

**MILITARY AFFAIRS IN RUSSIA'S GREAT WAR AND
REVOLUTION, 1914–22**

BOOK 3: THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR: MILITARY AND SOCIETY

EDITED BY

**DAVID R. STONE
JONATHAN D. SMELE
GEOFFREY SWAIN
ALEX MARSHALL
STEVEN MARKS
ANDREI V. GANIN**

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Slavica Publishers
Indiana University
1430 N. Willis Drive
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USA

[Tel.] 1-812-856-4186
[Toll-free] 1-877-SLAVICA
[Fax] 1-812-856-4187
[Email] slavica@indiana.edu
[www] <http://www.slavica.com/>

Conclusion: Red Victory

Andrei V. Ganin

To understand the outcome of the Civil War and the subsequent Soviet period of Russian history, it is extremely important to grasp in detail the reasons for the victory of the Red Army. These reasons become especially evident with comparative analysis of the military policy of the Bolsheviks and their opponents. This chapter examines five core themes: leaders; organization; equipment and supply; recruitment and training; and propaganda. It shows that there was far more to the Red Victory than simply their larger number of men.

Leaders

The White armies were led predominantly by senior officers and generals of the old Russian army. The Reds also managed to recruit prerevolutionary commanders, but quite reasonably they never trusted them with full military power, let alone political power. The Bolsheviks themselves, not their military specialists, determined Soviet Russia's military policy. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks proved far better organizers than the old army's officers, who were distinguished by inertia, a lack of initiative, and attachment to routine. As Colonel Aleksei Aleksandrovich fon Lampe wrote of General Anton Ivanovich Denikin, leader of the White movement in southern Russia: "although Denikin is a very decent man, he is undoubtedly narrow and has no sense of how to govern a state.... He is neither a dictator nor a ruler, but instead an honest executor of orders. Even when he makes his own decisions, he remains only that."¹

In the Red Army, such "honest executors of orders," even high-level commanders, were subject to energetic political leadership that successfully handled the coordination of political and military tasks and drove military spe-

¹ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. R-5853 (Lampe fon Aleksei Aleksandrovich), op. 1, d. 9, l. 130 (A. A. fon Lampe, diary, book 31, 1 August–30 November 1922).

cialists to positive efforts. Political leadership for the Whites was often taken by liberals or by Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs), who proved incapable of constructive state administration under crisis conditions and whose reputation in the eyes of the officer corps was poor.²

The former tsarist officers in the Red Army also distrusted the Bolsheviks, but many party leaders showed outstanding organizational abilities and remarkable vigor during the Civil War, which cannot be said of their White counterparts. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin headed the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defense (SRKO), which coordinated Soviet Russia's military and civilian policy from 30 November 1918. Lacking any experience in state administration, Lenin nonetheless managed to ensure the retention of power in his hands and suppress opposition among the party elite, direct the development of the new state and its army, establish a stable and effective central administration, and successfully organize Soviet society for war.

Lev Davidovich Trotskii lacked formal military education to run the Red Army as head of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RVSR) and people's commissar for military and naval affairs, but he managed to create the Red Army practically from scratch and turn it into an effective and powerful armed force. Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, serving as a member of the Central Committee and of the RVSR, clashed with Trotskii but still showed ability as a troubleshooter on problematic fronts that demanded immediate intervention and emergency measures. Professional revolutionary Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov, extraordinary plenipotentiary for Red Army supply and chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, played a major role in feeding the Red Army, as well as in the nationalization, centralization, and restoration of military industry. He did all this with a support staff that by 1921 amounted to only about 500 people.³ Georgii Aleksandrovich Solomon (Isetskii), who served as deputy people's commissar of foreign trade before defecting in 1923 and becoming deeply anticommunist, described Rykov as "a major figure in the Soviet system ... I consider him an impressive person with a real mind and eye for state authority. He understands that the time of revolutionary onslaught has passed. He understands that the time has long since come to call 'halt' and start the real construction of normal life.... An intelligent man and widely educated, with positive opinions, he does not fit well in Soviet Rus-

² See O. R. Airapetov, *Generalny, liberalny i predprinimateli: Rabota na front i na revoliutsiiu (1907–1917)* (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2003); F. A. Gaida, *Liberal'naiia oppozitsiia na putiakh k vlasti (1914–vesna 1917 g.)* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003).

³ A. P. Nenarokov, ed., *Pervoe Sovetskoe pravitel'stvo: Oktiabr' 1917–iiul' 1918* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 71.

sia."⁴ Of course, the latter judgment says a great deal about Solomon's opinion of the Soviet system.

Russian officers generally felt little affection for the Bolsheviks, who nonetheless needed to win their respect. Interestingly, the Bolshevik opponent fon Lampe wrote in his diary for 18/31 May 1920 on the acclaim Lenin had won abroad: "[I]n Trabizond [Turkey] they shout 'Long live Lenin, Enver, and Talalat!' These people have managed to spread their influence even into Asia! I find that we, the old ruling class, were completely incapable of that level of accomplishment!"⁵ Soviet commander in chief Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, former colonel in the old army, assessed the top political commissars of the Red Army during the Civil War. Though his incentives for flattering the Bolsheviks are clear, his remarks are nonetheless instructive:

[T]he exceptional job done in selecting members for the Revolutionary-Military Councils (RVS) of the fronts and armies, and commissars for divisions and smaller units, was quite conspicuous. It was necessary to have a deep knowledge of the qualities of those comrades who received important assignments in the Red Army, and Vladimir Il'ich [Lenin] knew each of them. I knew the members of Front and Army Revolutionary-Military councils most closely, and so my impressions refer mainly to them. I was often surprised by these comrades' familiarity with technical military matters. With respect to their fighting qualities—selflessness, resourcefulness, determination, courage—they were positively forged and hardened by a single school, a single model. It would be possible to give thousands of examples. The strongest proof is that many RVS members were later appointed as army commanders and handled troop command well. Very many unit commissars [primarily responsible for handling political indoctrination] took command of those units and were excellent.⁶

Nor is this an isolated example. Major General Vladimir Karlovich Gondel' gave a surprisingly similar assessment of Nikolai Ivanovich Muralov, the Bolshevik commander of the Moscow Military District: "[I]n the first and

⁴ G. A. Solomon, "Sredi krasnykh vozhdiei (lichno perezhitoe i vidennoe na sovetskoi sluzhbe)," in his *Lenin i ego sem'ia (Ul'ianovy)* (1931; Moscow: Giperboreia-Kuchkovo pole, 2007), 261–62.

⁵ Fon Lampe, diary, book 25, 19 February (N.S.)–14 July 1920 (GARF f. R-5853, op. 1, d. 2, l. 128).

⁶ S. S. Kamenev, *Zapiski o Grazhdanskoi voine i voennom stroitel'stve* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), 35.

all subsequent reports to Muralov, I was surprised that this man, completely devoid of military experience, quickly understood concrete supply and administrative issues, assessed them properly, and made a brief, energetic, and accurate decision.”⁷ Major General Fedor Fedorovich Novitskii gave a similar characterization of his long-time associate Mikhail Vasil’evich Frunze, who “had an amazing ability to quickly understand the newest and most difficult problems, to distinguish the essential from the peripheral, and then distribute assignments among subordinates in accord with their capabilities. He knew how to select people, as if he could guess who was capable of what.”⁸

The most important factor in the Bolsheviks’ victory was their internal unity: a single military-political center, a unifying party doctrine, and the military and economic unity, established by a decree of 1 June 1919, of the various socialist republics created in the wake of the Russian Revolution. There was no such unity in the anti-Bolshevik camp, torn by internal conflicts and contradictions. At the same time, the Bolsheviks benefited from their ability to make compromises and temporary alliances with hostile forces. For example, the Bolsheviks temporarily allied with the anarchists led by Nestor Ivanovich Makhno, who was granted the military rank of “brigade commander.” The Red Army High Command unsuccessfully tried to incorporate his forces in spring 1919 by introducing firm discipline, seeking to stiffen his “anarchist gangs” with detachments of party activists, security officers, sailors, and workers.⁹ At the end of 1919, the Reds were willing to conclude a similar alliance with Ukrainian nationalist Symon Vasyl’ovych Petliura.¹⁰ The Reds also concluded an alliance with Bashkir nationalists, before later depriving them of their independence and abolishing the Bashkir army.¹¹ To the protests of Bashkir leader Akhmed-Zaki Validov, Lenin replied: “the agreement signed with you obliges no one to do anything—it’s just a scrap of paper.”¹² Even if

⁷ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (RGVA) f. 612 (Redaktsionnyi sovet “Krasnaia armiia i Krasnyi flot v revoliutsionnoi voine Sovetskoi Rossii, 1917–1920”), op. 1. d. 49, l. 10 (V. K. Gondel’, “Moia sluzhba v Krasnoi armii: Vospominaniia”).

⁸ M. V. Frunze, *Vospominaniia druzei i soratnikov* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), 74.

⁹ Trotskii to Lenin, 22 May 1919 (RGVA f. 33987 [Sekretariat predsedatelia RVSР-RVS SSSR], op. 2, d. 32, l. 87).

¹⁰ Trotskii to L. P. Serebriakov, December 1919 (*ibid.*, l. 534).

¹¹ M. M. Kul’sharipov, ed., *Soglashenie Tsentral’noi sovetskoi vlasti s Bashkirskim pravitel’stvom o Sovetskoi Avtonomnoi Bashkirii v svete sovremennykh problem rossiiskogo federalizma* (Ufa: Bashkirskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2004), 49–50.

¹² Z. V. Togan, *Vospominaniia: Bor’ba musul’man Turkestana i drugikh vostochnykh tiurok za natsional’noe sushchestvovanie i kul’turu* (Moscow: n.p., 1997), 251.

Lenin's words were created by Validov himself, they accurately reflect Bolshevik attitudes toward their temporary fellow travelers.

Trotskii's chief strength as leader of the Red Army, despite his lack of military education, lay in a clear understanding of the Civil War's strategy. In this, he was far superior to even old formally educated military specialists, who did not understand the war's social nature. Trotskii's superiority was clearly manifested in debates over Soviet strategy on the Southern Front during the summer and fall of 1919. Commander in chief Kamenev planned to carry out an offensive through the Cossack regions, where the Reds met fierce resistance from the local population. At the same time, though, the Whites were making significant progress in their own offensive from Kursk toward Moscow, threatening the very existence of Soviet Russia. Trotskii hoped to separate the Cossacks from the rest of the Whites by an attack directed precisely toward Kursk and Voronezh, isolating the White offensive from its base without entangling the Reds in hostile Cossack territory. The party leadership unwisely rejected this.¹³ In the end, the Red Army accepted Trotskii's plan, but only after several months of Kamenev's failed efforts.

