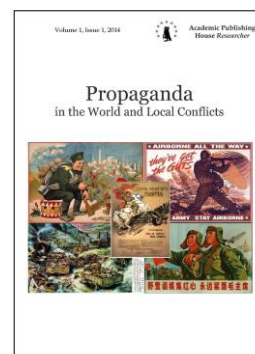


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Articles

At the Origins of the Don Military Propaganda: the Creative Work of M.Kh. Senyutkin

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Abstract

The paper explores a military patriotic component in the creative work of Mikhail Kh. Senyutkin, a person who, for the first time, organized structured military propaganda activities in the Don press in period of the Crimean War. The author shows that this was accomplished quite on the spur of the moment: M.Kh. Senyutkin, a trained lawyer, who built the major part of his career in the prosecutor's office and courts, found himself working as an editor of The Don Military Gazette (Donskiye Voyskovye Vedomosti) in the 1850s and, shortly after the outbreak of war, allowed to print military patriotic publications in the paper. Proceeding from M.Kh. Senyutkin's own oeuvre, the paper concludes that his efforts to systematize military propaganda were, nevertheless, meaningful – the Don lawyer viewed history as a study area of vital importance, which provided patriotic models to be followed. In his opinion, the history of Don Cossackdom was primarily shaped by its warfare legacy and essentially exemplified by the military exploits of Don units and particular Cossacks. At the same time, the paper shows that the oeuvre of M.Kh. Senyutkin was typical of the emerging Don military propaganda, and his reasoning gave explanations for some of its peculiarities, for example, the genre non-specificity of texts and authors' regular references to Russian poets, rather than professional historians.

Keywords: Don Cossack Host, Crimean War, military propaganda, Don Military Gazette, M.Kh. Senyutkin.

1. Introduction

The name of M.Kh. Senyutkin is largely unknown both to the general public, and professional historians in comparison to other prominent Don figures. Even for those who pursue interest in the past of Don Cossacks, the author of the 19th century is pushed into the background by his more successful and talented contemporaries, such as V.D. Sukhorukov, Kh.I. Popov, A.A. Karasev, N.I. Krasnov or S.F. Nomikosov. However, when in the 1900s, the Ministry of War of the Russian Empire decided to commission someone to write the official history of the Cossack Host, General N.A. Maslakovets, speaking about “the importance of Cossacks for Russia”, chose the creative writing of none other than M.Kh. Senyutkin. The general cited a voluminous quote from the works

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of the Don author, a quote so eloquent that we will give it here verbatim: “Obedient to some instinctive fervent desire to defend the faith of Christ from the onslaught of Mohammedanism, these free warriors, being few in numbers, repel day and night, century after century, the primordial enemies of Russia, feeling neither exhaustion nor fatigue in their fight. Their eyes are unsleeping, and their ears never stop listening. They can sense it in the wind when the enemy approaches, pick up its smell and wend their way to it. The turbulent Azov, Black and Caspian Seas are unable to hamper them. Their barks sail as far as Sinop, Trebizond and Constantinople. These people are made of iron, whom, according to Frederick the Great, you can kill, but you can never defeat! Turks, Crimeans, Nogais and Circassians wanted to stop them. All in vain. Not only did Don Cossacks defeat them, but they wiped them out of their land. They are conquering vast expanses of Siberia, and eventually everything – and their victories, and glory, and life – bring to the Tsar of Russia, saying: We are your serfs, ready to serve, ready for the Orthodox faith and you, Sire!” (OR RNB. F. 1055. Ed. khr. 4. L. 29ob.-30).

The choice of M.Kh. Senyutkin's oeuvre, instead of one of the more distinguished Don historians, was not accidental when the authorities conceived to compile a formal historical work. M.Kh. Senyutkin's writing is pervaded with utmost patriotism and glorification of the service of Russian Cossacks. Moreover, it was he who was the founder of military propaganda on the Don: we showed in our previous articles that it was the period, when M.Kh. Senyutkin was the editor of The Don Military Gazette during the Crimean War, which marked first publications of patriotic texts in this only newspaper in the region, and quite in volume – eighteen publications in three years (Peretyatko, 2018: 44-45). And, since no professional studies into M.Kh. Senyutkin's creative activity has been done so far (except a very concise popular essay compiled by an amateur local historian N.F. Bichekhvost (Bichekhvost, 2012), which can be found on the Internet), our paper will be an attempt to review the military patriotic component in the Don author's writing, which proved to come at the right time.

2. Materials and methods

M.Kh. Senyutkin's greatest creation was a two-volume edition “Dontsy”, published in Moscow in 1866 (Senyutkin, 1866a; Senyutkin, 1866b). Speaking of its genre, it can be categorized rather as a collection of historical and journalistic articles, which is implied by the subtitle given by the author himself: “Historical sketches of military operations, biographies of the last century's military officers, stories from modern life and a perspective to the history of the Don Host” (Senyutkin, 1866a: flyleaf). In a brief foreword, M.Kh. Senyutkin wrote that he initially planned to create a comprehensive history of Don Cossacks – “from the time of Pugachev's rebellion” to the middle of the 19th century, but the intention was at first thwarted by the abundance of illegible sources in a poor state of preservation, and later by the author's eye disease and a fire in the archives (Senyutkin, 1866a). In the end, M.Kh. Senyutkin simply included in his book all the texts he created on historical topics and topics close to history. There also were two stories, published in 1858 in The Don Military Gazette: “An episode from the Crimean campaign” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 63-67) and “The old hunter in the war” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 68-79). The stories are also of interest because they crowned the surge in patriotic publishing activity, inspired by the Crimean War, in The Don Military Gazette. (Peretyatko, 2018: 46). In addition, M.Kh. Senyutkin published an extensive essay “A Look on the History of the Don Host” at the end of the second volume, which discussed, in particular, the military and patriotic role of historical texts (Senyutkin, 1866b: 157-194). The three minor works of the author, who was the initiator of the first attempt to systematize military propaganda in the Don region, enable a perspective on the goals he set in his activities, as well as on the means used. We should only analyze them using comparative and descriptive methods to build an understanding what the military propaganda, offered by M.Kh. Senyutkin, was like.

