

**Russian-Soviet Unconventional
Wars in the Caucasus,
Central Asia, and Afghanistan**

by Dr. Robert F. Baumann



FOREWORD

In recent years, the U.S. Army has paid increasing attention to the conduct of unconventional warfare. However, the base of historical experience available for study has been largely American and overwhelmingly Western. In *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan*, Dr. Robert F. Baumann makes a significant contribution to the expansion of that base with a well-researched analysis of four important episodes from the Russian-Soviet experience with unconventional wars.

Primarily employing Russian sources, including important archival documents only recently declassified and made available to Western scholars, Dr. Baumann provides an insightful look at the Russian conquest of the Caucasian mountaineers (1801—59), the subjugation of Central Asia (1839—81), the reconquest of Central Asia by the Red Army (1918—33), and the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979—89). The history of these wars—especially as it relates to the battle tactics, force structure, and strategy employed in them—offers important new perspectives on elements of continuity and change in combat over two centuries. This is the first study to provide an in-depth examination of the evolution of the Russian and Soviet unconventional experience on the predominantly Muslim southern periphery of the former empire. There, the Russians encountered fierce resistance by peoples whose cultures and views of war differed sharply from their own. Consequently, this Leavenworth Paper addresses not only issues germane to combat but to a wide spectrum of civic and propaganda operations as well.

In particular, these cases illustrate the problems commonly confronted by conventional military powers when fighting unconventional foes in undeveloped theaters. Such problems include not only adjustment to the tactics of an unfamiliar enemy but the adaptation of one's own tactics and equipment to constraints imposed on them by terrain, climate, and distance. Political and economic considerations also played a central role and contributed to important shifts in Russian and Soviet strategic designs. Thus, a common thread running through each of these studies is the challenge armies face in conceptualizing and implementing changes after combat operations have begun.

Finally, Dr. Baumann considers broad patterns of conduct apparent in these wars and even compares them with the American experience in similar conflicts. This study will be of broad interest to military professionals and historians alike.

April 1993



RICHARD M. SWAIN
Colonel, Field Artillery
Director, Combat Studies Institute



Director

COL Richard M. Swain

Coordinating Instructor/Executive Officer

MAJ Rodolfo R. Diaz-Pons

Instructor Team I

LTC Richard V. Barbuto, Chief	LTC Michael J. Silverstone
MAJ Robert E. Connor	MAJ George J. Mordica III
Dr. George W. Gawrych	Dr. Samuel J. Lewis
Dr. Michael D. Pearlman	

Instructor Team II

LTC Richard L. Kiper, Chief	LTC Donald B. Connelly
LTC Andrew N. Morris	MAJ Stephen D. Coats
MAJ Kenneth R. Dombroski	Dr. Robert F. Baumann
Dr. Gary J. Bjorge	Dr. Thomas M. Huber

Instructor Team III

Dr. William G. Robertson, Chief	LTC Philip J. Baker Jr.
MAJ William M. Campsey	MAJ Scott R. McMeen
Dr. Jack J. Gifford	Dr. Christopher R. Gabel
Dr. Jerold E. Brown	

Historical Services Committee

LTC Robert D. Ramsey III, Chief	Marilyn A. Edwards, Editor
Donald L. Gilmore, Editor	Carolyn D. Conway, Editorial Assistant

Staff

SSG Samuel L. Brown	SGT Dwayne L. Borders
Sharon E. Torres	

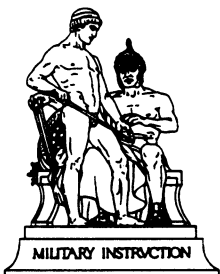
Leavenworth Papers are published by the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of Defense or any element thereof. Leavenworth Papers are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Leavenworth Papers US ISSN 0195 3451

Cover: Commander Ahmad Shah Masoud, shown inspecting a captured Russian AKS-74 with an underbarrel 40-mm BG-15 grenade launcher

Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan

by Dr. Robert F. Baumann



Printed courtesy of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.

Combat Studies Institute
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baumann, Robert F., 1952-

Russian-Soviet unconventional wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and
Afghanistan / by Robert F. Baumann.

p. cm. — (Leavenworth papers ; no. 20)

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Russia—History, Military—1801-1917. 2. Soviet Union—
History, Military. I. Title. II. Series.

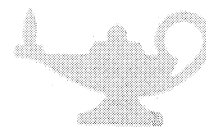
DK51.B38 1993

947'.07—dc20

92-36395

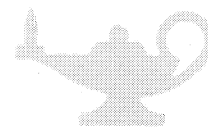
CIP

Contents



Illustrations	v
Tables	vii
Preface	ix
Chapter	
1. Russian Subjugation of the Central Caucasus: The War Against the Mountaineers	1
2. The Conquest of Central Asia	49
3. The Liquidation of the Basmachi Resistance, 1918—1933	91
4. The Soviet-Afghan War	129
5. Conclusions	211

Illustrations



Maps

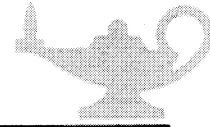
1. Russia's southern frontier in the nineteenth century	4
2. The Caucasus and Transcaucasia, 1763—1914	6
3. The Akhulgo campaign, 1839	13
4. Russian positions, 4—22 August 1839 (up to the capture of Akhulgo)	18
5. The Dargo campaign, 1845	22
6. The Russians' linkup and final thrust into Dagestan, 1859	31
7. The Khivan campaign, 1873	64
8. The Akhal-Teke campaign, 1880—81	73
9. The storming of Geok Tepe fortress, 12 January 1881	75
10. The Red Army's capture of Bukhara, 1920	110
11. Afghanistan	130
12. Tactical combat in a green zone	162

Tables



1. Vorontsov's column order	24
2. Composition of Russian forces in the Khivan campaign	65
3. Composition of Russian garrisons outside Tashkent	95
4. Soviet losses in Afghanistan, 1979—89	148

Preface



Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Russians adhered to the old Julian calendar, which during the nineteenth century was twelve days behind the modern Gregorian calendar that is in general use today. Nineteenth-century dates cited in this study are in accordance with the custom of that period. For twentieth-century dates, this study, of course, employs the modern calendar.

With regard to transliteration, this manuscript adheres to the Library of Congress system with a couple of exceptions. First, Russian “hard signs” are not transliterated into English. Second, for spellings of names and places, this manuscript uses accepted English spellings where applicable.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of many individuals to the production of this manuscript. Special thanks are due to Robert H. Berlin, E. Willis Brooks, Jerry M. Cooper, Lester W. Grau, Jim Holbrook, Jacob W. Kipp, Bruce W. Menning, Roger J. Spiller, Colonel Richard M. Swain, Graham H. Turbiville, and Lawrence A. Yates for their suggestions and assistance in the research and writing of this study. The author also appreciates the thoughtful observations of colleagues in the Combat Studies Institute (CSI), as well as numerous USACGSC students who read draft versions of this book as part of their course work. Don Gilmore of CSI provided invaluable help in the editing of this manuscript. Carolyn Conway and Marilyn Edwards also played important roles in guiding this Leavenworth Paper through the publication process. Robin Inojos and Al Dulin provided skillful assistance with graphics and maps. Librarians Mary Jo Nelson and Timothy L. Sanz again and again helped obtain difficult-to-locate materials. Cooperation from the Slavic Reference Service at the University of Illinois was also most appreciated.
