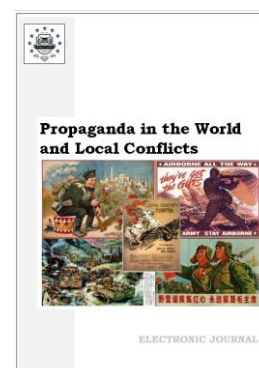


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## The Newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” (1992–1997) as a Historical Source

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### Abstract

This article examines the monthly newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” as a historical source for the period 1992–1997 in the south of Russia.

Issues of the monthly newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii,” which was published in Sochi, Russian Federation, in the years 1992–1993 and again after a hiatus in 1996–1997, were this study’s sources. A total of fourteen issues were published (five issues in 1992, from August to December; four in 1993, from January to April; one in 1996, in December; and four in 1997, the first three from January to March, and the fourth a double issue for April-May).

The complete run of the newspaper is held in the electronic library of the Cherkas Global University (Washington, DC, USA) and in the Library of Congress (Washington, DC, USA).

The present author applied the content analysis method, which is usually employed in academic research of this genre. Content analysis serves as a standard research method in the social sciences in cases that require quantitative analysis of texts with subsequent interpretation of their textual content.

The author finds that the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” serves as a valuable source of information on the creation of volunteer units in the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The materials presented convey the atmosphere of the situation in the early 1990s in the south of Russia. During its existence, the newspaper greatly increased the quality of the publication, and regular columns appeared. In addition, the newspaper published exclusive information about local conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact countries.

**Keywords:** Vestnik Leib-Gvardii, newspaper, 1992–1997, source, collapse of the Soviet Union, volunteer movement.

### 1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 provoked a significant patriotic outpouring in the territory of Russia; volunteer units, created in memory of the pre-revolutionary Russian army or the White Guard during the Civil War, began to arise spontaneously in the country. By 1992, such volunteer organizations existed in almost all the major cities of the Russian Federation. Enthusiasts, history lovers, and monarchists participated in the formation of these units, and the Cossacks, whose revitalization had begun, also played a prominent role. Early in 1992, one such organization sprang up in the city of Sochi, an organization which became the military-patriotic club the “Life Guards Semenovskiy Regiment.” As is well known, the regiment began its history in 1692 during the reign of Emperor Peter I as a “play (*poteshnyi*) regiment” and existed as a military organization until 1917.

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An attempt was made to form a volunteer unit in honor of this organization in Sochi. As early as August 1992 the organization's press organ was founded—the monthly newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii”.

## 2. Materials and methods

Issues of the monthly newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” which was published in Sochi, Russian Federation, in the years 1992–1993 and again after a hiatus in 1996–1997, served as sources for this study. A total of fourteen issues were published (five issues in 1992, from August to December; four in 1993, from January to April; one in 1996, in December; and four in 1997, the first three from January to March, and the fourth a double issue for April-May).

The complete run of the newspaper is held in the electronic library of the Cherkas Global University (Washington, DC, USA) and in the Library of Congress (Washington, DC, USA).

This study employs the method of content analysis, which is usually applied in academic research of this genre. Content analysis is a standard research method in the social sciences in cases that require quantitative analysis of texts with subsequent interpretation of their textual content.

## 3. Discussion and results

References to the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” are rare but do exist. For example, the seventh issue of the newspaper, from 1993, was deposited in the Perm State Archive of Socio-Political History ([PermGASPI, f. 574, op. 1, d. 12](#)).

