

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

**BOOK 3: THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR: MILITARY AND SOCIETY**

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# The Russian Officer Corps in the Civil War: The Reds and the National Armies

Andrei V. Ganin

The Civil War led to a previously unprecedented division of Russian society throughout all groups and classes. The war's outbreak—on the heels of the Great War and two revolutions—became one of the most difficult trials in the lives of officers from the old Russian army. The outcome of the struggle, the further development of the Soviet state and the newly independent states that arose on the ruins of the Russian Empire, depended largely on their choices, made out of mutual embitterment in the escalating of an armed conflict. Like the entire population of the former Russian Empire, officers found themselves divided between Reds, Whites, and the supporters of national states. A considerable number preferred to evade involvement in the fratricidal war, taking a neutral position, while some took part in the “Green” movement, fighting against everyone. This chapter will deal with the officers in two of these camps: the Red Army and the new national armies.

## The Red Army

Immediately after seizing power, Russia's new Bolshevik regime realized that without qualified commanders from among former officers, it could neither create a new army, nor protect itself from numerous enemies. Meanwhile, attracting officers to the Soviet regime was difficult, given that the Bolsheviks and their allies, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, took power in the wake of the old army's disintegration and rampant soldier indiscipline, along with the unprecedented humiliation and even the mass murder of officers. Having come to power, the Bolsheviks continued to implement policies that inevitably alienated officers. They abolished epaulettes and military ranks. And since the very word “officer” aroused suspicions of counterrevolution, they employed the term “military specialist” (*voenspets*) in its place.

Social forces created a split in the officer corps, aggravated by political and ideological divisions. In total, by October 1917 there were more than 250,000 officers in the Russian army, of whom about 190,000 (76 percent) were wartime officers, many of whom first took up arms during the First World War.<sup>1</sup> By November 1917, only 4 percent of cadre officers (that is, officers in the Imperial Army prior to the outbreak of the First World War) remained in active army infantry regiments.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, prewar officers still made up about 60 percent of the Navy's command personnel.<sup>3</sup> Cossack troops also generally retained their prewar officers.

There was an enormous difference between wartime officers and prewar or cadre officers. Prewar cadre officers were a closed and privileged caste. They devoted themselves entirely to the military as professionals, often originating from officer lineages, where, generation after generation, men chose military service as their profession. Some officers had higher military education, both general or more specialized (artillery, engineering, etc.). They retained strong corporate traditions, and many were nobles. By the turn of the century, however, in both Russia and the rest of Europe, the social base of the officer corps was expanding, with non-nobles advancing and even enjoying brilliant army careers. For instance, General Mikhail Vasil'evich Alekseev was the son of a common soldier who earned officer rank. General Lavr Georgievich Kornilov was the son of a Cossack who rose to junior officer status. General Anton Ivanovich Denikin was the son of a serf who had been drafted but then promoted to officer rank. The Soviet commander in chief, Colonel Ioakim Ioakimovich Vatsetis, was born into a family of farm laborers.

Cadre officers traditionally kept themselves aloof from political life; they did not know or understand the importance of party struggle and ideology, as they were raised on the ideals of obedience to the emperor. However, politically active individuals, including supporters of a constitutional monarchy or a republican system, began to appear more often among such officers. Cadre officers figured among the most prominent figures of the counterrevolutionary camp during the Civil War (for example, generals Evgenii Karlovich Miller, Nikolai Nikolaevich Iudenich, Admiral Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak) and many prominent Soviet Russian military staff were also drawn from this

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<sup>1</sup> According to S. V. Volkov in 2001, the total amounted to 276,000 officers. See his *Tragediia russkogo ofitserstva* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2001), 10. His later calculation set the number as 320,000: "Pervaia mirovaia voina i russkii ofitserskii korpus," *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo bogoslovskogo instituta* 38, 1 (2011): 115.

<sup>2</sup> A. G. Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty na sluzhbe Respubliki sovetov 1917–1920 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 27–28, 52.

<sup>3</sup> K. B. Nazarenko, *Flot, revoliutsiia i vlast' v Rossii: 1917–1921* (Moscow: Kvadriga/Russkaia Panorama, 2011), 61.

caste (former general Mikhail Dmitrievich Bonch-Bruевич, former colonels Vatsetis, Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, and Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov, and former lieutenant Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii).

Wartime officers were cut from a different cloth. The social backgrounds of this category of wartime officers were extremely heterogeneous. For example, a recent university graduate who had never smelled gunpowder could become a wartime officer, or an uneducated Cossack who had participated in many campaigns and served as a noncommissioned officer could then receive a promotion to officer for military distinction. The social composition of wartime officers was broad and democratic. Qualifications and level of training varied significantly. Many did not associate their lives with military service. In fact, this category of officers included a cross-section of Russian society, and, largely did not reflect an officer's worldview, but instead the view of those layers of the population from which they had originated.

Cadre officers were better prepared for command and control, while wartime officers were more difficult to classify as military professionals. But, quite naturally, among wartime officers there were many supporters of Populist (Narodnik) views and adherents of other left-wing political trends (for example, the first Soviet supreme commander, Nikolai Vasil'evich Krylenko, Sergei Georgievich Lazo, Mrktich Karapetovich Ter-Arutiunians, Ivan Fedorovich Fed'ko, Nikolai Aleksandrovich Shchors, and others). Moreover, of course, many such officers accepted both the February and October revolutions and actively supported the Bolsheviks.

