

## **The Origin of Military History at the Russian Federation and Caucasus: The Noble Commanders after the Patriotic War**

**Tomoyuki HANADA**

**Research Fellow, Center for Military History**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to clarify the origin of military history regarding the regional security of the current Russian Federation and Caucasus, focusing on the noble commanders of Russian Empire after the Patriotic War (Napoleonic War) on the first half of nineteenth century. During this period, the Russian Empire partly became responsible for sharing the European international order under the Vienna System. The Empire then was colored in military history, expanding its territory and colony as the new great power of the Eastward, conquering Grand Duchy of Finland, Baltic Sea countries, Kingdom of Poland in the west side facing the European nations. At the same time, the Empire continued to colonize into west Siberia regions under the direction of count Michael M. Speransky. Towards the south, it enforces to administrate the New Russia (current the south Ukraine) and Caucasus confronting Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Ruling and absorbing its new political, economic, social and cultural characteristics into the Russian Empire meant a progressive process of the nation and empire building within its new borders.

In particularly, the Russian Empire experienced number of ruling crisis at the Caucasus, notably after the annexation of Georgian Kingdom on September, 1801. And during the Islamic War at the North Caucasus, the Imperial Russian Army could not implement effective military strategy and not conquer Caucasian mountaineers. This level of ruling instability of the Russian Empire was not observed in any other territory and colony.

From these viewpoints, this article focuses on the middle-ranked young noble commanders of the Imperial Russian Army who played important roles at the expanding imperial borders and defending colonial frontiers. Notably, the army generals, Ivan F. Paskevich and Michael M. Vorontsov, who promoted at young ages after the Patriotic War, and implemented ruling the multi-languages, multi-religions, and multi-ethnicities of South Caucasus as the governor-general. In addition, they completed leading strategy against the Islamic leader who recited Muridism (sect of mysticism, Sufism). They truly implemented their ruling power in dual capability, domestic politics and military affairs, and ensured regional order formations at the frontiers of the Empire. On the contrary, Alexander I. Chernyshev was commanding the entire Imperial Russian Army as the Minister of War, and controlling the Caucasian administration from the Petersburg's headquarters. Military history between the Russian Empire and Caucasus could not be without the existence of the three noble commanders, as this article will describe.

### **Paskevich as the Governor-General of Caucasus**

Ivan F. Paskevich (Иван Ф. Паскевич) was born in Poltava in 1782. He was promoted to colonel in 1809, major general in 1810, lieutenant general in 1813, army general in 1826, and to field marshal in 1829. He commanded the 26th infantry division during the Patriotic War and the Imperial Guard the 2nd infantry division after the war.

As the army general, he commanded the Caucasian Forces and launched wars on Persia and the Ottoman Empire, invaded to Armenia, and then annexed Erevan Khan and Nakhchivan Khan, conforming to the Treaty of Torkamanchay. Persia was forced to retreat from the dominance of Caucasus by this Treaty, thus he was celebrated and rewarded as “Count of Erevan.” And as the new governor-general of Caucasus, he criticized his predecessor Alexei P. Ermolov’s domestic administration as “too enlightened” and so Paskevich wanted to establish a colonial ruling system more rigorously, given the Tsar’s desire and national benefit. Members of the Imperial Council and the Minister of Justice formed the Caucasian Special Committee at the Petersburg and this central committee superior to the local government-general had direct ruling to the South Caucasus.

But after that the outbreak of the November Uprising in 1830 (the Cadet Revolution), he soon dispatched to Warsaw to crush the armed rebellion of the imperial west borders. He was appointed to the Viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland, declared martial law, abolished the constitution of this country, banned national congress (Sejm) and ensured security and police actions within the Kingdom. He was truly regarded as a noble commander who greatly contributed to the ruling stability of the Caucasus and Poland in the frontline of Russian Empire.

### **Chernyshev as the Minister of War**

Alexander I. Chernyshev (Александр И. Чернышёв) was born in Moscow in 1786, and was promoted to colonel in 1810, major general in 1812, lieutenant general in 1814, and to army general in 1827. He experienced a military attaché in Paris before the Patriotic War, and then was assigned to the commander of cavalry division and the Chairman of the Special Committee about construction of Don Cossack Troops. He was the Chief of Staff of Imperial Russian Army from 1828 to 1832, and appointed to the Minister of War from 1832 to 1852 for twenty years.

He was deeply involved in this committee’s direct ruling of Caucasus as the Minister of War from the imperial center, and struggled to sort out the political and military turmoil. But in North Caucasus various mountain ethnic groups at Chechen and Dagestan were repeated to attack intermittently. They were aiming at the foundation of “Imamate” (an Islamic theocracy state) led by Imam Shamil, showing a slogan of anti-Russian imperialism. In addition, Hadji Murat of Avar Khan took side with them, and enlarged the battle frontline even to Dagestan. Thus the Russian Empire was being exposed to the largest threat at the North Caucasus.