3. Discussion

The key source of the information we know of M.Kh. Senyutkin is a small essay in the classic treatise on the Cossack historiography – “Dontsy of the 19th century” (Dontsy, 2003: 439-440). With reference to the essay, it can be seen that M.Kh. Senyutkin was born in 1825, received his legal education at the Kharkov University, held various positions in the Don Host civil administration from 1848, retired in 1871 and died in 1879 (Dontsy, 2003: 439-440). Everything

suggests that he was not much of an influencer even during his lifetime. In a larger portion of his career (from 1858 to 1867), the Don author had important, but subordinate appointments in a variety of prosecutor's offices and courts: he was a district judge, deputy host prosecutor and vice chairman of the host commercial court (Dontsy, 2003: 440). The lawyer's attention to literature and history was more likely associated with his appointment as editor of The Don Military Gazette in 1851 (Dontsy, 2003: 440). Be that as it may, no information of M.Kh. Senyutkin's earlier literary efforts survived; moreover, after he left the editor position in 1858, there was a marked slump in his creative activity: in the 1850s, he was one of the most industrious authors in The Don Military Gazette unofficial section, while in the 1860s, he almost abandoned publications there (Dontsy, 2003: 440; Volvenko, 2015b: 97). Alexey A. Volvenko in his series of papers on the social confrontation between conservative-minded Cossacks and liberal progressists, which took place in the Don region in the early 1860s, almost does not mention M.Kh. Senyutkin, although some materials in the latter's book were written at that very time and were quite in line with a true spirit of Cossack-mania or so called Kazakomanstvo (Volvenko, 2015a; Volvenko, 2015b; Volvenko, 2015c).

A note should also be added to this that M.Kh. Senyutkin's two most fundamental works, which constituted the first volume of his "Dontsy", are devoted to a very peculiar topic that pre-revolutionary historiography did not explore. "Military activities of Don Cossacks against Devlet Giray and Pugachev" delivers a meticulous description of the Don Army history in 1773 and 1774, including its internal state as well as benefits and favors bestowed from above (Senyutkin, 1866a: 1-89). A note should be made that the work originally appeared in the metropolitan press, in the renown *Sovremennik* in 1854 (Senyutkin, 1854). In a brief introduction to the publication, M.Kh. Senyutkin wrote that his purpose was to "prove that Don Cossacks, always eager to die for the faith, the tsar and the fatherland, not only did display intolerance towards Pugachev and all villains like him, but even, we can state with confidence, were Tsaritsyn's salvagers from the devastation by Pugachev, the most crucial participants in the final defeat of this impostor at Cherny Yar and main heroes behind his capture and conveyance to the hands of the government" (Senyutkin, 1854: 45). Therefore, in essence, the work by M.Kh. Senyutkin communicated a patriotic message and could spur a patriotic upsurge among Cossacks during the Crimean War if delivered in a more skillful presentation. However, this prospect was impaired by the author's desire to remain a historian rather than a propagandist – M.Kh. Senyutkin made no references to contemporary events in his text, his style was rather ponderous, and descriptions contained too much detail for the general reader.

On the other hand, to write a superior historical treatise, M.Kh. Senyutkin should not only have had appropriate education, but he also was carried away by the all-or-nothing approach typical of a young age in achieving the set goal and proving Don Cossacks' devotion to the throne. For example, the better part of his preface concentrates on criticizing Alexander S. Pushkin's "A history of Pugachev's rebellion" for misrepresenting the role of Don Cossacks: "There are some places in his history, which are lacking in historical credibility, namely those where he described Don Cossacks' actions against Pugachev. The description he provided is so incomplete and inaccurate that, when comparing it with the official documents we have uncovered in the Host Archives, you do not know what the mistakes of the author, who was appreciated for his discretion and objectivity, can be ascribed to" (Senyutkin, 1854: 44). By praising the exploits of Cossacks with his youthful ardor, M.Kh. Senyutkin transformed his text into a kind of rhapsody in their favor. In this context, very indicative is the excessively panegyric portrayal of Ataman Semyen N. Sulin, which would have been overly exuberant even if taking a more prominent commander: "Not displaying much valor in his actions, Sulin had, however, enough courage to firmly withstand all the tribulations and adversaries that threatened his host. Where other chiefs, perhaps though their temerity or, on the contrary, through their weak-willed indecision, would have rocked the entire boat of the cause for the sake of the public good, Sulin showed prudent forethought in his orders; in no situation did he take risk haphazardly, against every danger from enemies did he take precautions and, what is more remarkable, he was able to handle matters in such a smart manner and with so few resources that enemy designs against the Don were ruined as if on their own accord, failing to accomplish their intended purpose" (Senyutkin, 1854: 48).

From our view point, a greater balance and a happier presentation in a purely historical aspect was achieved by M.Kh. Senyutkin in his second major work – "Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Nogai Tatars" (*Voyennye deystviya dontsov protiv nogayskikh tatar*) (Senyutkin,