Among patriotic officers, a widely held view regarded Bolsheviks as enemies of Russia, traitors, and direct hirelings of Germany, who were striving for the defeat of their own country in the world war and who had betrayed Russia's Entente allies by concluding a shameful separate peace with the enemy in 1918. This view served as one of the reasons for officers crossing to the anti-Bolshevik side.

The active expression of personal political positions occurred rarely among Russian officers. The vast majority followed habits developed over years of service, blindly obeying orders from above and remaining in their places even after the October coup. Since the Bolsheviks assumed power in the country's center, where all the organs of the military's central administration were located, as well as the frontline zone of several fronts and the Stavka, the military field headquarters, a significant portion of officers from old army institutions remained in place in the same but modified organs of the new Red Army. For example, most Stavka personnel stayed in their positions after the change of power. In this sense, the period of transition from old army structures to the new Red Army proceeded from inertia. Many who came into the new army believed that they should serve their country irrespective of the

ruling regime. Only a small portion of officers cooperated with the Bolsheviks for ideological reasons. Simultaneously, a very small minority of the military experts entered the Bolshevik Party. The Bolsheviks rebuilt the army on new principles and established strict control rather quickly. These measures could not but impress many officers, who saw in the new regime a strong power capable of coping with the anarchy that had engulfed the country.

For many officers, primarily cadre, military service was their only occupation; they could not imagine themselves outside the army and in isolation from their vocation. Among these officers, a sort of mercenary psychology spread, making them ready to serve any authority in need of their services.<sup>4</sup> From this point of view, service in the Red Army—or any other Civil War army, for that matter—appeared a suitable option. Moreover, they were not alone in this pattern of behavior—they were among thousands of their former colleagues.

Many careerists actively joined the Red Army. The former General Staff major general Mikhail Bonch-Bruevich, whose brother Vladimir Dmitrievich managed the affairs of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) and was a member of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin's inner circle, was closely associated with the Bolsheviks. However, Mikhail Bonch-Bruevich's ideological convictions were doubtful.<sup>5</sup>

Entering the new army made advances possible that some, for various reasons, could not count on in the old army. There is ample evidence that for the sake of their career, volunteers entering the Red Army resented the old regime or were failures who sought to realize their unclaimed or missing potential. Receiving a salary and access to food rations provided additional important incentives for entering the Red Army's ranks, allowing officers and their families to survive in the midst of chaos and devastation. Finally, entering the new army offered protection from the arbitrariness of local bandit elements, who killed hundreds of cadre officers during 1917–18.

The Bolshevik peace talks with representatives of the Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk in late 1917–early 1918 included a group of officers as experts. When in February 1918 the Germans launched a large-scale offensive on the Eastern Front in response to Bolshevik delaying tactics, thousands of officers voluntarily joined the new Red Army for patriotic reasons, to protect their country from a ruthless enemy. Tsarist officers took an active role in repulsing the German offensive and defending Petrograd. On all the main fronts, former General Staff officers headed the defenses of the capital's approaches, assuming leadership and coordinating the actions of Soviet detachments from

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<sup>4</sup> For a comparative analysis, see Nazarenko, *Flot, revoliutsiia i vlast'*, 18–46.

<sup>5</sup> P. D. Mal'kov, *Zapiski komendanta Kremliia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1987), 79.

Petrograd. In Petrograd, by 1 March 1918, 28 former generals and colonels (regimental commanders or higher in the old army) declared their desire to participate in the city's defense.<sup>6</sup> In total, more than 8,000 former officers—sufficient to staff 20 divisions—voluntarily joined the Red Army during the German offensive.<sup>7</sup> The Supreme Military Council's order of 21 March 1918, which abolished the election of commanders, marked an important step in strengthening the Red Army and attracting former officers. Before the mass registration and mobilization of officers, it was decided "to acquire individual worker-specialists, and retain them in the event that staffs need to be formed for the army."<sup>8</sup>

One of the initiators of the policy to attract former officers into the Red Army was Lev Davidovich Trotskii, the people's commissar for military and naval affairs, who exerted much effort to make his views on the Red Army's development acceptable to the Party's Central Committee. The most far-sighted representatives of Soviet military-political leadership understood that they could not create a mass army on a voluntary basis or through improvisation. Moreover, many officers who entered the new army were not at all eager to participate in the fratricidal war unfolding in Russia. Some, when enrolled in the Red Army, directly put forward the condition that they would not fight internal enemies, but were ready to fight only against external enemies. The Bolsheviks themselves initially also considered it acceptable to use officers only against external enemies.<sup>9</sup>

Initially, the Red Army only accepted 765 former officers based on attestation of their reliability and knowledge.<sup>10</sup> The process of mass recruitment of officers into Soviet service began by Order no. 324 of the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, dated 7 May 1918, on the registration of former officer-specialists in district military commissariats. Initially, the registrations were voluntary, but gradually policies became stricter, transitioning to coerced volunteering (for instance, threatening the end of their professional careers, as in the case of General Staff officers), and then to direct compul-

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<sup>6</sup> A. L. Fraiman, *Revoliutsionnaia zashchita Petrograda v fevrale–marte 1918 g.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 151.

<sup>7</sup> Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty*, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (RGVA) f. 4 (Upravlenie delami pri narodnom komissare oborony SSSR), op. 1, d. 1520, l. 85 (correspondence between unidentified staff officers).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 81.