Senior party leaders, even including members of the Politbiuro (most notably Trotskii and Stalin), regularly appeared on threatened sectors of the front, intervening directly in moments of crisis. This usually produced positive results, especially in the case of Trotskii. Not only was he a talented organizer who understood the nature of the Civil War, but he worked effectively with military specialists. Trotskii later recalled his trips to the front as being primarily about rallying broken units: "looking back at the three years of the Civil War and looking through the record of my continuous trips to the front, I see that I didn't really have to accompany the victorious army, participate in its offensives, and directly share its successes. My trips were not vacations. I traveled only to crises, where the enemy had broken through the front and driven our regiments before him. I retreated with the troops, but I never attacked alongside them. As soon as the broken divisions were put in order and the commander signaled an offensive, I said goodbye and headed for another crisis or returned for a few days to Moscow to deal with accumulated business."¹⁴

Trotskii recognized the downside of exercising command as crisis management. "Of course, this method cannot be considered correct," he noted. "The pedant will say that the system is the most important thing, in supply as in all military affairs. That is true. I myself tend to pedantry. But we did not

¹³ See, for example, N. M. V'iunova et al., eds., *Direktivny glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi armii (1917–1920)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1969), 466.

¹⁴ L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin* (Moscow: Terra, 1990), 2: 115.

want to perish before we were able to create a harmonious system. That is why we were forced, especially early on, to use improvisation instead of a system, so that later we could establish a system."¹⁵

For example, Trotskii used his authority to provide all necessary supplies for the defense of Petrograd, the "Cradle of the Revolution." He dealt with the problems of supplying the Seventh Army, managed personnel, carried out strategic planning (proposals for fortifying Petrograd, and for relations with Estonia after Nikolai Nikolaevich Iudenich's defeated Northwestern White Army withdrew there), and generally exercised control over military and political leadership.¹⁶ As Trotskii himself noted, he gave a "push to the initiative of the front and to rear areas behind the lines."¹⁷ With his characteristically ebullient energy, Trotskii held rallies, delivered speeches, and wrote articles. The benefit of his presence in Petrograd was unquestionable. Trotskii described his first days at Petrograd: "the military command, dragged down by failure, had to be shaken, refreshed, updated. Even greater changes were made with the commissars. All units were reinforced with Communists. Fresh units arrived as well.... In two or three days, we restored a completely devastated supply service. The Red Army soldier ate better, had clean linens, had new boots, listened to speeches, woke up, pulled himself together, and became something different."¹⁸ By this time, Trotskii had already worked out a universal formula for victory in the Civil War. On 16 October 1919, he wrote to former General Dmitrii Nikolaevich Nadezhnyi, commander of the Seventh

¹⁵ L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001), 405.

¹⁶ On 16 October 1919, Trotskii wrote to the Seventh Army Commander D. N. Nadezhnyi that "under these conditions it seems absolutely necessary to organize the internal defense of Petrograd. If you remember that Admiral Dumbadze [sic; Admiral Fedor Vasil'evich Dubasov] needed almost a whole week to pacify Moscow in December 1905, even though there were hardly more than a thousand armed revolutionaries occupying a number of important buildings in Moscow, it is quite obvious that several thousand of the White Guard troops that have broken through will be completely driven, exhausted, baited, and destroyed in Petrograd with any reasonable organization of internal defense within one or two days, and during this time there will also be in time sufficient reinforcements from the outside.... If the Whites broke into the city, they would disappear like water splashing on a red-hot stove" (RGVA f. 33987, op. 2. d. 32, ll. 446–47). The defector and former Soviet bureaucrat G. A. Solomon, a sharp critic of Trotskii, used the words of Leonid Borisovich Krasin to criticize this order as "the height of confusion and stupidity": see Solomon, "Sredi krasnykh vozhdiei," 195, 343. This criticism seems untenable: it is based on an exaggeration of the forces and capabilities of Iudenich's Northwestern Army, which would have been annihilated in Petrograd by the scorched-earth tactics proposed by Trotskii.

¹⁷ Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'*, 407.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 419.

Army: "as always in such cases, we will achieve the necessary breakthrough with the help of organizational, agitational, and punitive measures."¹⁹ Such judgments testify to Trotskii's deep understanding of how to achieve success.

Organization

The key principles that led the Bolsheviks to victory in the Civil War were mass, systematic effort, and strict centralization. Leaving aside exceptions that merely prove the rule, these Bolshevik principles touched on almost all military questions. An important advantage for the new regime was the ability to use the old army's bureaucracy. For example, the staff of the Supreme Military Council were actively replenished by former officers of Stavka, the Imperial High Command, and later grew into the Red Army's Field Staff. The Bolsheviks used the front and army staffs of the old army to create Soviet military districts, the key organizations supplying manpower for the Red Army.²⁰ Of course, the Bolshevik military bureaucracy grew enormously. By 15 September 1920, the All-Russian General Staff alone had 4,247 personnel.²¹ By 1 January 1922, the central military bureaucracy included 12,583 positions, and 31,492 additional posts in local military districts.²² Nonetheless, the creation of parallel structures such as the Field Staff and the All-Russian General Staff had its advantages. The former concentrated on the front lines, and the second on force-building in the rear.

The escalation of the Civil War led the Red Army to abandon ideologically based principles of warfare, including elected officers, all-volunteer service, and partisan tactics—a decision that proved central to victory. On 21 March 1918, the Red Army abolished the elective principle. On 22–23 March, a meeting of the Supreme Military Council under Sergei Georgievich Lukirskii decided that the basic unit of the Red Army would be the division, and in late

¹⁹ Trotskii to Nadezhnyi, 16 October 1919 (RGVA f. 33987, op. 2, d. 32, l. 446).

²⁰ As an example, the staff of the Southwestern Front of the Imperial Army became the staff of the Belomorskii Military District. Fifty-seven people, led by Lieutenant Colonel Nikolai Nikolaevich Petin, former acting chief of staff for the Southwestern Front, appeared in Arkhangel'sk: Report of N. N. Petin to the chief of staff of the White Sea military district, 4 June 1918 (RGVA f. 25863 [Belomorskii voennyi okrug], op. 1, d. 26, l. 20). The Staff of the Northern Front's Seventh Army became the Staff of the Privolga Military District in Samara: P. P. Petrov, *Ot Volgi do Tikhogo okeana v riadakh belykh (1918–1922 gg.)* (Riga: M. Didkovskii, 1930), 245.

²¹ "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba k 1 sentiabria 1920" (RGVA f. 11 [Vserossiiskii glavnyi shtab], op. 5, d. 959, l. 16).

²² "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god" (Moscow, 1925) (RGVA f. 4 [Upravlenie delami NKO], op. 1, d. 167, printed pages 12, 16).

April 1918, the Red Army established a standardized unit organization. At the same time, a plan was completed for forming and deploying a million-strong army. By early July 1918, the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets had decided that every citizen between the ages of 18 and 40 was obligated to defend Soviet Russia. The Bolsheviks established military districts (*okruga*) in spring 1918 throughout Soviet Russia to conscript and train recruits. Initially there were seven, and they expanded along with Bolshevik-controlled territory to twelve by September 1920. Until the fall of 1918, the Bolsheviks had not yet established strict centralization in military matters, including mobilization. This led to chaos from the uncoordinated actions of local authorities. Nevertheless, gradual steps were taken to strengthen the new army. From July to November 1918, the local military commissariats (up to 7,000 at rural district [*volost'*] level, 385 *uezd* [district], 39 *guberniia* [province], and 7 *okrug*) were established. By late 1918, the Red Army included 13 field armies, with 42 rifle and 3 cavalry divisions operating on the fronts.²³ Divisional subunits such as rifle brigades increased the Red Army's operational flexibility. A serious test of the new system was the defeat of the White leader Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak's offensive on the Eastern Front in spring 1919. In that campaign, the Eastern Front received about 50,000 soldiers from 1 April to 15 May 1919, ensuring White defeat.

The ability to carry out long-term strategic economic and military planning was a key Bolshevik advantage that brought definite results. As early as spring 1918, the Red Army was working toward an army of a million men, a target achieved by February 1919.²⁴ At the end of 1918, chairman of the Higher Military Inspectorate Nikolai Il'ich Podvoiskii confidently proclaimed Lenin's slogan of a three-million-strong Red Army in a letter to the joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee and the Moscow City Council representatives of factory committees and trade unions.²⁵ This goal was achieved in a year. From 1918 to 1920, the Reds were consistently able to implement long-term plans for the development of the army and military industry. Because of turmoil and internal divisions, the Whites, particularly in 1918, found consistent long-term planning practically impossible.

At the climax of the Civil War between spring and fall 1919, the Red Army added an average of 130,000 new soldiers a month, a figure roughly equiva-

²³ S. M. Kliatskin, *Na zashchite Oktiabria: Organizatsiia reguliarnoi armii i militsionnoe stroitel'stvo v Sovetskoi respublike* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 336, 247.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

²⁵ *Sostoianie Moskovskogo voennogo okruga k 15 noiabria 1918 g.: Doklad Sovetu rabochei i krest'ianskoi oborony i Revoliutsionnomu voennomu Sovetu respubliki* (Moscow: Tipografiia tovarishchestva I. D. Sytina, 1918), 10.

lent to the *total* number of troops available to Denikin or Kolchak. According to records of the All-Russian Main Staff, about 585,000 men joined the Red Army between 15 May and 1 October 1919.²⁶ As noted by commander in chief Kamenev, Soviet military and political leadership had “a firm desire to put the ad hoc creation of military units on a more organized, even ‘factory-like’ basis.”²⁷ In other words, the Bolsheviks succeeded in creating a steady flow of replacements and reinforcements. One of Denikin’s White officers recalled the events of February 1920: “[U]nbelievable hordes of cavalry and infantry began to attack our positions, and in view of the weakness of our forces and the very limited number of fighters, we had to retreat further.”²⁸

The training of reserves and replacements in the Red Army was also systematic. As a rule, reinforcements for fighting formations came from reserve units intended to train and dispatch additional manpower. Initially, reserve units were created directly by divisions. At the same time, military districts organized their own reserve units. The demand for reserves and replacements was enormous: of the 11 rifle divisions formed in the summer of 1918, only 3 remained under the High Command at the end of the year, as the rest had been lost in battle.²⁹ In March 1919, military reserve departments were formed inside military districts. Along the Volga, a reserve army was established in August 1919. It eventually dispatched 2 rifle and 2 cavalry divisions, 26 rifle and 4 cavalry brigades, 4 rifle and 16 cavalry regiments, 30 cavalry squadrons, 20 artillery battalions, 17 batteries, over 200 reservist battalions, 12 machine-gun teams, an air detachment, and a pontoon battalion to the front lines. On average, 34 percent of all replenishments passed through the reserve army.³⁰ In addition to the preparation of reserve units, this army suppressed unrest.³¹ The fighting fronts also created reserve armies (4 in all). In July 1920, the creation of reserve brigades began. For the Whites, such a system was a distant hope.