1866a: 91-180). Its first edition also came out in the metropolitan press, in *Voenny Sbornik* (Military Collection), in 1860 (Senyutkin, 1860). Significantly, this time the Don author avoided prefacing his work with a declaration of patriotic goals. Instead, he emphasized its academic novelty in a small comment, pointing out that “main materials for this article” were “reports from the host archives”, part of which he published in *The Don Military Gazette*, and, of printed works, he primarily used first-hand accounts (Senyutkin, 1860: 345). M.Kh. Senyutkin no longer entered the fray with more competent researchers, and gave noticeably more reserved assessments to Don leaders. For comparison, we will quote the characterization he gave this time to a truly outstanding Don ataman, Alexey I. Ilovayskii: “It is hard to outline the character of a historical figure if you can only take few accounts of his contemporaries into consideration; but judging by the deeds that remained after Ilovayskii's administration and the important testimony about him made by Potemkin to the empress, we can beyond all doubt conclude that he was an energetic, pious, kind and honest man, with a devout allegiance to the throne and his homeland, accessible to all, being for that loved and respected by Cossacks” (Senyutkin, 1860: 349). It is even more interesting that further M.Kh. Senyutkin noted: the ataman achieved the successes not only thanks to these qualities, but also thanks to “frequent stays in the capital and refined demeanor” (Senyutkin, 1860: 349). We can state that, while retaining a clear patriotic focus, M.Kh. Senyutkin markedly progressed in his efforts, and if he had continued active historical studies, his history of the Don Host would have become an invaluable material, probably not in terms of the author's concepts and ideas, but as the work that introduced new archival sources and factual materials into scholarly research.

On the other hand, all the above offers a plausible explanation why M.Kh. Senyutkin and his works were almost forgotten within a short time. In a way, he was ahead of his epoch. In the middle of the 19th century, history was only an emerging subject on the Don with small popular articles and rather generalized historical and statistical descriptions as leading genres, and against this background, two main studies of M.Kh. Senyutkin, which relied on an archival basis and went into minute detail in describing periods in the Don Host history of minor importance, appeared simply irrelevant. The fact that the works were published in the capitals, also played against him, while other Don authors mainly targeted the local press. M.Kh. Senyutkin's closest contemporary, a renown Cossack statistician, N.I. Krasnov, compiled “An overview of the main sources” on the history of the Don Host in 1863, which made no mention at all of both metropolitan publications of the author we discuss here (Krasnov, 1863: 1-7). Nevertheless, “An overview” highly commended M.Kh. Senyutkin's articles on the fight of the Cossacks against Devlet Giray and Ye.I. Pugachev (“the latter of them is virtually the only material available to examine the influence of Pugachev's rebellion on Don Cossacks”) (Krasnov, 1863: 3). But M.Kh. Senyutkin's writing about the conflicts between Cossacks and Nogais, were either of no interest, or unknown to N.I. Krasnov. In 1884, S.F. Nomikosov, Secretary of the Don Statistical Committee, in a similar overview of works on the Don history, defined M.Kh. Senyutkin's “Dontsy” as a book that “deserved attention”, but only “partially” without anyhow clarifying this odd assessment and further ranking A.I. Rigelman's studies, for example, much higher (Nomikosov, 1884: 4). Finally, A.A. Kirillov, in his “Attempt in the bibliography of the Don history” in 1909, attributed some “Monograph on the Nogais” to M.Kh. Senyutkin, “where he also touched upon Pugachev's rebellion, depicting it only as an isolated episode in this story (which story the context didn't spell out exactly – A.P.)” (Kirillov, 1909: 20). All these give you impression that more recent Don amateur historians (and professional historians appeared on the Don only in the early 20th century) simply did not understand how to make use of M.Kh. Senyutkin's detailed and solid works largely dedicated to insignificant clashes of Cossacks with Tatars and Nogais. If researchers continued to show interest to his works, it was above all connected to their study of the Peasants' War 1773–75 and Pugachev's rebellion. A.A. Kirillov's mistake is particularly characteristic in this regard: it is clear that in all his explorations, M.Kh. Senyutkin invested most of his time and efforts into discovery of Don Cossacks' history, and he did not write any “Monograph on the Nogais”, but for the more recent historian the name of his predecessor was essentially associated with the study of Nogais. Add to this the relatively short duration of M.Kh. Senyutkin's exercises in history and the half-oblivion that befell his works will become quite understandable: a kind of the canon of the Don pre-revolutionary historiography encompassed the works of more prominent authors who studied the Don region all their lives and addressed more popular topics.

As a summary we can state that propaganda activity in M.Kh. Senyutkin's biography was rather a spontaneous, although not entirely random episode. Having received a legal education, he eventually opted for a judicial career over editorial and academic work. But even in his published works, the Don author made sincere efforts to be a scholar by caring about archival documents and insufficiently studied events, which was not typical of his generation. Except one thing – M.Kh. Senyutkin was a staunch patriot, and, looking at his principled criticism of A.S. Pushkin for him not characterizing the role of Don Cossacks in suppressing Pugachev's rebellion in a positive enough way, we can assert he was a Don patriot. Such sentiments were quite common in the general Cossack society. For example, I.S. Ul'yanov, who actively cooperated with The Don Military Gazette in their military patriotic propaganda undertakings during the Crimean War, similarly attacked N.M. Karamzin himself in his works: "The feats and mores of Yermak, as well as the feats and mores of the then Don Cossacks, have not yet been comprehended. The worst mistakes of the so-called historians, even of Karamzin himself, include, to name a few, the fact that this people and its amazing Ataman are judged by present standards, and some perhaps even by the Code of Laws, issued in 1834" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 41-41ob.). Years later, in the 1890s, A.A. Chigrintsev, Novocherkassk prosecutor, complained about Cossacks' "Don-specific patriotism": "We, Cossacks say, have served the Russian state with our blood for three hundred years, but... Cossack blood is only an inconsiderable part in the sea of Russian blood, and why should every drop of this blood be worth its weight in gold?!" (OR RNB. F. 1055. Ed. khr. 24. L. 3-3ob.). It was only natural that, being a patriot, a very conscientious person and a history lover, after the outbreak of the Crimean War, M.Kh. Senyutkin poured himself into publishing literary and historical texts with a patriotic bias, both about events of today and from Cossacks' past, on the pages of The Don Military Gazette he was entrusted to oversee. And it was just similarly natural that, soon after the end of the war, the Don author's enthusiasm about such military propaganda quickly waned, and later M.Kh. Senyutkin never returned to his attempts to revive it. And indeed, in his own creative activity, the patriotic line of literary texts was limited to two stories written in 1858 and dedicated to recent events, and his major historical works demonstrated his evolutionary trend towards deeper academic studies.