<sup>10</sup> "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba k 1 sentiabria 1920" (RGVA f. 11 [Vserossiiskii glavnyi shtab], op. 5, d. 959, l. 7).

sion.<sup>11</sup> By the summer of 1918, the forced mobilization of officers became the only way for the Bolsheviks to attract a mass of former officers to vital internal fronts.

The SNK issued a decree on 29 July 1918 calling up former officers born between 1892 and 1897. Compulsory mobilization produced only 4,237 military specialists by September 1918. According to other information, decrees of 29 July, 2 August, 29 August, and 3 September produced 9,901 former officers, 15,695 former noncommissioned officers, 303 doctors, 2,446 pharmacists and medics, and 481 former officials by 7 October 1918.<sup>12</sup> A new decree of 1 October 1918 called up former officers and military officials who had yet to reach the age of 40 by 1 January 1918. On 14 November, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RVSR) issued a similar resolution.<sup>13</sup>

This action, however, produced an opposite reaction. In conditions that included the illegitimacy of Bolshevik authorities and an internal confrontation with a full-scale civil war by late spring 1918, former officers who found themselves in the Red Army fled to the emerging anti-Bolshevik armies. For the period from 1918–20, over 560 General Staff officers alone, from a relatively narrow and small fraction of the officer corps, fled the Red Army.<sup>14</sup> Estimates of defectors from other officer categories number in the thousands. Entire squadrons fled to the Whites, and high-ranking military specialists up to the level of army commanders went over as well.

The number of military specialists increased substantially only toward the end of 1918. On 23 November 1918, the RVSR issued Order no. 275, which from 25 November to 15 December called up all former senior officers up to the age of 50, staff officers up to the age of 55, and generals up to the age of 60. This provided the new army with over 50,000 military specialists, as well as 9,000 administrative-economic staff.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A. V. Ganin, *Korpus ofitserov General'nogo shtaba v gody Grazhdanskoi voiny 1917–1922* gg. (Moscow: Russkii put', 2009), 45–46, 50–52.

<sup>12</sup> Report by the Organizational Directorate of the All-Russian General Staff, 1918 (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 50, l. 16). See also Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 71 (Institut Marksizma-Leninizma pri TsK KPSS), op. 35, d. 667, l. 2 (extracts from a report by the All-Russian General Staff).

<sup>13</sup> *Revvoensovet respubliki: Protokoly, 1918–1919* gg. (Moscow: Russkii mir, 1997), 114–15.

<sup>14</sup> Ganin, *Korpus ofitserov*, 120–22; A. V. Ganin, "Workers and Peasants Red Army 'General Staff Personalities' Defecting to the Enemy Side in 1918–1921," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 26, 2 (2013): 259–309.

<sup>15</sup> "Kratkii otchet nachal'nika Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba k 1 sentriabria 1920" (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 959, l. 7).

There are significant discrepancies in the data on former officers and military officials in the Red Army. Official records noted that the Red Army enrolled 23,900 officers and military bureaucrats in 1918, 80,000 in 1919, and 18,400 in 1920, for a total of 122,300.<sup>16</sup> According to estimates of former White officers based on documentation from Soviet state security organs, military bureaucrats accounted for up to a third of the total number of registered officers.<sup>17</sup> However, a different ratio of officers and bureaucrats characterized the Civil War. Thus, according to information on the composition of anti-Bolshevik formations in northwest Russia at the end of 1918, the number of officers was seven to eight times greater than the number of bureaucrats, though this statistic might count noncommissioned officers as officers. According to another source, from March 1918 to 15 June 1920, the Red Army assigned 154,923 men to fill command positions, including 22,869 Red commanders (*kraskomy*).<sup>18</sup> The remaining 132,054 were former tsarist officers, bureaucrats, and noncommissioned officers (up to 22,000). Excluding noncommissioned officers, former officers and bureaucrats should have numbered about 110,000, suggesting perhaps 98,000 former officers.

Taking into account losses, captivity, the rotation of personnel and numerous transfers of officers from Red to White and vice versa, approximately 100,000 officers might have passed through the Red Army. From 110,000 to 130,000 officers (including those commissioned in White service) could have passed through the White armies, including 70,000–90,000 through the White armies of Southern Russia, about 30,000 through the Eastern Front, and about 10,000 on other fronts. A considerable number of officers spilled over from one camp to the other as prisoners or defectors, so the figures mentioned will inevitably overlap. An additional significant number of officers evaded participation in the Civil War altogether. Thus, the definitive answer to the question of how many officers served the Red Army and how many served their opponents remains a task for future research.

All the technical work of creating a new army lay on the shoulders of military specialists. According to Kavtaradze's estimates, military specialists accounted for 85 percent of the Red Army's front commanders, 100 percent of front chiefs of staff, 82 percent of army commanders, at least 91 percent of army

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<sup>16</sup> "Otchet Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba za 1918–1920 gg." (RGVA f. 33987 [Sekretariat predsdatelia RVSR-RVS SSSR], op. 1, d. 58, l. 67).

<sup>17</sup> Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy. Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv, *Kniga ucheta lits, sostoiavshikh na osobom uchete byvshikh belykh ofitserov v organakh GPU Ukrainy* (Kharkiv: Saga, 2011), 1: 11.