Over the course of the war, the Red Army grew stronger and stronger. In October 1918, the Bolsheviks could deploy 30 infantry divisions, and 62 by September 1919. In early 1919, it had only 3 cavalry divisions, but 22 by late

²⁶ “Kratkii otchet nachal’nika Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba k 1 sentiabria 1920” (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, l. 5).

²⁷ Kamenev, *Zapiski*, 73.

²⁸ E. Giatsintov, *Zapiski belogo ofitsera* (St. Petersburg: Interpoligrftsentr, 1992), 77.

²⁹ N. Kakurin, N. Kovtun, and V. Sukhov, *Voennaia istoriia Grazhdanskoi voiny v Rossii 1918–1920 godov* (Moscow: Yevrolints, 2004), 79.

³⁰ Kamenev, *Zapiski*, 73.

³¹ RGVA f. 33987, op. 2, d. 32, l. 559.

1920. In spring 1919, the army had about 440,000 combat troops, 2,000 artillery pieces, and 7,200 machine guns in combat units alone, and total manpower exceeded 1.5 million.³² Superiority over the Whites increased with every passing day. By the end of 1919, the Red Army comprised 17 armies. By autumn 1920, the Red Army had drafted 29 different handbooks and field manuals, with another 28 in preparation.

At the same time, Trotskii noted that "it is impossible to create a strong army at a stroke. Patching and darning holes at the front will not help. Transferring individual Communists and communist detachments to the most dangerous places can improve the situation only temporarily. There is only one solution: to transform, reorganize, educate the army by persistent, steady work, starting with the smallest unit, from the company, and rising higher through the battalion, regiment, division; to establish proper logistics, the correct distribution of communist troops, the right relations between commanders and commissars, to ensure strict compliance with orders and unconditional honesty in reports."³³ Thus the secret of Trotskii's success was not simply raw manpower.

The quality of the army also improved with extensive combat experience and stronger discipline. Former tsarist officer Nikolai Vladimirovich Voronovich recalled what he saw in 1920 near Sochi: "for the first time since 1918, I saw Red Army soldiers and was amazed at their discipline and military bearing, which so sharply distinguished them from the earlier Red Guards, who had been uncontrolled, untrained, and terrifying even to their own commissars. Sometime after my arrival in Sochi, I had the opportunity to see even more of the radical reorganization of the Red Army, which was not much different, and even in some respects better than the prerevolutionary Russian army."³⁴

Indeed, prerevolutionary principles, especially in discipline, were actively promoted in the Red Army by veterans of the First World War, primarily from lower ranks. In contrast to former officers, they did not fear accusations of counterrevolution, and therefore did not refrain from harsh measures. Tsarist and then White officer P. Makushev recalled that in 1920 "I learned that discipline in the Red Army was strict. The punch in the jaw that Division Commander Dybenko gave to a clerk who spoke to him with a cigarette in his teeth bore witness that the matter was on an entirely different plane." He

³² Kakurin, *Voennaia istoriia*, 79.

³³ Trotskii, "Instruktsiia otvetstvennym rabotnikam 14-i armii," 9 August 1919 (RGVA f. 11, op. 1, d. 83, l. 258–258ob.).

³⁴ N. Voronovich, "Mezh dvukh ognei (Zapiski zelenogo)," in *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii* 7 (1922): 172.

also testified to the force of Red manpower: "Maikop was distinguished by new and lively sensations: everywhere there were posters and proclamations, many new faces, mostly military. On the main street the cavalry marched past, a brigade in full force. 'What will Denikin's cavalry do in the face of this ...?' I heard a voice behind me. I turned around and there was no limit to my surprise: I recognized one of the assistants to the ataman of the Maikop Cossacks. Then he and all the remaining officers were taken and hauled off to a prison camp."³⁵

By 1 January 1920, the Red Army numbered three million men. By 1 October, it had 5,498,000, including 2,361,000 at the front, 391,000 in reserve formations, 159,000 in labor armies, and 2,587,000 in internal military districts.³⁶ By 1 January 1921, the Red Army was down to 4,213,497 personnel, and combat troops amounted to 1,264,391, or 30 percent of general manpower.³⁷ At the front the Red Army had 85 rifle divisions, 39 independent rifle brigades, 27 cavalry divisions, 7 independent cavalry brigades. Red Army artillery included 297 light artillery, 85 howitzer, and 85 heavy field-artillery formations, totaling 4,888 artillery pieces.³⁸ From 1918 to 1920, the Red Army had called up 6,707,588 men.³⁹

Trotskii described the success of Soviet mobilization: "[W]hen they—Dutov, Kolchak, Denikin—had partisan detachments of the most qualified officers and Junkers (officer cadets), they were able to exert great striking force in relation to their number, for, I repeat, these elements had great experience and military skill. But when the heavy mass of our regiments, brigades, divisions, and armies, based on mass mobilization, forced them to conscript peasants in order to counter our mass with their own mass, the laws of class struggle here began to work. And so conscription became internal disorganization, creating a force of internal destruction. To reveal this in practice required only blows from our side."⁴⁰

³⁵ P. Makushev, "Vospominaniia o 'nachdiv'e' t. Dybenko" (GARF f. R-5881 (Kollektsiia otdel'nykh dokumentov i memuarov emigrantov), op. 1, d. 381a, ll. 4, 7–8).

³⁶ N. N. Movchin, *Komplektovanie Krasnoi armii (istoricheskii ocherk)* (Leningrad: Voen-naia tipografiia Upravleniia delami Narkomvoenmor i RVS SSSR, 1926), 101, 228.

³⁷ "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym delam za 1921 god" (RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 33, l. 6).

³⁸ Kliatskin, *Na zashchite Oktiabria*, 463.

³⁹ G. F. Krivosheev, ed., *Rossiia i SSSR v voynakh XX veka: Statisticheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2001), 138.

⁴⁰ L. D. Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, vol. 2, bk. 2 (Moscow: Vysshii voennyi redaktsionnyi sovet, 1924), 5–6.

By fall 1919, the Bolsheviks had also managed to create strategic cavalry. This was originally a cavalry corps, but later expanded to include a cavalry army and a number of cavalry divisions and brigades. By November 1919, the Red cavalry already numbered 447,000, having grown from 223,000 in November 1918. The Reds managed this despite lack of support from Cossacks, who were almost completely in the anti-Bolshevik camp.⁴¹

An important advantage for the Red Army was its relative homogeneity. By the end of the Civil War, in September 1922, the Red Army included 18.8 percent workers, 68 percent peasants, and 13.2 percent of other social backgrounds, while the White armies had a more varied composition.⁴²

The Red Army conscripted its commanders from tens of thousands of former officers, a group the Bolsheviks regarded as “class aliens” but labeled as “military specialists.” In November 1918, the RVSР ordered a call-up of all former line officers up to age 50, staff officers up to 55, and generals up to 60. As a result, the RKKA (the Workers-Peasants Red Army), acquired 50,000 military specialists. The total number of military specialists in the Red Army grew even higher: up to 75,000 by the end of 1920. After the Civil War, it naturally declined, falling to 21,500 in 1922.⁴³ The Bolshevik commitment to a multimillion-strong peasant army, commanded by tens of thousands of qualified former officers, controlled in turn by tens of thousands of political commissars and Communists, predetermined their success. The combination of these three components became a strength, not a weakness, of the new army.

A large part of the peasantry regarded the Red Army as its own, protecting peasant interests against the threat of White victory and a return of the landlords.⁴⁴ Many officers also served in the Red Army willingly, fighting foreign intervention on patriotic grounds.⁴⁵ There is no doubt about the ideological commitment of the Bolsheviks themselves. As a result, the peasantry provided the army with mass, the officers with professionalism, and the Bolsheviks with determination, revolutionary spirit, and political control. At the same time, the use of military specialists was bounded by important restric-

⁴¹ N. Evseev, *Konmitsa v razgrome belykh na Urale v 1919 g.* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1934), 8.

⁴² “Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god” (RGVA f. 4 [Upravlenie delami NKO], op. 1, d. 167, printed page 49).

⁴³ A. G. Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty na sluzhbe Respubliki sovetov, 1917–1920 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 176; “Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god” (RGVA f. 4 [Upravlenie delami NKO], op. 1, d. 167, printed page 92).

⁴⁴ V. V. Kondrashin, *Krest’ianstvo Rossii v Grazhdanskoi voine: K voprosu ob istokakh Stalinizma* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009), 188–89.

⁴⁵ In 1920, even Vrangels’ officers toasted the Red Army’s attack on Warsaw. See M. I. Mel’tiukhov, *Sovetsko-pol’skie voiny* (Moscow: Iauza–Eksmo, 2004), 134.

tions. By 1918, for example, it was forbidden to serve under close relatives in positions of authority.⁴⁶

Hundreds of former General Staff officers played a special role in the creation of the Red Army. Many served the Reds not from fear but from conviction. According to Soviet commander in chief Ioakim Ioakimovich Vatsetis, a colonel in the old army, "among the General Staff, especially those occupying the highest posts, there is a great deal of fatigue, nervous delirium, and declining energy. They are looked upon as a necessary evil to be used and then cast aside like a squeezed lemon. The success that we achieved in creating the Red Army and bringing it to the field of battle is due almost exclusively to the fact that in September 1918 I managed to place officers with academy training and former General Staff officers with great command experience and technical education into important staff and command positions. Without them, needless to say, we would have had no Red Army and no successes. This has to be recognized, and is a colossal credit to the former officers of the General Staff." Discounting Vatsetis' self-glorification, his claim is nonetheless valid.⁴⁷

Red commanders, unlike their White counterparts, were not distracted by numerous duties involving local civil administration, but could instead focus entirely on combat operations. Another important advantage was the ability to promote "people's commanders" from the ranks—capable military leaders from among former noncommissioned officers, which was practically impossible in the White armies. These included Vasilii Ivanovich Chapaev, Semen Mikhailovich Budenny, Oka Ivanovich Gorodovikov, and Mikhail Mikhailovich Lashevich, among others.