And it is good to mention and emphasize another very important detail. The majority of the 19th century Don authors, who were engaged in one way or another in military propaganda, left behind only patriotic articles and stories, not conceptual reflections on the role of such texts. Moreover, the authors were, as a rule, amateur writers, and their entire heritage only survived in one or two such works. In particular, it was during the Crimean War that a mathematics teacher in the Novocherkassk gymnasium, F.I. Anisimov wrote the poem "It's been roused, it's been stirred the Christian Quiet Don" (Vskolykhnuhsya, vsvolnovalsya pravoslavnyy Tikhiy Don), which later became the anthem of the Don Host and Rostov Region. However, very few other facts about F.I. Anisimov have made it to our days, and his other literary works are unknown. The only description of F.I. Anisimov, which has outlived the time to this day, characterized him as a teacher and was given by the administration of the Kharkov Educational District ("Demonstrates particular talents and love for mathematical sciences where he has already acquired very great knowledge and shows a considerable promise that over time he will become a useful scientist in this area") (Artinskii, 1907: 98). Against this background, M.Kh. Senyutkin's "A Look on the History of the Don Host", which is definitely a conceptual text that clearly reflects the author's approach to historical and patriotic works, sharply grows in importance. "A Look on the History of the Don Host" is illuminating in explaining why military patriotic propaganda and history were not just interwoven for M.Kh. Senyutkin, but constituted a coherent whole, and it was a duty of a historian to act as a propagandist.

The work of interest to us falls into a genre that stands out from the rest Don historiography. According to M.Kh. Senyutkin's own term, it is an "Epilogue" to the two-volume "Dontsy", but at the same time he provided a definition for the epilogue from antiquity: "the ancients called an epilogue a speech which one of the lead actors delivered directly to the audience at the end of a play and which typically contained some considerations related to the play and roles performed in it by actors" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 156). We would identify "A Look on the History of the Don Host" as a historical essay of a kind, a subjective expression of the thoughts that were supposed to be included in M.Kh. Senyutkin's history of Don Cossacks, which he never wrote. And, the first paragraph already made it clear that M.Kh. Senyutkin envisioned the history as a military patriotic account of

past events. He opened his reasoning with a crucial quote by N.M. Karamzin: “History is, in a sense, a sacred book for nations, an overarching, vital mirror of their existence and activity, an ancestral commandment to descendants, an extension to the present and an example for the future” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 157). Having thus delineating the significance of history as a singular model for actions to be undertaken today and tomorrow, M.Kh. Senyutkin stressed that the history of Don Cossacks remained obliterate: “Who of us knows the history of the Don Host? Who concerns themselves about it with enthusiasm and with pleasure?” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 157). And M.Kh. Senyutkin attached particular importance to saving Cossacks’ military history from forgetfulness: “Who appreciates Don Cossacks’ unfadable acts of courage, the likes of which are hard to come by in another history? <...>. Nowadays there are many among us who like amusing themselves with Don stories simply as a form of entertainment, out of sheer idleness, like with fairy tales about Yeruslan Lazarevich and Bova Korolevich; and even if they sometimes express surprise at the brave deeds of Don Cossacks, they do it so grudgingly and cold-bloodedly that they seem to be ready to immediately, for the benefit of others, switch their surprise to reproach” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 157-158). We can see, from M.Kh. Senyutkin’s viewpoint, the very exploration of Don history “as a form of entertainment”, not out of esteem for the “brave deeds of Don Cossacks” deserved condemnation, and, ultimately, a historian had to restore the “ancestral commandment to descendants”, the moral message of which, evidently, was to be permanently ready to perform these deeds.

Guided by such attitudes, M.Kh. Senyutkin further formulated the very definition of Cossacks’ importance for Russia, which later N.A. Maslakovets proposed integrating into the official Cossack history and which we cited at the beginning of our paper. Moreover, as the Don author admired the heroic conduct of historical Cossacks, he compared them with the legendary figures of ancient history. “The fate of the handful of Don Cossacks, triumphing over numerous enemies around them, seems to epitomize Moses’ prescient words: one would chase a thousand, and two would put tens thousand to flight” M.Kh. Senyutkin wrote (Senyutkin, 1866b: 160). After that, it elucidates why the works by Russian historians about Don Cossacks were unable to satisfy M.Kh. Senyutkin, and he once so strongly disapproved of A.S. Pushkin for his unsparing assessment of the Don Host’s operation during Ye.I. Pugachev’s rebellion. In “A Look on the History of the Don Host”, the Don researcher also denounced most of the studies into the Don past for being “bad compilations”, and contrasted historians... with the poets who managed to gain insight into the true nature of Cossack history: “Some of our famous poets, endowed with a better aesthetic sense than historians, were enraptured with the historical events on the Don and extolled Cossacks’ deeds of arms to the skies” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 158-160). Although M.Kh. Senyutkin’s selection of “our famous poets” was rather curious. It included Vasily A. Zhukovsky (with his poem about Platov: “Praise be to our storm of the ataman, / Leader of the invincible Platov! / Your enchanted lasso – / Terror of wretched foes”), Ivan I. Dmitriev (with his verse about Yermak: “But you, a great man, / You will march with demigods abreast / From generation to generation, from century to century!”) and D.P. Oznobishin (with his verse about Cossacks’ participation in the Patriotic War of 1812: “The Tsar cried out: ‘Where’s my Don, indeed?’ / And to feet thou sprang, Don, / And thine every son was a warrior. / Thou covered the steppes with ears of steel, / And in the Seine thou watered high-spirited steeds”) (Senyutkin, 1866b: 160-161). Understandably, to actually be listed in this selection, it was not a poet’s real significance and “aesthetic sense”, which mattered, but the fact that he created lines glorifying Cossacks: otherwise it is impossible to explain the absence of A.S. Pushkin with his excerpts in his classic book, “A History of Pugachev’s Rebellion”, which criticized the Don Host, and the presence of D.P. Oznobishin with his long-forgotten poem.