<sup>18</sup> "Otchet Vserossiiskogo glavnogo shtaba za 1918–1920 gg." (RGVA f. 33987, op. 1, d. 58, l. 107). There were 39,914 Red commanders by December 1920 (Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty*, 176).

chiefs of staff, up to 70 percent of division commanders, and over 50 percent of division chiefs of staff. Additionally, they made up more than 90 percent of the teaching personnel at military training institutions during the Civil War, which attests to their decisive contribution to the Red Army's creation.<sup>19</sup> It was no accident that Lenin, in the spring of 1920, repeatedly noted that without military specialists there would be neither a Red Army nor victories.<sup>20</sup>

An uneasy situation greeted former officers in the new army. Commissars and the Red Army treated them with suspicion as notorious enemies and counterrevolutionaries. Red commanders who graduated from military schools in Soviet Russia considered former officers their competitors for command posts, were hostile to them, and plotted against them, using their party ties and connections to power. The term *spetsseedstvo*—"eating specialists"—reflected the rejection of former officers in the army of workers and peasants.

Commissars needed to protect military specialists from the soldier masses and explain to soldiers the meaning and significance of bringing former officers into the new army.<sup>21</sup> Commissars additionally exerted political control over military specialists and were supposed to prevent treasonous activities, but not all commissars were properly trained for such responsibilities. To succeed in such a position, one had to possess not only military knowledge, but a sense of tact as well.

Serious measures were taken to increase loyalty among specialists and prevent treason. Initially, commissars were held responsible for treasonous military specialists, but events during the summer of 1918 showed that this was inadequate. Commissars could not prevent treason even among the small caste of General Staff officers, not to mention the rest of the mass of officers. Mutual relations between commanders and commissars acquired a personal character, which featured conflicts and confrontations as well as sympathies. Of course, the presence of friendly relations between commanders and commissars led to a decreased level of control over military specialists.

Commissars' inability to deter disloyalty led to a search for other forms of prevention. Trotskii's 30 September 1918 order allowed the government to take traitors' family members hostage as one way to intimidate military specialists.<sup>22</sup> It applied only to families of military specialists who had already

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<sup>19</sup> Kavtaradze, *Voennye spetsialisty*, 198, 208, 210.

<sup>20</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 40: 199, 218.

<sup>21</sup> V. K. Gondel', "Moia sluzhba v Krasnoi armii: Vospominaniia" (RGVA f. 612 [Redaktsiia "Krasnaia armii i Krasnyi flot v revoliutsionnoi voine Sovetskoi Rossii 1917–20 gg.": Otdel Istparta po istorii Krasnoi armii], op. 1, d. 49, l. 17).

<sup>22</sup> L. D. Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Vysshii voennyi redaktsionnyi sovet, 1923), 1: 151.

betrayed Soviet power. However, there were no details about what to do with the detainees. An analysis of documents showed that this was more of a declaratory Bolshevik threat than actual punishment. While individual cases of arrests of military specialists' family members did occur, Trotskii repeatedly asserted that no serious measures were taken against them. A further way of keeping officers in suspense was through arbitrary and unreasonable arrests.

At the Eighth Party Congress in the second half of March 1919, a large-scale discussion began on the use of military specialists in the Red Army. Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, at the time a Central Committee member, acted as the informal leader of those opposing the mass recruitment of military specialists. Supporting the absent Trotskii, Lenin stressed the importance of using those who had served the old regime; he discouraged excessive harassment of specialists while urging party members to monitor their work.

Gradually, party leaders and their leading military specialist supporters began to form groups in the Red Army. Thus, Lenin promoted Bonch-Bruевич, military director of the Supreme Military Council and later the head of the Field Staff of the RVSR, S. S. Kamenev, commander in chief, and Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii, commander of the Caucasus and Western fronts. For his part, Stalin backed Aleksandr Il'ich Egorov, commander of the Southern and Southwestern fronts, and Ieronim Petrovich Uborevich, commander of the Fourteenth, Ninth, and Thirteenth armies. Vatsetis, Kamenev's predecessor as commander in chief, could be considered Trotskii's protégé. At the same time, Trotskii engaged in practical military-administrative work, in contrast to the politicized and conspiratorial Lenin and Stalin. He focused on achieving success at the front and strengthening the Red Army, regardless of who promoted which commanders. For this reason, he lacked supporters among the high command. Conflicts in the Bolshevik leadership often led to high-profile cases against military specialists. One example came with the mass arrest of military specialists in the Field Staff of the Revolutionary Military Council in July 1919, which resulted in the replacement of Soviet Russia's highest military leadership. Multiple competing versions of these events blame Lenin, Stalin, and Trotskii.

The Bolshevik task was to build a powerful army in which, despite the party's position of priority, there should nevertheless exist a balance of interests between commissars and military specialists, since it was clear that coercion alone could not build an effective army. Many former officers served in the Red Army without the threat of punishment, and there are cases of heroic behavior by military specialists. For example, the Whites captured former major general Aleksandr Panfomirovich Nikolaev, a brigade commander in the Nineteenth Rifle Division, in May 1919 near Iamburg. He was hanged

for refusing to switch sides to the Whites. Similarly, Major General Anton Vladimirovich Stankevich, commander of the Red Army's Fifty-Fifth Rifle Division, was captured by the Whites on the Southern Front in October 1919, refused to serve them, and was then subjected to severe torture and hanged.

With the assistance of military specialists, the Bolsheviks were able to restore the network of prerevolutionary military schools and academies; some military schools were created from scratch, including the General Staff Academy.