This approach also had its drawbacks. Many newly promoted commanders lacked educational qualifications, although many gained valuable practical experience during the Civil War. By 1921, 41.55 percent of commanders at all levels lacked any military education beyond the most basic training, 26.17 percent had completed command courses and schools, 24.99 percent were wartime officers of the old army, 3.71 percent were prewar officers, 0.28 percent had graduated from the Nicholas General Staff Academy and 0.11 percent from the Red Army's General Staff Academy. The mass army the Bolsheviks created thus had almost half its commanders lacking proper training. Skilled specialists simply disappeared into the endless sea of personnel necessary to command such an army. That said, experienced officers of the old tsarist army accounted for more than 70 percent of the high-ranking commanders

⁴⁶ RGVA f. 3 (Vysshii voennyi sovet), op. 1, d. 42, l. 79.

⁴⁷ I. I. Vatsetis, memoirs about 1918–19 (RGVA f. 39348 [I. I. Vatsetis], op. 1, d. 6, l. 236).

and about 58 percent of senior commanders. Communists accounted for 41.1 percent of high-ranking commanders.⁴⁸

An important administrative body, unjustly neglected by historians, was the Higher Military Inspectorate. Unfortunately, historical research on this group's extensive and diverse activities, particularly during the formative 1918–19 period, is still inadequate. Nonetheless, the briefest acquaintance with archival holdings on the Civil War Red Army demonstrates that the Inspectorate's work was enormous and affected all aspects of the Red Army. The Higher Military Inspectorate guaranteed the Soviet military and political leadership timely information on problems and shortcomings in military affairs and resolution of those issues. The Inspectorate's highly professional work depended in large part on experienced and qualified specialists of the old Russian General Staff.

The Reds skillfully employed captured White officers. After capture, such officers were registered locally by district and army staffs and centrally by the All-Russian Main Staff, went through special accelerated political training courses (each with a thousand participants), then went into the Red Army. The Bolsheviks were careful in their use of these men. The total number of former Whites among a unit's officers was capped at 15 percent. Officers were barred from serving in the region where their capture or surrender had taken place, or near their birthplace or permanent residence.⁴⁹ For example, defectors from Iudenich's Northwestern Army in December 1919 went to serve on the Eastern Front.⁵⁰ This was particularly important with respect to the Cossacks. During their first year of service, former White officers had no right to leave, but otherwise held the same rights as other commanders. After a year of service without incident, they were released from special handling and served on the same basis as other commanders.

Colonel Nikolai Nikolaevich Lesevitskii, veteran of the Separate Orenburg Army who later served in the Red Army, recalled that "relations were purely fraternal. I ... indeed all of us ... were shocked and amazed at our encounter with Bolshevik power, the beasts and rapists we imagined, people who enjoyed the sight of blood and flooded Russia with it. Instead, we met a generous enemy who forgot all our guilt and gave almost all of us the opportunity to work. Very few of us were arrested and sent to the center, and even then only those who had somehow gotten involved in counterintelligence."⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym delam za 1921 god" (RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 33, ll. 46ob.).

⁴⁹ Draft order of the RVSR, August 1920 (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 69, l. 34ob.).

⁵⁰ RGVA f. 33987, op. 2, d. 32, l. 567.

⁵¹ N. N. Lesevitskii memoirs (RGVA f. 7 [Shtab RKKA], op. 5, d. 180, ll. 330, 338–39).

The Bolsheviks tried to follow similar principles for rank-and-file prisoners: captured White soldiers and draftees alike could not serve where they had been captured or conscripted, for fear of desertion. The Bashkir brigade that defected to the Reds in summer 1919 was accordingly sent to Petrograd. Orenburg Cossack prisoners were sent to western or southern Russia, to either the Polish or Crimean fronts. Special orders regulated this general policy, and local military organs issued similar orders. In August 1919 on the Eastern Front, for example, one such order directed that "District Military Commissariats will send prisoners and defectors to any front other than the one where capture or desertion took place."⁵² Because of the geographically constrained nature of White armies, they could not follow a similar policy.

The Red Army's military operations were systematic and methodical. According to Soviet commander in chief Kamenev, "in wars of modern large armies, the actual defeat of the enemy requires the accumulation of a planned sequence of victories on the entire fighting front, systematically building one upon another and interconnected in time.... Admiral Kolchak almost eliminated our 5th Army. Denikin almost routed the entire right flank of the Southern Front. Vrangeli' drove our 13th Army to the brink of destruction. And yet victory did not come to Kolchak, Denikin, or Vrangeli'. The side that won succeeded in coordinating its blows, inflicting them continuously, and thereby prevented the enemy from healing his wounds."⁵³

To be sure, the blockade of Soviet Russia, together with Denikin and Kolchak's advances in 1919, led to deterioration in Red food supply and some improvement for the Whites. Red retreat cost not only food but population, industry, and military equipment. During Denikin's push north in summer and autumn 1919, his armies' strength increased despite the heavy fighting. Nevertheless, Soviet power acted like a spring compressed to the limit, pushing back and dealing a powerful blow to its opponents. As soon as Denikin's retreat began in autumn 1919, his army and its resources melted away. Colonel fon Lampe, a committed opponent of the Bolsheviks and a White officer in southern Russia, compared Red and White strategy in his diary in fall 1919: "I see their plan: retreat in the center and pressure on the flanks. We have absolutely nothing. Struggle forward and assure everyone that the Red Army, counterattacking with bayonets fixed, has collapsed."⁵⁴ Unfortunately for the

⁵² RGVA f. 185 (Shtab 5-i armii i Vostochno-Sibirskogo voennogo okruga), op. 6, d. 21, l. 311.

⁵³ Kamenev, *Zapiski*, 72.

⁵⁴ Fon Lampe, diary, book 24, 1 July 1919 (O.S.; 14 July 1919 N.S.)—18 February 1920 (N.S.) (GARF f. R-5853, op. 1, d. 1, l. 61).

Whites, Lampe was correct. A gambling strategy could not lead to success, and individual feats of courage were not enough.

Finally, it was the Bolsheviks and Red Army that ultimately carried out the second “gathering of the Russian lands,” echoing the first in late medieval Russia: this ability to conceive of Bolshevik success in terms congruent with Russian nationalism proved extremely important. One military specialist declared to other former officers after Denikin’s defeat: “[N]o, it’s not Denikin’s movement that will gather the Russian lands.... *We* will do it ... you’ll see. Soon we’ll take Georgia and Armenia.”⁵⁵ This statement corresponds to the assessment of Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich Romanov:

[W]hen in early spring 1920 I saw the headlines in French newspapers announcing the triumphal march of Piłsudski[’s Polish forces] over the wheat fields of Little Russia [Ukraine], something inside me could not stand it. I forgot about the fact that a year had not passed since the execution of my brothers. I simply thought “The Poles are about to take Kiev! Eternal enemies of Russia are about to strip the empire of its western borderlands.” I did not dare to speak openly, but listening to the absurd chatter of refugees and looking at their faces, I wholeheartedly wished the Red Army victory.... It was clear to me then in that turbulent summer of 1920, just as it is clear now in 1933, that to achieve a decisive victory over the Poles, the Soviet government did all that any truly *national* government had to do. Whatever the irony that members of the Third International were defending the unity of the Russian state, the fact remains that the Soviets were forced to pursue a purely national policy, a policy of many centuries, started by Ivan the Terrible, given form by Peter the Great, and reaching its summit under Nicholas I: to protect the borders of the state at any cost and step by step to break through to the natural borders in the West! Now I am sure that my sons will see the day when not only the ridiculous independence of the Baltic republics will come to an end, but Russia will also win Bessarabia and Poland, and cartographers will be hard at work redrawing borders in the Far East.⁵⁶

The Grand Duke’s prophecy came true earlier than he expected.

⁵⁵ Makushev, “Vospominaniia” (GARF f. R-5881, op. 1, d. 381a, l. 18).

⁵⁶ [Grand Duke] Aleksandr Mikhailovich, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2001), 407–08.

Equipment and Supply

Soviet Russia's most important advantage was its control over the industrially developed and densely populated center of the country. Behind the Whites' front lines, on Russia's periphery, they had an underdeveloped network of railroads, especially in the north and east. The Bolsheviks enjoyed a dense network of railroads, while Kolchak, for example, relied solely on the Trans-Siberian Railroad route. The Whites in northern Russia were also forced to rely on a single railroad. The presence of a developed transportation network, particularly important in maneuver warfare, allowed the Bolsheviks to operate on internal lines, transferring troops and supplies to threatened sectors. To illustrate, 71.5 percent of Red Army divisions fought on multiple fronts.⁵⁷ With a disorganized rear and lacking established supply networks, the Whites could not make full use of foreign military supplies delivered by sea. Central Russia possessed not just more people but a greater collection of skilled individuals, including military professionals. In addition, the Bolsheviks had at their disposal virtually all the central administrative organs of the old army, allowing them to rely on an established bureaucracy. They also controlled the old World War I front lines, thus inheriting vital military supplies. The one drawback of central Russia was its relative lack of fuel and raw materials for industry, while regions under White control were comparatively rich in that regard.

Under such conditions, supplying the Red Army with everything it needed—food, fodder, fuel, weapons, ammunition, uniforms, horses, equipment—was decisive for the outcome of the war. Bolshevik leaders understood this perfectly, and acted accordingly. First of all, production and distribution were centralized with the wide application of extraordinary measures under the policy of "War Communism." Food supply for the RKKA employed forced requisitions of bread, grain, and fodder in 1918, expanding to all agricultural products in 1919–20 under a general ban on trade.⁵⁸ In 1918, the Bolsheviks carried out a series of measures: nationalization and mobilization of defense industry as well as other branches of industry; centralized management of the economy; registration of skilled workers and militarization of labor (treating workers like mobilized soldiers, including attaching them to particular enterprises and the treatment of leaving employment as desertion). By September 1919, 59 defense factories operated on Soviet territory, while 330 enterprises provided other supplies to the army. By May 1920, Red Army rations were keeping 226,000 workers fed.

⁵⁷ Kamenev, *Zapiski*, 77.

⁵⁸ N. N. Azovtsev, ed., *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 2: 37

By comparison, the Whites had at their disposal essentially no military industry, relying instead on Allied and captured equipment. Siberia had no military industry whatsoever. When the Reds captured the Luhans'k Cartridge Factory, retreating White Cossacks managed to salvage only 600,000 cartridges.⁵⁹ The plant had previously been in the possession of independent Ukraine and thus also inaccessible to the Whites. In addition, part of the factory's equipment and stocks had been carried off by German troops in fall 1918 during their evacuation of Ukraine.⁶⁰ The Whites captured the Perm' Artillery Factory in late 1918, but its productivity, compared with the prerevolutionary period, fell sharply. The few enterprises available to the Whites functioned poorly, and resources were employed irrationally.