Thus, the monthly newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” appeared chronologically from 1992 to 1997. From May 1993 to November 1996, however, the newspaper experienced a hiatus in its publication. Consequently, one can divide the publication history of the newspaper into two chronological periods: the first during the years 1992–1993, and the second during the period 1996–1997. Throughout the entire period, A. A. Cherkasov published the newspaper: the newspaper's first issue contained no information about the editor, while the second issue published an address for letters specifying A. Cherkasov's name; this information also appeared in subsequent issues during the years 1992–1993. Only beginning with the eleventh issue in 1997 did the publication name its editorial board, which consisted of two people—second lieutenant of the Guard A. A. Cherkasov and junior non-commissioned officer E. A. Khramova. One may learn of the subsequent fate of the publisher of the “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” from the article “Aleksandr Cherkasov: A Scholar, Publisher, and Organizer of Research Collaborations (to the 20th Anniversary of the Scholar's Research and Pedagogical Activity)” ([Tarakanov, Ludwig, 2019: 914–920](#)). In 1999, Alexander Arvelodovich Cherkasov finished university and began working at Sochi State University. In 2002 he defended his PhD thesis, and in 2007 he received his doctorate, becoming a Doctor of Historical Sciences. He founded a large publishing house (Academic Publishing House Researcher s. r. o.), which today traces its history to 1992, that is, to the founding of the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” ([Tarakanov, Ludwig, 2019: 914](#)).

Now let us turn to the bulletin itself. Throughout its publication, the newspaper appeared in A4 format on two sheets (four pages). Moreover, in 1992, all five issues were handwritten and reproduced on a copying machine. From January 1993, a typewriter was used for typesetting. From 1996, the quality of the layout increased dramatically, in all likelihood due to the use of a more modern typewriter and to efforts to design the newspaper's format.

**The first period (1992–1993).** During this period, one change in the name of the organization occurred. While the first issue of the newspaper was the publication of a club, from the second issue the newspaper appeared as the publication of a reserve platoon of the Life Guards of the Semenovskiy Regiment. That is, on August 22 and 23, 1992, the First All-Russian Monarchist Congress was held in the city of Taganrog, at which, in addition to business matters, the creation of a United Imperial Corps from volunteer units took place. Colonel G. V. Sarychev, commander of the Moscow Life Guards of the Semenovskiy Regiment, was elected commander of the corps. At the congress, it also emerged that organizations with the same name had been established in Moscow and Sochi; as a result, Colonel Sarychev invited a representative from Sochi to lead a reserve platoon of the Moscow regiment ([Tragedy..., 1992: 1](#)). The newspaper was the publication of the reserve platoon of the Life Guards of the Semenovskiy Regiment from September 1992 to April 1993, that is, for the entire first period of its publication.

In the first period of the newspaper's existence, a double-headed eagle on the background of a sword was placed on the first page (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. The first page of the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” in the period 1992–1993

The section in the newspaper, especially in the initial period of its publication, were not regular. Up to half of an issue's volume was spent on local news coverage, followed by editorial articles or recollections of military conflicts. For example, an interview with Sergei Vladimirovich Aliamovsky, a participant in the conflict in Transdnier, appeared in the first issue (Interview..., 1992: 4). Beginning with the second issue, excerpts from Leonid Belinsky's work “A Catechism of Monarchism” (Belinskii, 1992; Belinskii, 1992a; Belinskii, 1992b) were published.

From the fifth issue, a news column appeared in the newspaper, as well as a “Military Imperial Song” column. For example, among the news was the celebration of the tercentenary of the Life Guards of the Semenovskiy Regiment (300-letie ..., 1992: 1-2), and the publication of Leonid Belinsky's work continued on the last page (Belinskii, 1992c).

From the sixth issue, titles for the news items appeared, such as “A parade of monarchist troops,” “Celebrations of the Kuban Cossack army,” and others. In the column on military imperial song, the composition “Monologue with Russia” was published (Monolog..., 1993: 3). On the last (fourth) page, the presentation of Leonid Belinsky's work continued (Belinskii, 1993).

The newspaper's eighth issue published materials concerning the Ossetian-Ingush conflict of the years 1992–1993 (Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt, 1993: 3) and information about the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict of 1992 and 1993 (Abkhazo-gruzinskii konflikt, 1993: 3).

A large number of local items appeared in the ninth issue of the newspaper, specifically “The Composite Cossack Regiment of the Life Guards,” “Easter celebration,” “A chronicle of the cadet corps,” “On patrol,” and others. One page contained materials on the formation of the Composite Cossack Regiment of the Life Guards (Leib-gvardii svodnyi..., 1993: 3). The last item in the last issue of the newspaper's first period was the continuation of Leonid Belinsky's work “A Catechism of Monarchism” (Belinskii, 1993a).