Many military specialists quickly managed to create a career as they adapted to the conditions and requirements of the new army, and even worked diligently. The absence of military ranks meant positions determined careers. In the period from 1917 to 1922, rapid advancement in the Red Army required personal qualities and professional skills, as well as loyalty to Bolshevik power. Patronage from a party leader could play an important role. Among the Bolshevik elite, Trotskii, S. I. Aralov (himself a former junior officer), and Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze exhibited a generally benevolent and protective attitude toward military specialists. A number of former officers boasted impressive careers during the Civil War, including Vatsetis, Kamenev, Tukhachevskii, Uborevich, Avgust Ivanovich Kork, and Matvei Ivanovich Vasilenko (who managed also to serve under the White forces on the Eastern Front in 1918–19). Military specialists served as commander in chief of the Red Army, as well as front and army commanders.

Several former officers became members of the highest Soviet military-administrative organ, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (Revvoensovet). Among them were former colonels Vatsetis and Kamenev, former rear admiral Vasiliĭ Mikhailovich Al'tfater, former lieutenant Vladimir Aleksandrovich Antonov-Ovseenko, former staff captain Aralov, former sergeant Dmitriĭ Ivanovich Kurskii, and former warrant officer Fedor Fedorovich Raskol'nikov. Thus, out of 23 members of the RVSR, there were 7 military specialists (although for Antonov-Ovseenko, who deserted during the Russo-Japanese War, the term "military specialist" is not quite accurate). Vatsetis, Kamenev, and Al'tfater, the only members of the RVSR who had achieved high rank in the tsarist army, were not Bolshevik Party members.

As pilots in the Red Air Force had to be officers, an official document listing pilot losses in 1918–19 can offer some insight into the nature of former officers' service in the Red military during the Civil War. In total, Soviet Red aviation during this period lost 554 pilots. Of them, 56 were killed, 59 went missing, 92 were wounded, 18 died of wounds, 15 were dismissed due to illness, 63 deserted, 43 were taken prisoner, 92 were arrested, 39 defected to the

enemy, 9 were shot, and 68 were lost for other reasons.<sup>23</sup> One hundred two defections or desertions, combined with 43 prisoners, implies that 26.2 percent found themselves in White hands or fled from the Bolsheviks, 13.4 percent were killed or died of wounds, 19.3 percent were dismissed due to injuries and illnesses, 16.6 percent were arrested, and 1.6 percent were executed. By early 1920, only 378 pilots remained in the ranks.<sup>24</sup> Thus, up to 44.4 percent of Red Air Force pilot losses resulted from captivity, desertion, and repression.

The Soviet-Polish War aroused a renewed surge of patriotic sentiment among officers. In May 1920, a famous proclamation by former General A. A. Brusilov and other older generals called on "all former officers, wherever they are," to rally to the fight against an external enemy. This appeal had a significant impact on those former officers who had yet to serve in the Red Army. Many White officers who believed this announcement and surrendered to the Bolsheviks then suffered repression.

By the end of the Civil War, the Red Army command staff was replenished with former White officers. By 1 January 1921, they made up about 12,000, or 5.53 percent, of the Red Army's commanders.<sup>25</sup> In 1921 an additional 2,390 former White officers were registered. At the same time, however, the Red Army attempted to rid itself of former Whites. After dismissals, only 1,975 former White officers remained, accounting for 2.3 percent of the command staff. Of those, 33.3 percent were treated as highly qualified specialists not subject to dismissal. In the White armies during the Civil War, by contrast, such a nuanced approach toward captured military experts and their active and mass utilization in responsible positions was impossible.

According to information for 1921, the educational level of the Red Army's commanders was as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> Chart showing losses of pilots in 1918–19 (RGVA f. 11, op. 5, d. 1047, l. 67).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 69.

<sup>25</sup> "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym delam za 1921 god" (RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 33, l. 45ob.).

**Table 1.** Education level of RKKA command staff for 1921 (in percentages)<sup>26</sup>

Positions/Posts	Percentage Ratio					
	Graduated from the General Staff Academy	Former Cadre Officers	Former Wartime Officers	Graduated from the Red Army General Staff Academy	Graduated from Red Army command school and courses	Graduated from training but did not receive military education
High Command Staff	3.26	29.69	38.02	1.79	6.29	17.21
Senior Command Staff	0.42	12.26	45.26	0.18	15.50	24.10
All Staff (including platoon commanders)	0.28	3.71	24.99	0.11	26.17	41.55

Thus, 41.5 percent of the command staff were not trained for command positions, the price of creating a mass army.

Communists made up 41.1 percent of the higher command staff in 1921. By comparison, in 1920, party command staff had numbered only 10.5 percent. Even as the officer corps became increasingly communist, the highest positions in the Red Army were still held by nonparty military specialists, including Bonch-Bruevich, the two commanders in chief, Vatsetis and Kamenev (who did not join the party until 1930), and chiefs of Field Staff of the RVSR N. I. Rattel', Pavel Pavlovich Lebedev, and Fedor Vasil'evich Kostiaev. Party membership was not yet perceived as necessary for promotion or for consolidating one's position.

Data on commanders and administrators for 1922 is as follows:

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., l. 46.