The Whites were also crippled by internal divisions. The most egregious example comes from the politics of the Volga region in the summer and fall of 1918. The anti-Bolshevik Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (Komuch) Government, at odds with the also ostensibly anti-Bolshevik Provisional Siberian Government, preferred to abandon military factories and storehouses to the Reds, rather than evacuate them to the east and see them in Provisional Siberian Government hands. As a result, the Reds captured tens of thousands of pounds of gunpowder and 100 field guns in Kazan', and in Simbirsk equipment for two cartridge factories with stocks of metal and parts for 100 million cartridges. In Ivashchenkovo, the Reds seized a plant for explosives, a fuse factory, artillery stockpiles, explosives for two million shells, millions of empty and loaded shells along with fuses and detonators, and in Samara, a large ammunition factory with 5,000 tons of brass and a powder factory.⁶¹

Production of weapons and ammunition on Soviet-controlled territory in 1919 came to 460,055 rifles, 77,560 revolvers, over 340 million rifle cartridges, 6,256 machine guns, 22,229 sabers, 152 76-mm field guns, 83 76-mm guns of other types (antiaircraft, mountain, short-barreled), 24 108-mm quick-firing

⁵⁹ Report of the Volunteer Army representative at the Don Ataman and Government to the deputy commander in chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia General A. M. Dragomirov, 10 (23) January 1919 (RGVA f. 40307 [Kollektsiia dokumentov belogvardeiskikh ob'edinenii], op. 1, d. 172, l. 2ob.).

⁶⁰ In addition to ammunition, the Germans took trainloads of additional material from the factory as well: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Luganskoi oblasti f. P-2 (Istpart), op. 1, d. 149, ll. 31ob.–32, 39, 40 (reports about the losses of the Lugansk cartridge factory); see also d. 148.

⁶¹ Report by Colonel K. N. Rogul, October 1918 (RGVA f. 39617 [Upravlenie Sibirskoi armii], op. 1, d. 70, ll. 156–58ob., published in A. V. Ganin, *Sem' "pochemu" rossiiskoi Grazhdanskoi voiny* [Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Piatyi Rim" (OOO "Bestseller"), 2018], 444–50).

guns, 78 122-mm howitzers, 29 152-mm siege guns, about 185,000 shells, and 258 aircraft—with another 50 repaired, indicating the enormous potential of the Soviet military-industrial complex. In 1920, production reached 426,994 rifles (300,000 repaired), 38,252 revolvers, more than 411 million rifle cartridges, 4,459 machine guns, 230 76-mm guns, 58 76-mm of other types, 12 108-mm quick-firing guns, 20 122-mm howitzers, 35 152-mm siege guns, and 1.8 million shells.⁶² As important as this was, it still represented a steep drop from World War I production as a result of a food, fuel, and transport crisis; a shortage of raw materials (brass, lead, etc.), tools, and skilled workers; and an industrial plant worn from heavy usage since 1914. According to official data, rifle production at the Tula and Izhevsk plants in 1919 amounted to only 39 percent of 1916 output (the peak of military production in prerevolutionary Russia). In 1920, this dropped to 36 percent. In the production of machine guns, the Tula Plant (the sole source) managed to reach 57 percent of the volume of 1916 in 1919, and in 1920, 41.3 percent. Revolvers were much worse: 27 percent in 1919 and 21.3 percent in 1920 respectively. In 1919, Tula managed 81.6 percent of the peak output of rifle cartridges and 78.4 percent in 1920. Simbirsk produced only 15 percent of peak output in 1919, and in 1920 still only 20 percent. Luhans'k, which changed hands repeatedly during the Civil War, hit only 8 percent in 1920.⁶³

Though production was significant, at the beginning of 1919, the Field Staff of the RVSR calculated that its rifle divisions had only 40 percent of their normal complement of artillery. As of 1 May 1919, the Red Army had only 50 percent of the machine guns specified in its table of organization. By the beginning of 1920, the Red Army's frontline units had approximately 600,000 rifles, 7,500 machine guns and 4,500 artillery pieces. In 1920, the average RKKA infantry division had up to 150 machine guns and 28 guns, giving a ratio of 37.5 machine guns and 7 artillery pieces per 1,000 infantrymen.⁶⁴

Given shortages of weapons and ammunition, the Bolsheviks scoured their territory for material. In February 1919 the Arkhangel'sk guberniia Military Commissariat demanded all surplus weapons from Onega uезд. Military

⁶² RSFSR, *Sovet voennoi promyshlennosti, Tablitsy i diagrammy k otchetu o deiatel'nosti Soveta voennoi promyshlennosti za 1919 i 1920 gg.* (Moscow: Izdanie GUVF, [1921]), 3–5, 7–10; T. F. Kariaeva and N. N. Azovtsev, eds., *Direktivy komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi armii (1917–1922 gg.)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), 4: 406–07; G. A. Belov et al., eds., *Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1961), 3: 168–70; D. A. Kovalenko, *Oboronnaia promyshlennost' sovetskoi Rossii v 1918–1920 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 383.

⁶³ E. E. Klebanov et al., eds., *Sovetskoe voenno-promyshlennoe proizvodstvo (1918–1926 gg.)* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2005), 2: 213–14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 89; Kovalenko, *Oboronnaia promyshlennost'*, 253, 389.

commissars were permitted only a revolver, and party members were allowed a rifle and revolver. Better quality weapons were given to the Red Army, and particularly 7.62-mm Mosin-Nagant rifles were taken for military use, with foreign models and other nonstandard makes replacing them.⁶⁵ Despite the lower intensity of fire in the Civil War by comparison to the First World War, the expenditure of ammunition in the multimillion-soldier Red Army was still substantial. The Sixth Army alone, fighting in the Soviet North, expended 10,000 76-mm shells of two types each month in spring 1919, even though military operations in the North were not particularly intense. From July to November 1919, the RKKA expended 197.7 million Russian rifle cartridges, 20.9 million Japanese rifle cartridges, 1.5 million 76-mm shells, and 200,000 shells of other calibers.⁶⁶

In May 1920, the RVSR considered it was falling short of its minimal needed monthly output of 50 million rifle cartridges and 50,000 rifles.⁶⁷ The Bolsheviks worked persistently to overcome the ammunition crisis. On 4 June 1919, the RVSR decided to proceed with the manufacture of cartridges with reduced charges to save materials.⁶⁸ In the second half of 1920, cartridge production began at a new Podol'sk plant. A shortage of lead for bullets led to the manufacture of brass bullets, requiring new designs, extensive experiments, and the engineering of mass production. Finally, at the end of the Civil War, new policies worked to rehabilitate military industry by reducing production targets and improving production quality. Planning assumed that production would recover to a level close to the volume of 1916.

Nevertheless, Soviet military industry had impressive achievements. By the end of 1919, it had produced 33 British-designed Austin armored cars.⁶⁹ By the end of November 1920, the first Soviet tank, based on two small Renault tanks captured from the Whites, successfully passed testing and moved into serial production. Tank engines were manufactured at the AMO factory, armored bodies at the Izhorskii plant near Petrograd, chassis and assembly at the Sormovo works (Nizhnii Novgorod), and guns at the Putilov plant in

⁶⁵ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Arkhangel'skoi oblasti f. R-2851 (Voennyi komissariat Arkhangel'skoi gubernii), op. 9, d. 283, l. 68 (Arkhangel'sk province military commissariat to Onega district military commissariat, February 1919).

⁶⁶ Kariaeva and Azovtsev, *Direktivy komandovaniia frontov*, 4: 393–94.

⁶⁷ V. M. Mikhalova et al., eds., *Revvoensovet respubliki: Protokoly, 1920–1923 gg.* (Moscow: URSS, 2000), 79.

⁶⁸ V. O. Daines et al., eds., *Revvoensovet respubliki: Protokoly, 1918–1919 gg.* (Moscow: Russkii mir, 1997), 244.

⁶⁹ M. Bariatinskii and M. Kolomiets, *Broneavtomobili "Ostin"* (Moscow: Modelist-konstruktor, 1997), 30.

Petrograd. The Council of Military Industry ordered 15 tanks for completion by the end of June 1921, assuming monthly production of 4 tanks.⁷⁰ These tanks were not completed in time to take part in the Civil War. By the beginning of 1922, the Red Army had 79 tanks (mostly captured), 141 armored locomotives, 321 armored train cars, 5 armored cars designed to run on railroad tracks, and 195 armored cars, 47 of them armed with artillery and 148 with machine guns.⁷¹ To be sure, spare parts for the captured vehicles were scarce, nonstandard designs were common, some armor was only improvised, and many vehicles were at the end of their serviceable life.

From 1918 to 1920, at least 558 airplanes were built (including those assembled from existing stocks), and several hundred aircraft underwent major repairs.⁷² On average, aircraft output from 1918 to 1920 was only 17 percent of 1917 production. Although this was not enough to replace losses, the accomplishment was impressive under conditions of economic collapse. By comparison, the Whites did not establish aircraft production, despite the existence of such factories in southern Russia, and depended on Allied supplies. Striking achievements took place in other sectors as well: the Soviets managed to repair 3,387 locomotives in 1919 and over 8,000 in 1920.⁷³

The Red High Command showed concern for clothing its ordinary soldiers. In the fall of 1919, Trotskii wrote to the Central Committee about the need for warm clothes, since “you cannot demand more from the human body than it can endure.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, providing the army with uniforms in 1918–19 was particularly difficult. Stocks from the old army did not suffice to supply a multimillion-man Red Army, while Central Asian supplies of cotton were cut off until the fall of 1919 (except for a brief interval in March–April 1919).⁷⁵ The textile industry of Soviet Russia essentially came to a halt due to lack of raw materials. White accounts often refer to capturing ragged, poorly-dressed Red Army soldiers. Not having their own textile industry, the Whites relied entirely on Allied supplies, themselves insufficient.

⁷⁰ Belov et al., *Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voiny*, 3: 247; M. Kolomiets, I. Moshchanskii, and S. Romadin, *Tanki Grazhdanskoi voiny* (Moscow: M-Khobbi, 1999), 4–6.

⁷¹ “Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god” (RGVA f. 4 [Upravlenie delami NKO], op. 1, d. 167, printed page 133).

⁷² M. Khairulin and V. Kondrat’ev, *Voenlety pogibshei Imperii: Aviatsiia v Grazhdanskoi voine* (Moscow: Iauza–Eksmo, 2008), 89–90, 92.

⁷³ Belov et al., *Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voiny*, 3: 610.

⁷⁴ Trotskii to Central Committee, September 1919 (RGVA f. 33987, op. 2, d. 32, l. 410).

