

Map 9

1856–1859: Before the Final Storming of the “Caucasus Fortress”

Map 10

1860–1864: The End of the War and the Formation of Kuban, Terek, and Daghestan Provinces

The Crimean War of 1853–1856 against the Ottomans and their Anglo-French allies exposed the vulnerability of Russia, especially its Caucasian ports on the Black Sea coast. The allied occupation of Kerch—a major gateway to Anapa and Novorosiisk from the Russian mainland—in 1855 forced the Russian authorities to abandon these cities. They had already evacuated garrisons along the Black Sea Coast Defensive Line. Setbacks experienced during the war made it clear to Russian military strategists that the remaining gaps in imperial control in the Caucasus had to be eliminated.

The capture of Shamil, the leader of the imamate in Daghestan and Chechnya, in 1859 crowned Russia’s military successes under Viceroy Aleksandr Bariatsky and is seen as marking the end of the Caucasus War in the eastern part of the North Caucasus. However, even after the defeat of the imamate, sporadic actions against the imperial authorities continued there. Forced resettlement from the mountains to the lowlands remained one of the main methods used to control populations and territories that were not loyal to the empire. In Chechnya in 1859–1861 some auls (highland villages) were again forced to relocate, and new fortifications and Cossack settlements were put in place. In Circassia, as well, the strategy of advancing the line in this way was central during the final phases of the war and had dire consequences for highlanders there.

In fact, the strategy that Bariatsky applied in 1856–1859 combined the approaches of earlier military leaders, Generals Aleksei Yermolov and Ivan Paskevich, by advancing lines of forts and stanitsas while conducting intensive incursions deep into highlander territories. In 1861–1864 General Nikolai Yevdokimov further refined this strategy during the final subjugation of Circassia.

Maps 9 and 10 reflect the development of Russian lines of

fortification and the first postwar reform of the administrative structure of the North Caucasus. In 1860 the entire Caucasus Defensive Line was abolished, and Kuban, Terek, and Daghestan Provinces were established.

After the abolition of the Caucasus Line Cossack Host (KLKV), the territories it had occupied were divided between the newly established Kuban and Terek Cossack Hosts and their new “Host provinces” (Voiskovye oblasti; territories that were populated, governed, and defended by their respective Hosts), Kuban (which absorbed what had been Black Sea Host Province) and Terek. The creation of the Kuban Host, which also included the western portion of the former KLKV, greatly contributed to the formation of a new identity frame in the North Caucasus for vast numbers of Cossacks, some of whom had “Little Russian” (Ukrainian) roots, while others originated from “Great Russian” provinces (Velikorusskie oblasti). While certain cultural distinctions and even a degree of internal conflict between former Black Sea and “Line” Cossacks (*Chernomortsy* and *Lineitsy*) persisted, the Kuban Cossacks would become a unique instance where these distinctions gradually disappeared, and a new identity emerged among the Cossacks that evolved into a region-specific form of Russianness.

These new “military” provinces, which were established in 1860–1861, included not only Cossack territories but highlander territories that had been under the military governance of the former Caucasus Defensive Line. Kuban Province incorporated part of Circassian territories south of the Kuban (the Right Flank [*flang*] of the former Caucasus Line, which after 1856 had been called its Right Wing [*krylo*]). Terek Province encompassed the territory of the center and the Left Flank of the Caucasus Line as well as Vladikavkaz District (known as the Left Wing in 1856–1860). The third province established in 1860, Daghestan, was not made the home for some newly established Cossack

Host but remained under direct military rule. This province incorporated the highlands of Daghestan and the northern portion of the Caspian Territory (the Derbent Military District, the Shamkhalate of Tarki, and the Khanate of Mekhtuli).

The border between Terek and Daghestan Provinces was originally drawn along the Sulak and Andi Koisu Rivers. A year later, in 1861, Avar and Andi-Tsez communities living along the left bank of these rivers (in Gumbet, Andi, Tekhnutsal, Chamalal, and Unkratl) were incorporated into Daghestan Province. The change was motivated by “ethnic” considerations; however, these considerations would have had little significance had they not been coupled with another factor: the historical, cultural, and economic connections between the Andi-Tsez and Avar communities in the Koisu Valley and communities in Daghestan, something the imperial administration could not ignore. It is clear that the ethnic (or “tribal,” to use imperial terminology) criterion for the setting of administrative boundaries was not applied in isolation—Salatau (Avar Salatavia) was left in Terek Province along with Kumyk District, lying between the Terek and Sulak Rivers. The southern portion of what was the Caspian Territory—Kuba (Kubinsky) District—was incorporated into Shemakha (Shemakhinskaya, later Baku) Province. (The province was renamed when the administrative center was relocated to Baku after the Shemakha earthquake in 1859.) Districts with Lezgi-speaking populations thus wound up divided between two imperial administrative units. However, the 1860 border was not an invention of the empire; it corresponded to the old boundaries that once separated the Kuba Khanate from Kiura and the free communities of Samur Valley.

The borders of Terek Province were initially drawn along the borders of the former military districts of the Caucasus Defensive Line. In particular, Vladikavkaz District (formerly the