Still, these reasoning of M.Kh. Senyutkin explains very well the work of his contemporaries. For example, in his writings of the first half of the 19th century, I.S. Ul’yanov also compared Cossacks with the legendary figures of ancient history, although instead of personages from Moses’ prophecies, he chose Homeric characters: “Despite the motley apparels, which were punctured with bullets or showed traces of guerrilla raids and bivouac fire, despite their tanned faces, singed mustache and eyebrows, we seemed to see Homer’s legendary heroes in the Cossacks. The very swiftness, with which they closed round the common cauldron and extended their victorious hands to the dishes presented, proved the affinity of this comparison” (Ul’yanov, 1902: 58). In his writings, he also referred to the works of Russian poets as serious historical sources, and

interestingly, his references included V.A. Zhukovsky (with his verse about Cossacks' participation in the Patriotic War of 1812: "Hardly did they reach the wood – the wood has come to life, / Trees are shooting arrows! / Hardly to the bridge – the bridge has gone! / Hardly to the villages – the villages ablaze!" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 35ob.)). Moreover, we have shown in one of our previous papers, genre ambiguity and pretensions of propaganda texts to the status of being a piece of historical scholarship were in principle very characteristic of the patriotic Don authors of the 19th century (Peretyatko, 2019: 17). And with all in mind, we can say that central ideas in "A Look on the History of the Don Host" can be used as a key to analyze not only M.Kh. Senyutkin's creative work, but also that of other 19th century Don authors, at least for those whose works can be distinguished by the "Don-specific patriotism".

A more characteristic feature is, in our opinion, is fact that for M.Kh. Senyutkin, Don patriotism was a totally inherent part of Russian patriotism. He gave the following description of the relations between the Don region and Russia, which later were a stumbling block for many Cossack authors: "Does the Don Host itself not gravitate toward its great mother Russia as eternally as the moon toward the earth; in its movement, does it not in the same obey to her laws, producing the ebb and flow of masses of her people by its attraction?" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 161). And, strictly speaking, the underlying cause for M.Kh. Senyutkin's complaint against historians was precisely their alleged misunderstanding of Cossacks' fundamental nature. According to M.Kh. Senyutkin, two opinions prevailed among historians: one group denied Cossacks of Russian origin, while the other considered them to be descendants of Russian brigands (Senyutkin, 1866b: 162-166). However, from the very time they came into being, Don Cossacks actually were "warriors of Christ, who consecrated themselves to eternal war with Mohammedans for the faith of Christ, for Orthodox Russia" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 166).

As a summary, we can formulate a methodological framework M.Kh. Senyutkin relied on in his historical research. He believed that a Don historian's duty was to act as a patriot at all times, who explored the past of his home land through the lens of love for the heroic deeds of his ancestors and to pass on their positive experience to future generations. At the same time, the very subject of his study, Don Cossacks, was always represented by soldiers who laid down their lives to defending Christianity and Russia. Hence, it is not a chance coincidence by any means that the key focus in M.Kh. Senyutkin's works was made precisely the military history of Cossacks, and this history was by and large interpreted as a history of deeds of arms, which provided lessons to be learnt. Such ideas were not nearly original – their basic provisions were shared by many contemporaries of the Don author. However, it was the meticulous M.Kh. Senyutkin who stated them on paper, tried to distill them down to a coherent and comprehensive system of beliefs, and also maintained the most remarkable consistency in putting the theoretical views expressed into practice. In fact, this explains his scholarly attention to less obvious topics. M.Kh. Senyutkin's ambition, we know, was to write a history of Don Cossacks "from the time of Pugachev's rebellion", and, primarily interpreting it as a military history, he structured his work based on Cossacks' clashes with some or other enemy. But, since each feat of Cossacks played its role and deserved attention, he obviously planned not only to elaborate on milestone events, but highlight all such clashes. It then becomes clear that "Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Devlet Giray and Pugachev" and "Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Nogai Tatars" were the first two sections of the book he conceived. Unfortunately, in reality, the approach not only proved to be somewhat naive, but it suffered, as we showed above, from an internal contradiction: by packing his texts with historical facts and concentrating on less studied episodes, M.Kh. Senyutkin was not well-positioned to create patriotic works that could win popularity with general readers, and his idealized representation of Cossacks inhibited him from conducting a truly scholarly and objective study. But only an insight into M.Kh. Senyutkin's theoretical views on history will enable us to understand why military propaganda developed in the Don region in parallel with historical studies, often by some of the most prominent amateur historians, and their creations were often difficult to unambiguously categorize either as a research or propaganda genre.

The remainder of "A Look on the History of Don Cossacks", which interprets the history of Don Cossacks according to the views, as described above, is less interesting to us. We can simply state that attempts to idealize Cossacks and justify their shameful actions by military and religious motives are taken to extremes there. For example, the 18-19th century history was described by M.Kh. Senyutkin through the prism of wars and biographies of F.P. Denisov and M.I. Platov, and

the author employs the following maxim to characterize it: “In all the wars, they (Cossacks – A.P.) are at the forefront: they are the first to start and the last to finish engagements with the enemy” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 183). On the other hand, speaking about Cossack uprisings against the Russian state, M.Kh. Senyutkin writes: “Revolts have always been an anomaly in the life of the Cossacks who have been devoutly faithful to their tsars from time immemorial. Some historians, by distorting the true causes of the indignation, in vain exert themselves to find in them a pretext to make sweeping accusation against all Cossacks. History proves that Don Cossacks were never fond of such wrong phenomena of the public life and with admirable zeal they hurried to quench the flames as soon as possible, they break out” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 181). Even Cossacks’ propensity to plunder those who attacked the Don was justified by the author because they “were perhaps guided by the examples of Jews who conquered the once Promised Land” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 167).