⁷⁵ Orenburskii gosudarstvennii arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii f. 7924 (Sektssiia Istparta VKP[b] Orenburgskoi gubernii), op. 1, d. 196, l. 107 (M. A. Sharapov, memoirs about the Civil War in 1917–1919 in the Orenburg–Orsk–Aktubinsk region, 1925).

In the second half of 1919, the Red Army received 1.5 million overcoats, 700,000 shirts, 600,000 pairs of trousers, 4.5 million sets of underclothes, and 1.8 million pairs of shoes. After the resumption of access to the cotton of Turkestan, textile production increased at an unprecedented rate. In 1920 alone, the Red Army received more than 3.5 million overcoats, 5.8 million pairs of shoes, 2.9 million summer shirts, 2.7 million summer trousers, 21 million sets of underclothes, 1 million fur hats, 1 million padded jackets, 1 million sets of footcloths, 800,000 forage caps, and 700,000 padded trousers. In 1920, monthly saddle production hit 5,000.⁷⁶ Even these astounding production figures met less than half the Red Army's needs, which amounted to 6.2 million overcoats, 2.6 million fur hats, 11.6 million sets of footcloths, 19.5 million undergarments, and 1.9 million campaign uniforms. The Bolsheviks even centralized the production of *lapti*—crude shoes woven from birchbark, under an Extraordinary Commission for the Supply of Troop Lapti (Chekvolap).

The Red Army inherited supplies from the immense stocks of the old army. On the Bolshevik-controlled Northern and Western fronts, the demobilization of the old army left 4,806 artillery pieces, 945,858 rifles, 505.5 million cartridges, and 9.2 million artillery shells. Across all fronts, based on incomplete data, 11,964 guns, 2,508,123 rifles, over 1.2 billion cartridges, and over 28 million shells were available for use in the Civil War.⁷⁷ How these colossal reserves were distributed during the Civil War is far more difficult to determine. According to data for April–May 1918, Soviet warehouses contained 896 serviceable 76-mm guns, 4,902 machine guns, 1,249,170 rifles, 687 million rifle cartridges, and 3.5 million 76-mm shells. In addition, there were over 300 serviceable artillery pieces of other systems (including heavy artillery). The Red Army thus avoided a munitions crisis until 1919.⁷⁸ It then had to solve the problem of supplying a mass army with rifles and cartridges for a long war. In 1919, the Red Army reestablished full-scale production. For many years Soviet military industries continued to rely on stocks of various semifinished goods, gunpowder, saltpeter, and other materials from World War I.⁷⁹

The supply of horses was a major problem considering the enormous role they played in the rapidly moving fronts of the Civil War. The Whites had the

⁷⁶ Kliatskin, *Na zashchite Oktiabra*, 409; Belov et al., *Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voiny*, 3: 249; RSFSR, *Sovet voennoi promyshlennosti, Tablitsy i diagrammy*, 13; Mikhailova et al., *Revoensoviet respubliki: Protokoly, 1920–1923 gg.*, 126.

⁷⁷ Kovalenko, *Oboronnaia promyshlennost'*, 117.

⁷⁸ Kariaeva and Azovtsev, *Direktivny komandovaniia frontov*, 4: 355–56; Kakurin, *Voen-naia istoriia*, 209; V. V. Polikarpov, *Russkaia voenno-promyshlennaia politika, 1914–1917: Gosudarstvennye zadachi i chastnye interesy* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2015), 126.

⁷⁹ Klebanov et al., *Sovetskoe voenno-promyshlennoe proizvodstvo*, 251.

initial advantage thanks to their powerful Cossack cavalries and occupation of Cossack territories with their large herds of horses. Stocks available to the Bolsheviks had been depleted during the First World War, when 1.5 million horses were conscripted from the population (some 30 percent of the stock was fit for military service, and no more than 10 percent of it was returned). Nonetheless, the Reds conducted their first mobilization of horses in September 1918, which yielded 281,000 by 1 April 1919. In order to avoid devastating agriculture, already burdened by Bolshevik seizures of food, in 1919 the Red Army shifted from conscripting to purchasing horses. By September 1920, the army had received more than half a million head, covering 50 percent of its needs. In total, the Bolsheviks mobilized an impressive one-quarter of the total number of horses available in the territory under their control.⁸⁰ This enabled the creation of a powerful strategic Red cavalry, already operating successfully by 1919.

Recruitment and Training

The Red Army had to assemble and train commanders and rank-and-file soldiers on an enormous scale in a very short time. By the summer of 1919, courses to train infantry officers—a taboo term replaced with “commanders” in the Red Army—were running in Moscow, Petrograd, and most large provincial cities. Similar courses for a variety of military specialties were established in locations across Soviet Russia: machine gunners received training in Moscow, Oranienbaum, Penza, and Saratov; cavalry in Petrograd, Tver’, Orel, Tambov, and Borisoglebsk; artilleryists in Moscow, Petrograd, and Saratov; engineers in Petrograd, Orel, Samara, and Kazan’; electro-technical specialists in Sergiev Posad; specialists in chemical weapons in Moscow; railroad personnel in Torzhok; specialists in military mapping and even physical education and fencing in Petrograd. Aviation schools operated in Moscow and Egor’evsk, and an armor school in Moscow. The Red Army also planned courses on military-economic management. Combat arms schools—infantry, machine-gun, and cavalry—required four months of training.⁸¹ Certainly the Red Army benefitted from its control of a network of prerevolutionary military schools, but that does not completely explain its successes.

Both officers commissioned during the First World War and Red commanders, newly appointed during the Civil War, lacked the formal military

⁸⁰ “Kratkii otchet nachal’nika Vserossiiskogo Glavnogo Shtaba o deiatel’nosti shtaba i podvedomstvennykh emu uchrezhdenii k 1 sentiabria 1920 goda” (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, ll. 5ob.–6).

⁸¹ Report about Soviet military schools and courses, 1919 (RGVA f. 100 [Upravlenie armiiami luzhnogo fronta], op. 3, d. 930, l. 323).

education of old prerevolutionary officers. As such, they were initially unsuited for high command. To correct this, the Soviets created higher military schools from mid-1918 to train new, more politically sympathetic commanders to supplement and eventually supplant the old officer corps. These schools were divided into branches specializing in infantry, artillery, cavalry, electrical engineering, chemical weaponry, mechanized warfare, military finance and economics, General Staff service, and camouflage.

When it became clear that the Red Army was sorely lacking in General Staff specialists, the new regime created an Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army. By late 1918, it was operating with an impressive teaching cadre. The time required for General Staff education was too much for a fast-growing army. As a result, a Higher Soviet School of General Staff Service opened to train junior staff officers in technical skills through an accelerated program. It trained former officers and graduates of command courses who had served in the Red Army for at least six months and had had combat experience. This not only boosted the qualifications of junior officers and commanders, but began the mass introduction of General Staff training into the Red Army. Plans to open such schools at each front headquarters proved too ambitious. To prepare highly qualified specialists, the Red Army also opened artillery, military-engineering, and military-economic academies, as well as a military-pedagogical institute, with programs of study calculated to take years, not months. On 17 June 1919, Trotskii ordered each army of the Southern Front to create its own training courses for commanders. Other military schools were also established, sometimes of a highly specialized nature. In Kuskovo, training courses for regimental commanders were opened for 100 students.⁸² The White armies lacked any comparable institutions.

The scale of training was truly impressive. In December 1919, 8,000 people were trained in Petrograd courses alone. In connection with the threat of war with Finland, Trotskii increased the number of cadets by 2,000 through the assistance of the Petrograd commune, thus training revolutionaries on a revolutionary scale.⁸³ If Denikin had enjoyed a reserve of 10,000 trained combatants in fall 1919, equivalent to what Trotskii could draw from Petrograd alone, he would have had every chance of taking Moscow. While in spring 1918 the Reds had only 10 courses for training commanders, by September 1918 they reached 34, in February 1919, 63, in September, 109, and in August

⁸² Report about regiment commander courses, August 1919 (*ibid.*, I. 481).

⁸³ Trotskii to E. M. Sklianskii, 23 December 1919 (RGVA f. 33987, op. 2, d. 32, l. 571).

1920, 117.⁸⁴ As of 1 August 1920, there were 43,000 Red cadets enrolled in six-month courses; 28,000 cadets had already completed courses. The Red Army's command structure reached a total of 85,000. The training of command cadres thus acquired a mass character, with substantial numbers of newly trained commanders capable of fighting effectively at the front.

Red Army training did not neglect rank-and-file soldiers. From 1918, basic military preparation was the responsibility of General Military Training (*Vseobshchee voennoe obuchenie*; *Vsevobuch*). In short order departments responsible for military training and recruitment appeared in all factories and other industrial workplaces. Under Trotskii's conception, *Vsevobuch* was tasked with organizing military formations up to the level of full-size armies. The initial September 1919 plan provided for the creation of 131 reserve divisions from workers, but this proved too ambitious. By May 1919, the commander of *Vsevobuch* had 24,000 former officers and noncommissioned officers at his disposal to help prepare potential troops. The *Vsevobuch* course was eight weeks long and included 96 hours of basic training, conducted without taking trainees from their regular work. Courses continued with an additional 28 days' study as part of larger units—companies and battalions. By September 1920, half a million people had passed through the 96-hour course.⁸⁵ *Vsevobuch* also provided preconscription training in schools for laborers, which trained 60,000 people or 10 percent of all those registered for conscription.

Propaganda

Soviet propaganda during the Civil War is traditionally and deservedly hailed as extremely effective. Compare, for example, the legendary poster by Dmitrii Moor with the caption "Have You Enlisted as a Volunteer?" (issued in 1920 with a print run of 50,000) with its White analogue asking "Why Are You Not in the Army?" Of course, the idea behind the posters was not new—all the belligerent powers issued similar posters during the First World War. And in this realm, the Whites definitely lost: the White version of the poster did not motivate its audience and, in addition, White publishing capabilities were far more modest.

⁸⁴ "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo Glavnogo Shtaba o deiatel'nosti shtaba i podvedomstvennykh emu uchrezhdenii k 1 sentiabria 1920 goda" (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, l. 7ob).

⁸⁵ Kliatskin, *Na zashchite Oktiabrya*, 266; Vatsetis, memoirs about 1919 (RGVA f. 39348, op. 1, d. 1, l. 19); "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo Glavnogo Shtaba o deiatel'nosti shtaba i podvedomstvennykh emu uchrezhdenii k 1 sentiabria 1920 goda" (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, l. 10).