**Table 2.** The command and administrative staff of the Red Army in 1922<sup>27</sup>

Year of Birth	Number of persons	% in relation to total
1850–54	1	0.001
1855–59	—	—
1860–64	49	0.054
1865–69	90	0.098
1870–74	215	0.233
1875–79	363	0.394
1880–84	1,102	1.086
1885–89	4,288	4.702
1890–94	12,508	13.549
1895–99	52,520	56.921
1900–04	21,182	22.946
1905	14	0.016
Total:	92,332	100.000

Red Army commanders were quite young—93.40 percent of the command-administrative staff in 1922 was from 18 to 32 years old, including about 57 percent aged 23 to 27. According to a report of the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, in 1922 the Red Army included 4,710 cadre officers who had received training before 14 July 1914 (5.10 percent of commanders), 16,592 wartime officers (17.97 percent), 39,896 commanders without formal military training (43.21 percent), 220 military academy graduates (0.23 percent),<sup>28</sup> 2,372 higher school graduates (2.57 percent), and 12,752 graduates from schools and courses for command staff (13.82 percent).<sup>29</sup> At the end of the Civil War, then, military specialists numbered no more than 26 percent of the command staff.

The share of former tsarist officers among the Red Army's commanders gradually declined. If in 1918 they numbered 75 percent, by 1919 their total dropped to 53 percent, 42 percent in 1920, and only 34 percent at the end of 1921. This decline resulted from an influx of newly trained Red commanders,

<sup>27</sup> "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god" (RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 167, l. 91).

<sup>28</sup> This figure is incorrect. In a list of individuals with higher military education as of 1 August 1922, 522 graduates are included, plus 23 transferred to the General Staff (some of whom did not have academy training). See Ganin, *Korpus ofitserov*, 84.

<sup>29</sup> "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voennym i morskim delam za 1922 god" (RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 167, l. 92).

the outflow of aged military specialists, and the purging of “class aliens” from command and administrative positions. Some former officers in the 1920s legally or illegally emigrated from Soviet Russia.

Military specialists played a major role in the creation and strengthening of the Red Army. Thanks to their activities, the Red Army retained continuity with the old tsarist army. The presence of many highly trained officers contributed to the intellectual level of the Red Army. Military specialists managed to transfer their knowledge and experience to the next generation of Soviet commanders, which ultimately contributed both to the victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, and to the transformation of the Soviet Army into the most formidable armed force in the world in the postwar period.

### **National Armies**

The events of 1917 fragmented not only the Russian Imperial Army but also the Russian imperial officer corps. The process of forming newly independent national states arose from the empire’s ruins. Of course, this process necessarily involved thousands of officers and soldiers who had originally come from the now-independent regions, or belonged to the titular nationalities of the emerging states. A wave of nationalist sentiment overwhelmed the Russian Army. Various national formations appeared: Polish, Ukrainian, Baltic, and Transcaucasian.

None of the senior military figures in 1917 could imagine the long-term consequences of the political process that nationalized elements of the Russian army. Initially, authorities sanctioned such national formations to invigorate the decaying revolutionary army. In a historical paradox, radical nationalists were not the ones who opened this “Pandora’s box.” Rather, those who did came from among those most dedicated to preserving the Russian imperial state. In particular, the future White leader Lavr Kornilov initially believed the creation of Ukrainian national units would strengthen the Imperial Army’s morale—a clear miscalculation. Pavlo Skoropads’kyi, who allegedly warned Kornilov of the dangers of the Ukrainian Rada, was surprised by Kornilov’s dismissal of the problem. General Staff officers, including General Nikolai Nikolaevich Dukhonin and A. E. Gutor, supported Ukrainian national units as a way of increasing the army’s fighting capacity. It soon became clear, however, that national formations led only to the army’s final fragmentation and collapse. Opponents of the army’s nationalization included future prominent figures of the White movement, including Alekseev, Denikin, and Sergei Leonidovich Markov, but they did not have the last word.

The fate of Russian officers in Ukrainianized formations was unenviable. According to Denikin’s testimony, old officers were subject to bullying as they

found themselves under the power of Ukrainian junior officers who were now their superiors.<sup>30</sup> Confident of their own impunity, soldiers' committees entered into direct confrontation with higher commanders. The Bolsheviks, once in power, curtailed this process of nationalization.

Officers entered national formations for varied reasons. Those who followed this path were primarily connected by birth, kinship, service, or property in those territories seeking self-determination. Chance played a significant role. It was easier, geographically, for those who served on the Southwestern and Romanian fronts during the First World War to serve in Ukrainian armies. Like those who joined the Red Army, officers who were previously unable to fulfill their career plans joined national formations expecting their careers to take off. This was one of the reasons, but not the most significant. Bolshevik opponents also joined the new national armies, hoping to take part in the struggle against the Bolsheviks or wait out the Civil War and avoid the repressions against former officers in Soviet Russia.

Russian army officers entered service in the armed forces of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Ukrainian armies comprised one of the largest contingents. According to some reports, officers of Ukrainian origin in 1917 numbered up to 60,000, not all of whom, of course, were part of Ukrainian forces.<sup>31</sup> Hetman Skoropads'kyi's army mobilized up to 7,000 officers. Officers who joined nationalist forces were not necessarily nationalists themselves. Probably only in Finland and Poland, with well-rooted national languages and nationalist ideas already deeply embedded in mass consciousness by 1917, were the majority of officers motivated primarily by nationalism.

In other newly created states, the situation was completely different. For example, only in rare cases did Ukrainianized officers know the Ukrainian language, which resulted in many jokes heard even later during the years of emigration. Thus, among the 51 officers of the General Staff included in a 24 May 1918 list, only 37.2 percent considered themselves or their relatives to be Ukrainians and only 44 percent understood Ukrainian to one degree or another.<sup>32</sup> According to a 21 November 1918 list of 305 officers, only some 35 percent knew Ukrainian, 21 percent of officers were studying the language and knew it poorly, and 42 percent did not know the language at all.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> A. I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty* (Moscow: Airis-press, 2003), 1: 459.