Interestingly, this time M.Kh. Senyutkin came within touching distance of creating a full-fledged propaganda text. Some of the episodes he recounted were already suitable for full-fledged military patriotic propaganda of the early 20th century. For example, the picture of F.P. Denisov’s first battle thanks to its outright mythologization and dubious realism anticipates the descriptions of the acclaimed exploits of K.F. Kryuchkov during World War I. “Denisov, like fabulous Russian bogatyr Ilya Muromets, sat without stirring in his Pyatiizbyanskaya stanitsa for thirty years, as if summoning up his strength to amaze the world with his heroic prowess. <...>. Once Field Marshal Rumyantsev, when he looked through a spyglass at the sides fighting in a battle (this was the famous Battle of Larga), was surprised to notice some horseman, in a light blue caftan, on a white horse, striking each Turkish and Tatar warrior who ran into him, and wherever he turned, Turks and Tatars fled from him in terror! Marveling at the art and courage of the stranger, the count wished to know who it was, and when, after claiming the victory, the brave man in the blue caftan was introduced to him, the field marshal’s first question was: ‘Who are you?’ ‘I am Cossack Denisov’, the stranger answered”, M.Kh. Senyutkin wrote (Senyutkin, 1866b: 183-184). For comparison, here is an excerpt describing the military exploits of K.F. Kryuchkov from a 1914 brochure with undisguised propaganda contents: “Kozma Kryuchkov on his fast horse outdistanced his comrades and was the first to storm into the enemy detachment. The other Cossacks who drew up in time saw Kryuchkov for a moment, surrounded by the Prussians and chopping them right and left with his sabre. Then, people and horses – everything merged a close fight. <...>. At this time, two Prussians with pikes pounced on Kryuchkov, trying to throw him from the saddle, but Kryuchkov grabbed the enemy pikes with his hands, jerked at them, and unhorsed both Germans. After that, armed with a Prussian pike, Kryuchkov rushed into battle again” (Nelyubin, 1914: 13-14). With all dissimilar details of the of the two descriptions, the literary and journalistic similarity of their genre is of little doubt. Such passages would have certainly been incongruous in a research work.

Therefore, the main part of “A Look on the History of the Don Host” is a succinct description of the history of Don Cossacks, containing literary and journalistic features, which could have been leveraged as military propaganda with much greater success than M.Kh. Senyutkin’s previous works. However, the author himself considered the text exclusively as an epilogue to his collected writings, and, to our knowledge, never sought to publish it in a serial title that was more accessible to the general public. This explains why “A Look on the History of the Don Host” was actually forgotten (we only managed to uncover a reference to in the work by A.A. Kirillov, who insisted that this material “merits special attention of the Don historian”, the attention the author never received (Kirillov, 1909: 20).

As we are now acquainted with M.Kh. Senyutkin’s views on the role of history as an area of scholarly interest and on the importance of historical research, we can much better understand two of his patriotic stories, published in The Don Military Gazette soon after the end of the Crimean War. Although contemporaries considered them to be literary works, this is actually not quite right (Strukov, 1878: 53-54). In fact, the works reproduced accounts from the heroes of the Crimean and Caucasian wars – Pyotr Filin (“An Episode from the Crimean Campaign”) and Osip Zubov (“The Old Hunter in the War”), which had undergone ostensible literary adaptation. Again, we can emphasize the resemblance of the texts with the writings of other contemporaries: as we noted in previous papers, it was from the time of the Crimean War when Don patriotic literature developed a crucial plotline – a “panegyric for a historical or a living hero, with a claim to historical credibility, which in fact, however, will hardly lend itself to any verification and is founded on

hearsay and all kinds of stories, and sometimes even just the author's imagination (Peretyatko, 2019: 17).

However, M.Kh. Senyutkin's materials have salient features meaning that the author did not rush at all to believe in the accounts given by heroes of past wars; moreover, he made some attempts yet very tremulous to verify them. For example, he compared the story of P. Filin with the reports of two regimental commanders (Senyutkin, 1866b: 205). He checked the story related by O. Zubov with press articles about him (Senyutkin, 1866b: 68). So, it is likely that M.Kh. Senyutkin himself treated the works of his not as literary, but as historical writings, a kind of the original source publication. This sheds light on why he published the texts after the Crimean War ended, when they became no longer relevant in terms of military propaganda.

The plot and composition of "An Episode from the Crimean Campaign" and "The Old Hunter in the War" are constructed in the same way. The author happens upon a war hero, starts asking him and writes down the first-hand accounts, filled with admiration for the deed of arms. At the same time, "An Episode from the Crimean Campaign" is conceptually much cruder and less shallow in content. The narrator, P. Filin, was not provided with any characterization by the author, the latter only mentions that Filin was a gymnasium student before the war (Senyutkin, 1866b: 63). And the story itself is rather depersonalized. He describes only two episodes: a battle between Russians and Turks near Yevpatoria (Senyutkin, 1866b: 63-66) and the subsequent awarding of Cossacks (Senyutkin, 1866b: 66-67). In the battle, the key role is given not to P. Filin, but to his commander, Sergeant (uryadnik) Pismenskov, who not only led the detachment with courage and skill without panicking, but also delivered a speech before the battle, which bore surprising correspondence with M.Kh. Senyutkin's views: "Boys! We have now a chance to show our worth. Let us prove in practice that we are no cowards, that we, like our glorious ancestors, can defeat enemies and would rather die for our faith, our Tsar and our fatherland than turn tail" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 64). The very description of the battle is given in a very truncated manner: "Our hearts flared up... With a cry 'Attack!' we charged at the enemy... The Turks, after a short resistance, were beaten and fled" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 64). However, there is an interesting scene in P. Filin's story, which lends credibility and a kind of persuasive literary power to the whole account: the narrator himself got stuck in thick mud on a lake shore during the battle, his horse got bogged down in the ooze, and he describes in the greatest detail exactly how he struggled to free the horse while reinforcements arrived to the Turks and his own detachment already began to retreat (Senyutkin, 1866b: 64).