**Second period (1996–1997).** In December 1996, the newspaper resumed its publication as the print organ of the headquarters of the southern Russian district of the United Imperial Corps. Judging by the materials published in the newspaper, one can determine that the district included several volunteer units, including the following: the First Separate Terek Cossack *Sotnia* [i.e., a “hundred”] (Maisky, Kabardino-Balkaria), the First Troop of the Fifth Hussars of the Alexandrinsky Regiment (Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria), the First Separate Kuban Cossack Platoon (Krasnodar, Krasnodar Krai).

The title page of the newspaper changed only from the February 1997 issue (Figure 2). The double-headed eagle was replaced by a shield with the letter “M” and a crown. The newspaper’s title incorporated Old Slavonic orthography.



Fig. 2. The first page of the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii” from February 1997

Beginning with the tenth issue of the newspaper in 1996, a new column, “Everyday life and holidays in the district,” appeared. This column established that the district was founded on December 31, 1994 (Budni i prazdniki..., 1996: 2). This explains why the year 1994 was part of the newspaper’s title design and indicates that the district’s emblem was placed on the newspaper. Igor Girkin’s recollections concerning the Second Russian Volunteer Detachment in Bosnia in the years 1992–1993 were published on the newspaper’s fourth page (Girkin, 1996: 4).

In 1997, the district’s personnel at that time had developed brochures for internal use entitled “In support of the command staff of units of the U. I. C. [United Imperial Corps].”<sup>1</sup> Some of these materials appeared in the newspaper “Vestnik Leib-Gvardii”. For example, the paper’s eleventh issue published the duties of military ranks (*Obiazannosti voinskikh chinov*, 1997: 3). Information for quartermasters also began to appear; for example, in Sochi in January 1997, a set of camouflage uniforms cost 230 thousand rubles (*Intendantskaia informatsiia*, 1997: 3). This makes it possible to ascertain the cost of uniforms in the region. The newspaper’s fourth page contained a continuation of the memoir about the Second Russian Volunteer Detachment in Bosnia in the period 1992–1993 (Girkin, 1997: 4).

In the twelfth issue, the paper continued to present the column on the everyday life and holidays of the district. Information from the district’s localities now constituted 75 percent of the newspaper. Along with news from Sochi, items about regional matters began to appear. Thus, in the article “Search operation” from Nalchik, district officials reported on attempts to find the grave of General Krukovsky (*Poiskovaia rabota*, 1997: 3). The fourth page of the newspaper contained the continuation of Igor Girkin’s recollections of the fighting in Bosnia in the years 1992–1993 (Girkin, 1997a: 4).

In the thirteenth issue of the newspaper, the editorial board turned to the “Historical Perspective” genre and presented material about the military schools of the Russian Empire. (*Istoricheskii pakurs*, 1997: 3). The editor devoted the fourth page to continuing the reminiscences of Igor Girkin (Girkin, 1997b: 4).

In the fourteenth and last issue of the newspaper, three pages contained materials about the everyday life of the district: awards, memorable dates (for example, May 23, 1997, marked four years since the consecration of the flag in Sochi), the opening of a representative office, and field

<sup>1</sup> This work had been prepared in 1995 (*Ob"iavlennii*, 1997: 3)

training. The column “Historical Perspective” published an article about the cadet corps of the Russian Empire ([Istoricheskii pakurs, 1997a: 3](#)). The last installment of Igor Girkin’s memoir about the conflict in Bosnia concluded the fourteenth issue ([Girkin, 1997c: 4](#)).

#### 4. Conclusion

In summarizing this analysis of the materials in the monthly newspaper “*Vestnik Leib-Gvardii*”, I would like to note that this organ serves as a valuable source of information on the creation of volunteer units in the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The materials presented convey the atmosphere of the situation in the early 1990s in southern Russia. During its existence, the newspaper greatly increased the quality of the publication, and regular columns appeared. In addition, the newspaper published exclusive information about local conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact countries.

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