<sup>31</sup> Ia. Iu. Tynchenko, *Ofitser'skyi korpus Armii Ukrain'skoi narodnoi respubliky (1917–1921): Biohrafichnyi dovidnyk* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2011), 2: 60.

<sup>32</sup> Ganin, *Korpus ofitserov*, 93.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–96.

While officers still requested transfers to certain national formations in the summer of 1917, by that time many officers were carrying out their own unauthorized transfers to national armies, contrary to the orders of higher authorities.

By the end of 1917, all appointments in Ukrainian formations were supposed to go through Symon Vasyl'ovych Petliura, secretary general for military affairs of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR). In one illustrative example of how complex relations could become, in the Special Army, operating in the Poles'ia area, Petliura did not confirm the earlier appointment of the army's commander, Lieutenant General V. N. Egor'ev. The latter repaid Petliura in kind by ignoring his orders. This produced a confrontation between the army *Committee*, which supported Egor'ev, and the army *Council [Rada]*, subordinated to Petliura and working around the army commander. As a result, Egor'ev arrested the Council, but on the night of 31 December 1917, was himself arrested by *gaidamaks* (Ukrainian nationalist activists) acting on behalf of either Ataman Pevneg or Ataman Kudri. Egor'ev was taken to Berdychev Prison: due to a lack of loyal units, the army commander could not ensure his own safety.<sup>34</sup> After two days, Egor'ev was transferred from Berdychev to Lukyanivska Prison in Kyiv, where he surrendered his sword, and a serious discussion followed about whether Egor'ev had been arrested or taken prisoner. With the Reds' occupation of Kyiv at the end of January, Egor'ev managed to free himself.

In 1918, thousands of tsarist army officers found themselves on the territory of Hetmanate Ukraine, a de facto German protectorate. Many of them went on to serve in the hetman's army. Previously one of the most peaceful regions in the former Russian Empire, Ukraine was now consumed by civil war. Moreover, this region was closest territorially and culturally to central Russia. It preserved the Russian language, and military service operated similarly to prerevolutionary principles. For these reasons, many officers decided to move there, fleeing Red Terror and civil war.

As a rule, the officers were anti-Bolshevik, but in the Russian imperial spirit rather than Ukrainian nationalist. As Mykhailo A. Koval'chuk correctly noted, "for many cadre officers, service in the Ukrainian State's army was a necessary stage in the struggle for the 'revival of Russia,'" a concept these officers took with deadly seriousness.<sup>35</sup> According to the testimony of Oleksander I. Udovychenko, Ukrainian general and former officer in the Russian army,

<sup>34</sup> V. N. Egor'ev, "Ot tsarskogo generala do krasnogo komandira (Vospominaniia o 1917 g.—1922 g.)" (RGVA f. 33221 [N. I. Podvoiskii], op. 2, d. 174, ll. 15–16).

<sup>35</sup> M. A. Koval'chuk, *Nevidoma viina 1919 roku: Ukrain's'ko-bihohvardiis'ke zbroine protystoiannia* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2006), 50.

at this time “many people worked for the state and military apparatus who, because of their Russophile tendencies, viewed Ukraine as a springboard for the formation of anti-Bolshevik forces.”<sup>36</sup> Ukrainian authors themselves admitted the fact that most of the officers serving in Ukraine under Hetman Skoropads’kyi were hostile to the Ukrainian national idea.<sup>37</sup>

Wartime officers were dismissed from the Hetmanate Army in summer 1918 with the provision that they complete formal study at military schools; many instead decided to join the ranks of the regime’s opponents, supporting the nationalist leaders Petliura and Nestor Ivanovich Makhno.<sup>38</sup> After the fall of Hetman Skoropads’kyi’s regime in late 1918, thousands of former officers fled the Ukrainian Army, as they could not align themselves with the radical Ukrainian nationalist Directory which replaced Skoropads’kyi. The Directory was itself responsible for the persecution of officers and their execution in Kyiv. Only about half the officer corps remained. Even the head of Skoropads’kyi’s General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel (from 31 October 1918, Colonel) Aleksandr Vladimirovich Slivinskii (Sliva), found himself in Odessa after the collapse of the Hetmanate regime, registered with the Reds, and then crossed over to the Whites. In White armies, the attitude toward officers who followed the nationalist path was negative, although more tolerant than the Reds; those officers who came over to the Whites were subject to a field court-martial.

At the same time, service in national armies came with a number of conditions that were at odds with traditional views of Russian officers. For example, signs of officer loyalty to Petliura’s leadership (and to a lesser extent the Hetmanate’s) were an absence of any contacts with organizations or individuals that were firmly associated with Russia; not using the Russian language in oral and written form; and a contemptuous attitude toward “*Moskali*” (a pejorative Ukrainian term for ethnic Russians). In the Ukrainian Galician Army, former members of the old Russian army had to serve alongside their recent enemies, Austrians, since the senior and high command staff of the Galician forces were former Austro-Hungarian army officers. Ukrainians and Galicians were represented only among junior and middle-ranking commanders.