And yet, the combat description proper of "An Episode from the Crimean Campaign" is rather stereotyped with the gist running that a Cossack detachment, impressed by the patriotic speech of its commander, defeated a numerically superior detachment of Turks. Odd as it may seem, the second episode – the episode where the distinguished Cossacks are decorated for courage – is more thoughtful and speaks better about the author. We would like to give in full the part of the greatest conceptual significance. "Meanwhile, another joy awaited me. Hardly had I, upon arrival from the section, made myself comfortable for rest in the apartment of a friend of Cornet Khoperskov, then again I received an order – to present myself immediately to their Imperial Highnesses, Grand Dukes Nicholas and Michael Nikolaevich, who were in the Crimea at the time. Upon my arrival, Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevich asked me with kindness: 'Well, tell us how you distinguished yourself'. When I recounted to them in words how it all happened, His Highness went to his room, brought out a pocket watch with a gold chain, and, bestowing it on me, said: 'This is your reward from my brother and me, and besides, we will ask the commander-in-chief to award you a George'. Deeply moved by their benevolent attitude towards me, I bowed, unable then to find words to express my most heartfelt gratitude" (Senyutkin, 1866b: 66). This almost parodic veneration for the members of the imperial family and the delight of meeting them, combined with Sergeant Pismenskov's speech before the battle, allow us to more accurately interpret the underlying idea of "An Episode from the Crimean Campaign". As a reminder, M.Kh. Senyutkin considered it crucial to learn from historical examples, and from the story of P. Filin allows for an inference that victories are achieved by Cossacks not just thanks to their patriotism, but thanks to patriotism with a definite monarchical coloring.

The story "The Old Hunter in the War" is deeper and much more elaborate. The figure of the narrator, O. Zubov, is essential here as the man appears to personify perhaps even the ideal of an ordinary Cossack for the author. M.Kh. Senyutkin set a specific stress that in the outward

appearance of his character, “there was nothing noteworthy: small in stature, a lean old-looking face, gray eyes with a meek expression, a medium physique, a Cossack manner in movements” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 68). However, O. Zubov was notable for a silver cross he wore on his neck, granted by Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and for the glory that his name won after the Crimean War (Senyutkin, 1866b: 68). The very encounter between M.Kh. Senyutkin and O. Zubov is key for understanding the idea of the story: a young official met an old hero on business, when the latter was delighted to learn that he was again assigned to serve in the theater of military operations, in the Caucasus, and, together with his colleagues, could not but ask him about past events (Senyutkin, 1866b: 68-69). O. Zubov described the past in detail, but without exaggeration, “sensing the value of his military feats, <but> not attaching too great importance to them” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 69). The old Cossack did not seek fame, but was eager to serve the throne and his home land, and even “was sorry that he had been the only one of all Don Cossacks, who happened to take part in sorties near Sevastopol” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 69).

And the stories of O. Zubov only intensified and complemented the image of an inconspicuous hero, created by M.Kh. Senyutkin right at the start of his narration. The renowned warrior began his recital with a statement that he “is not the same in words as he is in deeds”, and if he could have also “easily write”, he would have become an officer long ago (Senyutkin, 1866b: 69-70). Further, it turned out that the old Cossack joined the army as early as in 1823, took part in the Caucasian War and in the suppression of the Polish Uprising of 1830–1831, and already at that time “for his courage was one of the most reckless Cossacks”, but was passed over for awards and ranks (Senyutkin, 1866b: 70-71). Interestingly, the only award mentioned of the time was received by him not for a military feat, but for rescuing a woman and a child from a fire in a Polish village (Senyutkin, 1866b: 71-72). In 1845, O. Zubov retired by age, but the Crimean War broke out, and he could no longer sit idly in his home village: “I heard rumors that many peasants joined militia and set off to help the army – to defend their faith, their tsar and fatherland with all their might and main. It was then that I also felt a strong urge to go there. I thought to myself: Good God! My fatherland is being menaced by enemies, everyone, even peasants are arming themselves, but for me it is as if nothing had happened – I am sitting untroubled in my smithy and hammering iron” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 72). A certain anonymous Cossack, having learned about the old man’s wish to join the army, offered him 800 rubles and all his equipment as long as O. Zubov “replaces him on duty”, but the future hero rejected such an offer, regarding it as humiliating (Senyutkin, 1866b: 72).

Near Sevastopol, O. Zubov indeed showed himself as one of the true “warriors of Christ, who consecrated themselves to eternal war with Mohammedans for the faith of Christ, for Orthodox Russia”. He was even more in his element on the battlefield than in a peaceful village: “How well I kept out of misconduct, sir, when I was a soldier serving, so to say, on death’s doorstep! If you think, what life I lead here – only sins. And there, I will tell you in truth, not a single sin, not a single evil thought did ever come into my mind. I used to light an icon lampion before an icon in my dugout at night and pray, reading psalms from the psalter of prophet-king David. And I used to be so light of heart!” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 73). And again M.Kh. Senyutkin delivers idealized and conditional descriptions of actual combat operations, as he did in “An Episode from the Crimean Campaign” or in “A Look on the History of the Don Host”: “As we drew nearer to the battery, we unexpectedly with shouts ‘Charge!’ rushed at drowsy Brits; stabbed many of them and took six people prisoner with the gun” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 74-75). Still, interesting episodes of a soldier’s everyday life slip out now and then in the story, similar to that which occurred with P. Filin and his horse that got stuck in the mud. For example, O. Zubov recollected how he once escorted a captured Englishman to the Russian positions, and when they came under a fire storm, the Englishman cried something – it seemed to the Cossack that the prisoner was afraid to die from a friendly bullet and shouted ‘Hurry, Russ, Hurry, Russ!’” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 76). However, it turned out later that the captured English colonel could not speak Russian (Senyutkin, 1866b: 76).