Quantitative comparisons of Soviet and White Guard propaganda make this contrast abundantly clear. In December 1919, the cumulative circulation of the chief Soviet newspapers *Bednota*, *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia* exceeded one million copies per day. In the second half of 1919, 520,674 copies of central newspapers were sent to the Red Army daily (i.e., roughly half of the total circulation), and in total from March 1919 to February 1920, the total army circulation of newspapers reached 142,515,460 copies. In addition, the army published its own newspapers with circulation of 250,000 copies per day.⁸⁶ By comparison, print runs of the White Siberian press peaked at 10,000 copies per day for the largest newspapers. According to prisoners from the White Northern Front, Soviet newspapers reached White troops more effectively than their own.⁸⁷ Given a generally low level of political consciousness, the intensive propaganda among soldiers (including Bolshevik underground propaganda among White troops) led directly to the disintegration of anti-Bolshevik forces and raised Red morale.

Despite general economic difficulties, Soviet Russia published 68.2 million books and pamphlets in 1919, falling to 47.5 million in 1920 as a result of paper shortages, and this was considered totally inadequate. In 1918, the Red Army created more than 3,000 libraries, increasing that number to 7,500 in 1919 and adding an additional 2,400 mobile libraries used not only by soldiers but also by local populations. The Red Army's Political Directorate insisted that "the illiterate and semi-literate peasant and worker passing through the Red Army must return home literate, and he will never forget that worker-peasant power provided him with the most powerful weapon for defending his interests: education."⁸⁸ By 1 October 1919, the Bolsheviks had opened 3,800 Red Army schools of basic literacy, increasing that number in 1920 to 5,950. By summer 1920, the Red Army operated more than 1,000 theaters. The troops received directed propaganda and indoctrination on a scale typical of the Bolsheviks. Among the Whites, nothing like it was evident. Whereas Bolshevik slogans were simple and attractive, the Whites failed to articulate a clear and convincing political message.

Members of the Bolshevik Party provided a key solidifying element within the Red Army. By late 1920, party and Communist Youth League (Komso-

⁸⁶ B. N. Ponomarev et al., eds., *Istoriia SSSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 7: 684; L. A. Molchanov, *Gazetnaia pressa Rossii v gody revoliutsii i Grazhdanskoi voiny (okt. 1917–1920 gg.)* (Moscow: Izdatprofpress, 2002), 136–37.

⁸⁷ L. A. Molchanov, *Gazetnyi mir antibol'shevistskoi Rossii* (Moscow: Posev, 2001), 28–29; correspondence with the Special Department about POWs, 1919 (RGVA f. 188 [Upravlenie 6-i Otdel'noi armii], op. 3, d. 392, l. 101).

⁸⁸ Belov et al., *Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voiny*, 2: 821.

mol) members accounted for 7 percent of overall manpower but 20 percent of commanders. By 1 October 1919, the army had up to 180,000 party members, and by August 1920, more than 278,000. During the Civil War, more than 50,000 Bolsheviks died at the front, suggesting a high degree of commitment and ideological identification with the struggle.⁸⁹ Exact figures are impossible to determine, but over the course of the Civil War, roughly one in every five Bolsheviks at the front was killed. The Bolshevik Party's political apparatus permeated the Red Army from top to bottom and played an important role in Red victory. Whether commissars helped or hurt Red military effectiveness has been long debated. Former old army general V. K. Gondel', serving as a military specialist in the Red Army, wrote that

seeing the disconnected work of commanders and commissars, often observing actions taken by commissars that were contrary to military sense, I wondered whether commissars were necessary to the construction of Red Army, but came to the conclusion that without them, it would have been impossible. The Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars might believe that former officers had voluntarily offered their services, that due to their scrupulousness and honesty they could never turn traitor, and that therefore they must be given work without any political controls. But how would the Red Army masses react to this? The workers, peasants, and soldiers composing this mass were involved in a class struggle, and since the old army had long been class-based, it was also a struggle against the military elite, the old officer corps. Naturally, the workers, peasants, and soldiers would have been perplexed to see that those against whom they struggled mercilessly yesterday were today the leaders of the Red Army. Only the presence of representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' Government and the ruling political party alongside those former officers could dispel this confusion, taking advantage of the innate habit of the Russian people to submit without protest to their recognized authorities. The task of the military commissars was truly difficult: they had to maintain the authority of those whom they did not trust, whom they suspected, and over whom they were supposed to exert both open and secret authority. To do this required serious intellect, outstanding tact, endurance, and flair. Initially, as a result of misunderstanding and thoughtlessness, excesses took place that harmed the construction of the Red Army.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Azovtsev, *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR*, 2: 46; Kakurin, *Voennaia istoriia*, 205.

⁹⁰ Gondel', "Moia sluzhba v Krasnoi armii" (RGVA f. 612, op. 1, d. 49, l. 17).

Popular attitudes toward the Red Army figured as another important factor in the Bolsheviks' victory. The Bolsheviks had turned the Red Army into an effective means of spreading its ideology among the masses, and the Red Army's schools and libraries raised its social status, and made it attractive to the most politically active part of the population, striving to achieve basic education. Of course, most of the population was impoverished and indifferent to political events, but some portion was influenced by the demagogic but attractive slogans of the Communists.

Heightened fighting spirit contributed to the success of the Reds and the failure of the Whites. Reports of military censors, monitoring correspondence to and from the front, are a particularly useful source. Red Army soldiers held a wide range of views, some mutually contradictory. Nonetheless, in spring 1919 soldiers expressed their readiness to fight for the victory of Revolution, for Soviet Russia, and for the freedom of the Proletariat against world Capital. One letter declared "we will not lay down our arms until we have cut off the head of world capitalism."⁹¹

Other soldiers, however, expressed anti-Soviet sentiments. Negativism most often grew as a result of fatigue, hunger, low pay, or cancellation of leave. Not all the Red Army soldiers were ready for severe Bolshevik discipline. One censor picked out this phrase: "the mood of the troops, especially the infantry, is insubordinate. They are afraid to speak out openly, but everyone is against Soviet power. Something almost like the old discipline is being introduced."⁹²

The chaotic state of areas under White control also played a key role in building support for the Bolsheviks among populations craving order. At the same time, harsh Bolshevik discipline allowed the Soviets to make use of indifferent or even hostile soldiers in the Red Army, giving it an indisputable advantage. The Red Army also awarded medals and decorations to build morale. By autumn 1920, the Red Army had bestowed 1,866 Orders of the Red Banner, including to 92 military units.⁹³

Strict discipline was not initially employed in building the Red Army, but control was substantially tightened after the introduction of general conscription in fall 1918. Without a powerful and effective punitive apparatus, the Bolsheviks simply could not mobilize millions of peasants radicalized by the events of 1917. Violence was of course not the only Bolshevik tool, but it was certainly significant for Bolshevik success. Repression was wide-ranging, but

⁹¹ Military censor reports, 1919 (RGVA f. 6 [Polevoi shtab RVSR], op. 10, d. 3, l. 272ob.).

⁹² *Ibid.*, l. 273.

⁹³ "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo Glavnogo Shtaba o deiatel'nosti shtaba i podvedomstvennykh emu uchrezhdenii k 1 sentiabria 1920 goda" (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, l. 7ob.).

its influence was both positive and negative. A considerable share of repressive action was unjustified, produced passivity and fear among commanders, and drove valuable technical specialists away from service. At the same time, repression had immense disciplinary and mobilizing power, and served to deter disloyalty.

The secret "Instruction to the Responsible Workers of the 14th Army," signed by Trotskii on 9 August 1919, laid down the principles of punishment: "all leading institutions of the army—the Revolutionary Military Council, Political Section, Special Section, and Revolutionary Tribunal—must firmly establish and enforce the rule that no crime in the army remains unpunished. Of course, the punishment must be strictly consistent with the actual character of the crime or misconduct. Sentences must be such that every Red Army soldier, reading about them in his newspaper, clearly understands that they are just and necessary for maintaining the army's fighting efficiency. Penalties must follow crimes as soon as possible."⁹⁴ The inevitability and publicity of punishment played an important psychological role, particularly by comparison to the chaos prevalent in the White armies.

Of course, desertion was a mass phenomenon that took place on a colossal scale. Considering that 2.6 million deserters were apprehended, their total number must have been even higher.⁹⁵ While the problem was not eradicated until the end of the Civil War, by summer 1919 the fight against it had achieved significant success. Desertion from the Red Army was not necessarily caused by unwillingness to serve, but driven in large part by such objective circumstances as hunger. Starving Red Army soldiers faced tragic and desperate circumstances. Letters home from the front mentioned executions for theft of food (for example, potatoes) from civilians.⁹⁶ Soldiers found themselves in a Catch-22 situation: theft of food was punishable by death, but soldiers were not always fed. In order to survive, soldiers traded uniforms for food or begged.

On 25 December 1918, the struggle against desertion was centralized under the Central Temporary Commission to Combat Desertion, made up of representatives of the military, the Party, and the NKVD. Local governments participated through corresponding guberniia commissions. Roundups for

⁹⁴ Trotskii, "Instruktsiia otvetstvennym rabotnikam 14-i armii," 9 August 1919 (RGVA f. 11, op. 1, d. 83, l. 256ob.).

⁹⁵ Movchin, *Komplektovanie Krasnoi armii*, 133. In another work, Movchin clearly exaggerates the number of those detained: N. Movchin, "Komplektovanie Krasnoi armii v 1918–1921 gg.," in *Grazhdanskaia voina 1918–1921*, ed. A. S. Bubnov et al. (Moscow: Voennyi vestnik, 1928), 2: 83. This error has subsequently been repeated elsewhere: see Krivosheev, *Rossiiia i SSSR v voynakh XX veka*, 134.

⁹⁶ Military censor reports, 1919 (RGVA f. 6, op. 10, d. 3, l. 386).

deserters in 1919–20 managed to catch 837,000 people. As a result of amnesties and investigations, from mid-1919 to mid-1920, more than 1.5 million deserters voluntarily surrendered. Extreme measures were also applied against deserters. Red Army soldiers wrote home from the front reporting the execution of deserters at railroad stations.⁹⁷

Strict disciplinary measures were the norm in the Red Army. In many cases, only harsh discipline could enforce orders, especially since soldiers and even part of the command ranks had been rendered resistant to authority by the events of 1917, and the deference to traditional authority that the Whites could employ was practically nonexistent. In summer 1919, the main concern of the commander of the Eighth Army, former Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Vissarionovich Liubimov, was whether punitive detachments and a revolutionary tribunal were being established in the divisions under his authority.⁹⁸ Liubimov considered these measures necessary for successful combat operations.

