

By the end of 1921 the material situation of the workers of Omsk had significantly worsened, which created fertile soil for the agitation of opposition elements, including the anarchists. The obkom of the RKP(b) was very concerned about the growth of anarchist influence in the city and recommended the intensification of agitation and propaganda against anarchism. Simultaneously everyone involved in the anarchist movement was taken under the firm control of the VChK-OGPU.

Under the conditions of political crisis, anarchist ideas penetrated into the ranks of the communists. In 1921 through 1922 everywhere in the RKP(b) there sprang up “workers’ oppositions” — supporters of anarcho-syndicalism. In Omsk such people were even found in leadership positions — I.E. Potyomkin, P.D. Alisov, and others. The “Workers’ Opposition” spoke out for workers’

democracy, and against bureaucratization of the Party and over-centralization of the government. The leaders of the RKP(b) and the Sibburo had to exert considerable efforts to suppress the activities of these groups.

In 1922 through 1923 an underground anarchist organization continued to be active in Zhulanikh, Barnaul *uyezd*. Basically it provided political support to anarcho-partisan detachments operating in the region (in Barishnikov and other places). This organization carried on agitation and propaganda and supplied the partisans with intelligence information. This was one of the last formally anarchist political formations in Siberia.

Anarchist influence on the peasant movement was concentrated mainly in Western Siberia (Altai, Tomsk, and Semipalatinsk gubernias; and Slavgorod *uyezd* of Omsk *gubernia*). The number of participants of the “Siberian Makhnovshchina” (insurrections and movements operating under anarchist or composite slogans) in 1920 through 1921 ranged from 20,000 to 25,000 persons. Following the anarchists were those strata of the Siberian peasantry which, while they were unhappy with the Soviet government and the communist dictatorship, at the same time had no desire for the return of the White Guard regime.

Detachments of anarcho-insurgents resisted right up to the summer of 1923, when the Bolsheviks, having suppressed popular movements throughout the whole of Russia, had already implemented some of the slogans of those movements — abolishment of food requisitioning, freedom of trade. But political power remained with the Bolsheviks. The peasant war, which cost more lives than the civil war, gave the people a breathing space for eight years, after which the communists broke the back of the peasantry once and for all.

In the 1920s through 1930s in the Kuzbas, communes of the anarchist type flourished. Especially noteworthy for its smooth functioning was the Tolstoyan commune directed by Boris Vasilyevich Mazurin. It was based in the settlement of Talzhino, not far from Kuznetsk.

A special impact on the history of the Kuzbas was made by the Autonomous Industrial Colony (AIK-Kuzbas) created by American worker-emigrants, a number of whom were members of the anarcho-syndicalist trade union organization “Industrial Workers of the World” (IWW). The organizers of the colony were implementing anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Between January 1922 and December 1923 566 people arrived to take part in the colony.

At the end of 1924 the Soviet of Labour and Defense of the USSR adopted a resolution about the transfer of the Kolchugin, Prokopyev, and Kiselyev mines to the colony. Furthermore, the AIK also included the Kemerovo Mine, the Guryev Metallurgical Plant, and other enterprises, along with a parcel of land 10,000 hectares in size. There were representatives of 27 nationalities working in the AIK.

“... Several years passed. Painful memories of the comrade — anarchists who had died in battle subsided. And on December 22 1926 the Soviet government announced that its agreement with AIK-Kuzbas was cancelled. Thus ended the great anarchist revolution in the Kuzbas.”

Glossary

bednyak a poor peasant, who might have a smallholding but probably had to sell his labour to others.

Cheka or VChK All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for combating Counter-Revolution, Profiteering and Corruption, the original Soviet secret police organization set up by the Bolsheviks shortly after taking power (1917–1922). Its functionaries were known as Chekists.

ChON acronym for Special Purpose Units, elite military units raised for internal use against counter-revolutionaries and other “undesirables” in 1919–1925 in the Soviet Union.

echelon a troop train.

GPU State Political Directorate, the successor of the Cheka (1922–1923).

gubernia literally “governorate,” the tsarist administrative unit which can roughly be translated as “province.”

ispolkom executive committee. As used in the text this term refers to the administrative organ of a Soviet.

komcell communist cell, the smallest unit of the Communist Party.

kulak a peasant who employs hired labour.

Left SR member of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party, formed in October 1917 from the left-wing of the SR Party.

Maximalist a member of the Maximalist Party, an early (1904) anarchism-oriented split from the SR Party. Like the anarchists, the Maximalists insisted on the immediate socialization of land and the means of production.

obkom *oblast* committee.

oblast region; the term which in Soviet times replaced the tsarist *gubernia*.

OGPU Joint State Political Directorate, successor to the GPU and VChK (1923–1934).

pood unit of weight equal to 16.4 kilograms.

prodrazvyorstka food requisitioning system.

raion equivalent to *volost*—a subdivision of an *uyezd*.

RKP(b) Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

samogon home-made vodka — the literal meaning of the word is “self-distilled.”

serednyak a middle peasant, i.e. an economically independent farmer but one who did not exploit the labour of others.

revkom revolutionary committee. During the Civil War, revkoms were temporary Soviet administrations set up by the Bolsheviks.

Sibburo Siberian Bureau of the Central Committee of the RKP(b). This was the highest organ of the Communist Party in Siberia, responsible for all party and economic work in the region.

SR member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (PSR), the largest leftwing party in Russia, which claimed to represent the interests of the peasantry. Socialist but non-Marxist, it was prone to factionalism and underwent a number of splits. Its members were often referred to as Right SRs, to distinguish them from members of the main defecting group — the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

TsK RKP(b) Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

uyezd administrative territorial unit, a subdivision of a *gubernia*.

VChK see Cheka.

voenkomb military commissar.

volispolkom executive committee of a *volost* Soviet.

volost administrative territorial unit which was a subdivision of a *uyezd* in Western Siberia. Roughly equivalent to a U.S. or Canadian county.

Whites The White movement was the main counter-revolutionary force in the Russian Civil War. Officially democratic, it included monarchist and proto-fascist elements.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Igor Podshivalov
Siberian Makhnovshchina
Siberian Anarchists in the Russian Civil War (1918–1924)
2011

Scanned from original, published by Black Cat Press, Edmonton, Alberta
English translation: Malcolm Archibald

theanarchistlibrary.org