In such a confused situation, Chernyshev assumed the Chairman of the Committee and prepared a draft of the concept of future planning regarding the new Caucasus ruling system. He had

to not only intend to restore the colonial administration in South Caucasus, but also to make a breakthrough in the Caucasian War situation. He completed an investigation report referring to the actual state of Caucasus and addressed to Tsar Nicholas I, stating neither a governor-general system nor a direct ruling from the Petersburg's committee, but newly establishing the Viceroy with strong leadership. He added that the Viceroy should have powerful authorities in both colonial administration and military affairs and fulfill the task of orderly formation ruling Caucasus. These were the historical consequences derived from the Russian Empire's military history with North and South Caucasus. Minister of War Chernyshev also truly played important role in the ruling of Caucasus form imperial center.

### **Vorontsov as Caucasian Viceroy**

Michael S. Vorontsov (Михаил С. Воронцов) was born in St. Petersburg in 1782. He spent his childhood and youth in London with his father who was an ambassador in United of Kingdom. He was promoted to colonel in 1807, major general in 1810, lieutenant general in 1813, army general in 1825, and to field marshal in 1856. During the Patriotic War he commanded the composite grenadiers division under Prince Bagration at the Battle of Borodino 1812 and Battle of Craonne.

After the war he was appointed to the governor-general of New Russia to establish a political and economic milieu in South Russia and to promote interests on the Black Sea coast including the "Eastern Question." He is also well known for his encouraging winery industry development centered by Crimea, and contributing to develop the steamboat businesses basing Odessa and Yalta as intermediate trade ports to realize free trade centered by the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. When he was appointed to the Caucasian Viceroy in 1845, he granted dual positions of Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus Independence Force, thus obtained absolute authority of domestic administration and military affairs. Vorontsov could establish the local ruling system only following the will of Tsar Nicholas I.

During the Caucasian War, as the Commander-in-Chief he concluded that it was impossible to conquer the North Caucasus area in a large battlefield. He emphasized that they needed a "new strategy" that was similar to what was formerly engaged by Ermolov, a war-instructed encircling operation in the mountains that gradually tracked down and repeated small combat that led to the seizing of North. His military strategy paved the way to seal Shamil and Murids deep into the mountains and gained a chance of winning. In particular, he firstly implemented large-scale logging practices and expanded vacant spaces to improve the army's mobility and effectively commanded artillery troop's attack. This strategy had the effect of depriving the mountaineers' living area at the same time. Secondly, logging and expanding vacant spaces enabled to construct new fortresses at Khasav-Yurt, Achihoi and Urus-Martan, while fortress Grozny was refurbished and military roads and main roads in Georgia were constructed.

Under the strategic situation, tactical small-scale on-and-off attacks were continued

intermediately by the Caucasus Independence Force Left Army in the mountain sealing operation. The “new strategy” reflected the local climate and determined the military campaign season. In the mountain where there were lush forests such as Chechen, the attacks implemented in the leaf drop season of fall and winter, while the attacks to other frontlines were regarded ideal in the summer. Taking into adequate consideration of these Caucasus climates, the military strategy enabled the Caucasus Independence Force to capture main fortresses until September 1847, and they were able to force Shamil to gradually retreat deep into the mountains.

During the ten years Vorontsov established new administrative, economic and social policies, and a stable ruling system. And during the Caucasian War, he implemented a decisive military strategy, leading the Russian Empire to victory. He truly contributed to defense the Empire’s borders and frontiers as the Caucasian Viceroy.

### **Conclusion**

The contemporary significance of the above three noble commanders is the need to emphasize the importance of the Caucasus integrity by understanding the backdrops of military history between the Russian Empire and Caucasus. Considering the geopolitical importance of modern Caucasus, this region draws much attention in the viewpoint of regional security such as the abundance of natural resources and military balance. In the Republic of Chechnya, the Russian counter terrorism operations were released in 2009, but international situation remains unstable. And conflict including the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic concerning an “unrecognized state” and the South Ossetia war between the Russian and Georgia reveal the complicated problems involved for the international community. This article is able to contribute to consider future regional security and international perspective by reviewing the characteristics of the multi-language, multi-religion and multiethnic Caucasus, and the by analyzing the military history of Russian Empire.

**(Completed on April 10, 2012)**

### **References**

*Волков, С.В.* Генералитет Российской Империи: энциклопедический словарь генералов и адмиралов от Петра I до Николая II. Центрполиграф, Москва, 2010.

The viewpoints expressed in the above article are of the author’s own, not necessarily those of the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), or of the Ministry of Defense, Japan.  
All rights reserved.  
Contact information is available at the Planning & Management Division,  
Planning & Administration Department, NIDS.  
(URL) <http://www.nids.go.jp>