Yet again, the final part of the story is most substantial to obtain an insight into the ideological core of the narration. The fact was that, when O. Zubov had returned from the Crimean War distinguished a hero to his village, he again very quickly got bored. “Nothing gratifies my heart. Without war, I seem to be orphaned at home. I don’t know what to put my hands to. To forge iron again – I already feel rather ashamed about it; to work in the field – my body got too frail for it, but to live in idleness is a sin” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 78). “Who is a true warrior, he will soon get

bored at home”, O. Zubov concluded and applied to be enlisted in the army field forces in the Caucasus (Senyutkin, 1866b: 78). And M.Kh. Senyutkin, when seeing off the “hero of Sevastopol”, thought what a “wonderful man” he was: “While many seek repose for themselves in their younger days, he is an eternal hunter on the war even in his old age” (Senyutkin, 1866b: 79).

It is clearly visible that O. Zubov really fitted well into the image of an ideal Cossack, reconstructed from other works of M.Kh. Senyutkin. A true warrior of Christ, who hunts for a battle, but fights mainly against infidel Muslims, Turks and Caucasian highlanders; a devout believer saying prayers in a dugout under enemy fire; devoted to the imperial family and wearing the cross given by the empress; and, for all that, he was no doubt a merciful person capable of rescuing the family of a Pole, a former enemy of the empire, from the blaze. We may perhaps say that for a character of serious literature, O. Zubov received an excessively idealized and smooth portrait. However, within the confines of the patriotic genre, his image looks very well-positioned, to our mind. Using the real story of the old Cossack as starting point, M.Kh. Senyutkin successfully created a figure of an inconspicuous hero, memorable and spirited, differing from characters in his other works. It is not fortuitous that in our days the story “The Old Hunter in the War” has suddenly emerged as relevant on the Internet: we found out several popular patriotic texts that either directly refer to it, or integrate word-for-word borrowings ([Legendarnyi uryadnik...](#); [Bichekhvost](#)). Therefore, in other circumstances, the patriotic stories of M.Kh. Senyutkin could have been duly appreciated and have given birth to the Don military propaganda. Alas, they were published too late already when the Crimean War had ended, and The Don Military Gazette began to wind down its propaganda activities. And, besides, the author himself positioned them not as propaganda, but as historical texts.

4. Conclusion

We would like now to offer a summary for some of the findings from our analysis of the military patriotic component in M.Kh. Senyutkin’s creative work. They can be crystallized into the following points.

1) M.Kh. Senyutkin’s attention to military propaganda was spontaneous and prompted by external circumstances. Being a certified lawyer, with, obviously, a vocation for the job, he was not interested in literary writing and historical research until he was appointed editor of The Don Military Gazette, furthermore he was not engaged in military propaganda until the start of the Crimean War. It is most appropriate to consider his military agitation efforts as civil position exercising, as a reaction of a person with patriotic feelings towards Don Cossacks and the Russian Empire to a situation when his “fatherland is being menaced by enemies”. M.Kh. Senyutkin’s writings clearly show that in such a situation he considered it unacceptable to continue with his usual work “as if nothing had happened”. In these settings, having no combat experience, the Don author endeavored to serve the empire to the best of his capabilities and transformed The Don Military Gazette into a military propaganda mouthpiece by dramatically increasing the number of military patriotic publications in the medium.

2) M.Kh. Senyutkin did not look on his works as propaganda materials (he may not have known the word at all in the first place), but historical texts, and in this regard he estimated the military patriotic component as absolutely indispensable to historical research. Unlike most of his contemporaries, M.Kh. Senyutkin expressly framed his views on historical studies, as he wrote a work specifically on this issue, “A Look on the History of the Don Host”. It demonstrates that for the Don author, history was a model to take action in the present and in the future. As for the history of Don Cossacks, he regarded it mainly as a military history, a chronicle of feats that were to set an inspiring example for contemporary Cossacks. As a result, M.Kh. Senyutkin did not demarcate the borderline between history and military propaganda at all, and his own writings were characterized by genre ambiguity with a combination of historical research and literary journalism features.

3) The genre ambiguity of M.Kh. Senyutkin’s works negatively affected their quality and demand among readers. With regard to quality, the early works of the Don author are weakest of all, “Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Devlet Giray and Pugachev” in the first place, where the format of thorough research came into conflict with the undisguised patriotic content and intention of the work. Over time, M.Kh. Senyutkin improved his skills both as a scholar and as a propagandist, and, although he never overcame the genre ambiguity, his later works were visibly

dominated either by a scholarly (“Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Nogai Tatars”) or military patriotic (“A Look on the History of the Don Host”) component. Nevertheless, since the Don researcher did not separate historical and journalistic works, he chose very unsuitable places to print them – he published academic and highly specialized “Military Activities of Don Cossacks against Nogai Tatars” in a Russian national periodical intended for a general reading audience, and “A Look on the History of the Don Host” became an epilogue to a rare and not very popular book. And two patriotic texts, defined by contemporaries as short stories with a potential to create a foundation for the Don military propaganda, were viewed by M.Kh. Senyutkin as a publication of historical sources and came out too late, in 1858, when attention to the history of the Crimean War already started dwindling.

It is important to understand that M.Kh. Senyutkin was a typical figure for the Don patriotic propaganda in the period of the Crimean War. One of our previous papers showed that the authors of emerging propaganda texts in The Don Military Gazette were mainly people for whom the use of literature was spontaneous and was not so much a literary move, but a civil act (Peretyatko, 2018: 44-46). And in this paper, we found out that the genre ambiguity and several other more peculiar features brought M.Kh. Senyutkin’s texts closer to the works of his Don Cossack contemporaries. As a result, thanks to explanations provided by M.Kh. Senyutkin to underpin the specific features of his writings, we can understand why the Don propaganda during the Crimean War was precisely what it was and what the causes lay behind its strengths and shortcomings.

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