Strong discipline applied not only to rank-and-file soldiers but also to commanders and even commissars. As head of the Red Army, Trotskii was even willing to execute party members on exceptional occasions. Troops of the Second Petrograd Regiment abandoned their positions at Kazan' and fled by ship in summer 1918. On Trotskii's orders, a tribunal issued death sentences to Gneushev, the regimental commander, Panteleev, the commissar, and every tenth soldier.⁹⁹ This incident provoked a debate over the legitimacy of shooting party members and led to a wave of criticism of Trotskii. Nonetheless, it seems that such steps strengthened discipline among commanders and commissars. This noteworthy case suggests that executions of party members were exceptional occurrences. Another means of intimidation, which was not in fact seriously applied in the Red Army, was taking hostages from the families of military specialists who defected.¹⁰⁰ After the Civil War, Trotskii downplayed such harsh measures (primarily orders for the shooting of commissars): "this was not an order for execution, but was instead a means of exerting pressure at that time. I have dozens of similar telegrams from Vladimir

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, I. 312ob.

⁹⁸ Godel', "Moia sluzhba v Krasnoi armii" (RGVA f. 612, op. 1, d. 49, l. 39). For more detail, see V. O. Daines, *Shtrafbaty i zagradotriady Krasnoi armii* (Moscow: Iauza-Eksmo, 2010).

⁹⁹ Trotskii, *Stalin*, 2: 70–74; S. I. Gusev, *Grazhdanskaia voina i Krasnaia armii* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1925), 20.

¹⁰⁰ A. V. Ganin, *Sem' "pochemu" rossiiskoi Grazhdanskoi voiny* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Piatyi Rim" [OOO "Best Seller"], 2018), 375–94.

Il'ich [Lenin].... At that time it was the standard method."¹⁰¹ They were thus primarily threats, not punishments.

The Bolsheviks found that mass public executions were also a reliable way to strengthen discipline. During 13–16 February 1919, the Military Tribunal of the Eastern Front's Fifth Army considered an incident in the Fourth Penza Infantry Regiment. Four platoons of its Fifth Company defected to Kolchak, having negotiated their flight by correspondence. Another company planned but failed to escape. In addition, the regiment's First Battalion abandoned its posts, permitting an enemy breakthrough against the battalion's position.

The Tribunal disbanded the regiment, transferring its combat-ready platoons and companies to other units. Every fifth commander of the Ninth Company, which had been preparing to defect, was sentenced to be shot after the Tribunal determined that an underground organization in the company had carried on treasonous correspondence with the Whites. Every twentieth rank-and-file soldier was likewise sentenced to death, along with all others from the First Battalion found guilty of failing to obey orders. This amounted to 57 people subject to execution, a sentence to be carried out on 16 February 1919 in front of the rest of the regiment.¹⁰² The intent of the mass execution was to produce a profound impression on soldiers, extinguishing forever any temptation to defect. A Fifth Army field court-martial that took place during 15–17 February 1919 similarly sentenced 15 soldiers of the First Penza Rifle Regiment to death for failure to obey orders, and condemned others to various prison terms.¹⁰³

Another well-known case was the execution of a large group of soldiers and commanders of the First Cavalry Army who carried out mass antisemitic pogroms in Ukraine in fall 1920. On 9 October 1920, the First Cavalry Army's Revolutionary-Military Council issued an order to disband the regiments involved. A total of 387 soldiers were arrested, mainly from the Sixth Cavalry Division under Iosif Rodionovich Apanasenko. At a Revolutionary Tribunal's extraordinary public hearing in Elisavetgrad on 21–23 October 1920, 141 Red Army personnel, including 19 members of the military command, were sentenced to death. Thirty-one then had their sentences commuted to imprisonment, and many others also received prison terms. Another 57 people were shot. Some researchers suggest that further executions took place, with up to

¹⁰¹ V. G. Krasnov and V. O. Daines, *Neizvestnyi Trotskii: Krasnyi Bonapart* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2000), 446.

¹⁰² Sentence by the military tribunal of the 5th Army, 13–16 February 1919 (RGVA f. 6, op. 5, d. 66, ll. 147–147ob.).

¹⁰³ Sentence by the military tribunal of the 5th Army, 15–17 February 1919 (*ibid.*, l. 150).

400 executed.¹⁰⁴ Even this, however, did not restore full discipline. In 1920, a total of 6,543 people were shot by sentence of military tribunals.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

We shall fight our way to the Ganges,
 In battle we shall die,
 So that from England to Japan
 My motherland shall shine.
 —Pavel Kogan

Despite building an enormous army and achieving staggering military victories, the Bolsheviks still could not achieve their goal of world revolution. The idea seemed enticing when discussed in the Central Committee, but efforts to realize this dream fell far short of reality. Above all, the Bolsheviks faced the active hostility of neighboring states, their populations, and especially their elites. In addition, they confronted a surge of nationalism and patriotism (for example, in Poland and the countries of the East), and significant local differences in the conditions necessary for the promotion of revolution (even in neighboring Persia and Turkey, to say nothing of the differences between the countries of Europe and Asia).¹⁰⁶ Representatives of other countries who collaborated with the Bolsheviks often played a double game, posing as revolutionaries, but in fact being nationalists trying to solve their own problems at the expense of the Bolsheviks. Even managing the particularities of one specific society created many difficulties and required the employment of relevant specialists.¹⁰⁷ The coordination of such large-scale actions and simultaneous planning of revolutions in many countries turned out to be technically impossible tasks. Exporting revolution required resources which the Bolsheviks did not possess.

¹⁰⁴ See L. B. Miliakova, ed., *Kniga pogromov: Pogromy na Ukraine, v Belorussii i evropeiskoi chasti Rossii v period Grazhdanskoi voiny 1918–1922 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 422–28; O. V. Budnitskii, *Rossiiskie evrei mezhdru krasnymi i belymi (1917–1920)* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), 479–93; V. L. Genis, “Pervaia Konnaia armia: za kulisami slavy,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 12 (1994): 73; N. S. Prisiazhnyi, *Pervaia Konnaia armia na pol’skom fronte v 1920 godu* (Rostov-na-Donu: Izdatel’stvo Rostovskogo universiteta, 1992), 19.

¹⁰⁵ Statistics of military tribunals in 1920 (RGVA f. 4, op. 3, d. 1648, l. 1).

¹⁰⁶ M. A. Persits, ed., *Persidskii front mirovoi revoliutsii: Dokumenty o sovetskom vtorzhenii v Gilian, 1920–1921* (Moscow: Kvadriga, 2009), 348.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Iu. N. Tikhonov, *Afganskaia voina Stalina: Bitva za Tsentral’nuu Aziuu* (Moscow: Iauza, Eksmo, 2008).

Moreover, Soviet Russian society was hardly in a position to support world revolution. The party was torn by internal contradictions, and after the first setbacks in Poland and Persia in 1920, the party leadership was discouraged about the feasibility of world revolution. Red Army soldiers, exhausted by many years of fighting, were tired of war and did not identify with the goal of reconstructing the world, which was central to Bolshevik doctrine. Soviet Russia had been through many years of ruinous civil strife, and the threat of a new protracted war with the whole capitalist world loomed, including against the victorious powers in the First World War with their colossal resources. In 1921, the country was wracked by famine. Peasant discontent was growing. Military industry urgently required renovation that entailed both cutting production and investing in infrastructure and capital goods. Under the demands of wartime production, military industry was on the verge of complete collapse. Continuing to fight would require contending with a worsening transport and fuel crisis in the face of already substantial physical destruction. These problems were ultimately insurmountable, and the Bolsheviks had to pivot in order to strengthen their position within the country and oversee the demobilization of the multimillion-man army. This required gradually abandoning the adventurist course of exporting the revolution through direct military action.

The Red Army should not be idealized. Given the scope and speed of its expansion, and its enormous scale, serious shortcomings were unavoidable. These included the low level of training of Red commanders, the rudeness and incompetence of commissars, bloated staffs, baseless and often senseless repression and harsh punishment, mass desertion, poor combat training, and shortages of almost every material need. As Soviet commander in chief Vatsetis noted, "it was hardly possible to ask that the Red Army at that time [late 1918] be as it was portrayed at its Jubilee celebrations. It must be kept in mind that the Red Army was built in the midst of colossal military devastation, with major disputes and divergences, which by the end of [1918] had not yet been eliminated."¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik leadership did not allow these shortcomings to overwhelm their achievements. Indeed, one White author is completely incorrect to say that "all the military successes of the Red Army can be ascribed exclusively to weight of numbers."¹⁰⁹ Veterans of the Whites truly wished to believe this naive explanation, ignoring deeper and more serious reasons for

¹⁰⁸ Vatsetis, memoirs about 1919 (RGVA f. 39348, op. 1, d. 1, l. 960).

¹⁰⁹ M. Kritskii, "Krasnaia Armiia na luzhnom fronte v 1918–1920 gg. (po dokumentam i sekretnym prikazam, zakhvachennym v boiakh 1-m Korpusom Dobrovol'cheskoi armii)," *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii* 18 (1926): 280.

the victory of the Reds and for their own failure. The Reds indeed outnumbered their opponents, not simply in soldiers but also in supplies, printed leaflets, and the number of political opponents executed. The Whites' fatal errors only widened this gap. Not surprisingly, the Bolsheviks' new force eventually prevailed.

The Bolsheviks were fanatics for their cause. They did not flinch at the most brutal measures to achieve their goals. They launched a total war against the Whites: the distinctive features of that war were precisely its systematic nature, its scale, and its centralization—the basic principles of Bolshevik military policy. The anti-Bolshevik camp, based on traditional and prerevolutionary principles of administration, had nothing with which to oppose the Reds. In this respect, the opposing sides were completely unequal. The war was a struggle between old and new systems of values, old and new world views, centuries-old traditions and modern unscrupulousness, cruelty, and determination. Some Bolshevik opponents understood this. As Major General Ernest Georgievich fon Val' justly wrote, "in a struggle for life and death, it is pointless to hold the gentleman's sword when bludgeons are at work all around."¹¹⁰ It was perhaps not the Whites' fault that they could not become different than they were.

As a conclusion, these words from Colonel fon Lampe's diary, dated 19–20 April 1920 (O.S.), fit perfectly: "I once intended to write *Stages of Destruction*. At the time, I thought that the final chapter would be 'The Volunteer Army.' But I now see that things go on further and are more complicated. I'm very interested in the essence of the Red Army. It was created as a socialist delusion, but its struggle with us, its introduction of real officers, and its gradual return to prerevolutionary principles, makes it a chapter in the very book I dreamed of writing."¹¹¹

Translated by David Stone

¹¹⁰ Ernest Georgievich fon Val', *Kak Pilsudskii pogubil Denikina* (Tallinn: n.p., 1938), xv–xvi.

¹¹¹ Fon Lampe, diary, book 25, 19–20 April 1920 (GARF f. R-5853, op. 1, d. 2, l. 100).