Only those officers who were in Ukrainian forces throughout the entire Civil War can be considered to have intertwined their fate with the Ukrainian national movement. They numbered fewer than those who served in Ukrainian armies for a limited period. Only about 10 percent of the grad-

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<sup>36</sup> O. I. Udovychenko, *Ukraina u viini za derzhavnist’: Istoriiia organizatsii i boiovykh dii Ukrainskikh Zbroinikh Sil, 1917–1921* (Kyiv: Ukraina, 1995), 42.

<sup>37</sup> Tynchenko, *Ofiterskyi korpus*, 2: 7.

<sup>38</sup> N. V. Gerasimenko, *Bat’ko Makhno: Memuary belogvardeitsa* (Moscow: Intergraf Servis, 1990), 25.

uates of the General Staff Academy fought for Ukraine, including such iconic figures of the Ukrainian national movement as generals Vsevolod M. Petriv and O. I. Udovychenko. As a rule, those who enjoyed successful careers in Ukrainian formations were devoted nationalists and Russophobes. For example, in his memoirs, General Udovychenko wrote about the White and Red *Moskali* who enslaved Ukraine.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the former chief of the General Staff of the UNR, General Petriv, a descendant of Swedes and Norwegians, liked to emphasize his genuine nationalism by walking around in Ukrainian embroidered shirts.

The UNR officer corps was small with a low level of formal training. By 1 June 1922, there were 2,863 officers in the UNR Army interned on Polish territory.<sup>40</sup> In various periods from 1919 to 1922, the number of officers varied from 2,414 to 3,888, significantly less than the 7,000-strong officer corps mobilized under Skoropads'kyi.<sup>41</sup> In total, up to 12,000 former Russian army officers passed through Ukrainian armies. Ukraine also trained national officers during the Civil War. The Ukrainian branch of the Second Kyiv School for ensigns (*praporshchiki*), as well as the First and Second Ukrainian military schools, graduated several classes at the end of 1917. In the autumn of 1919, 163 junior officers graduated from the Zhytomyr Military School. Additional officer graduations took place in exile.

## Poland

The creators of the Polish army had to deal with officers' heightened ambitions. Lieutenant General Iosif Romanovich Dovbor-Musnitskii noted during the formation of the Polish corps in 1917 that some Polish officers from the Russian army demanded appointments two ranks higher than those they had previously held. At the same time, there was an acute shortage of senior officers.<sup>42</sup>

The Polish army was forced to combine experience and traditions from various European armies. By 23 September 1919, there were 11,040 officers in the Polish army, including 3,950 in combat formations.<sup>43</sup> Austrian officers out-

<sup>39</sup> Udovychenko, *Ukraina u viini*, 127–28.

<sup>40</sup> Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv vysshikh organov vlasti i upravleniia Ukrainy f. 1075 (Voennoe ministerstvo UNR), op. 2, d. 838, l. 353 ("Sostav armii UNR," 1 June 1922).

<sup>41</sup> Tynchenko, *Ofiterskyi korpus*, 2: 61.

<sup>42</sup> J. Dowbor-Muśnicki, *Moje wspomnienia* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk, 1936), 184–85.

<sup>43</sup> L. Wyszczelski, *Wojsko Polskie w latach 1918–1921* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2006), 75.

numbered former members of the Russian army, who were only one of several groups of Polish commanders. Thus, the Polish officer corps did not possess unity; Polish army officers represented various military schools and recently hostile armies, as shown by the origins of generals and senior officers in the Polish army in March and September 1920:

**Table 3.** Origins of high-ranking and senior commanders in the Polish army (March–September 1920)<sup>44</sup>

Rank	Date	Origin						Total	%
		Austrian Army	Russian Army and from Eastern Formations	Legions	Haller's Army	German Army	Civilian		
Generals	3/1920	42	71	5	—	2	—	120	7.9
	9/1920	54	56	11	4	3	—	128	5.7
Colonels	3/1920	116	200	7	—	1	1	325	21.3
	9/1920	159	133	49	10	14	—	365	16.3
Lieutenant-Colonels	3/1920	187	196	31	—	2	21	437	28.7
	9/1920	297	254	128	28	57	—	764	34.2
Majors	3/1920	222	162	95	—	15	147	641	42.1
	9/1920	439	234	224	41	40	—	978	43.7
Total	3/1920	567	629	138	—	20	169	1523	100.0
		37.2%	41.3%	9%		1.3%	11.1%		
	9/1920	949	677	412	83	114	—	2235	100.0
		42.5%	30.3%	18.4%	3.7%	5.1%			

Thus, former Russian Imperial Army officers numbered from 30 percent to 41 percent of the new Polish officer corps. In 1917, the Russian Imperial Army had 119 generals of Polish origin and up to 20,000 Polish officers. To be sure, not all of them entered service in the Polish army. Denikin, leader

<sup>44</sup> Centralne archiwum wojskowe im. majora Bolesława Waligory (CAW) I.303 (Oddział V Sztabu Generalnego).9.3, l. 6 (background of higher and senior commanders of Polish Army, March–September 1920). The figure of 57 Lieutenant Colonels from the German army in September 1920 includes 18 doctors and 18 judges.

of the White movement in southern Russia, was half-Polish, but the Polish command hardly considered him a compatriot. In total, by March 1920, 71 generals, 200 colonels, 196 lieutenant colonels, 162 majors, 523 captains, 1,758 lieutenants, and 3,294 junior lieutenants from the Russian army or other eastern formations served in the Polish army, for a total of 6,204, or 26.9 percent of the officer corps. By comparison, Habsburg officers numbered 38.2 percent, Polish Legion officers 17.7 percent, and German army officers 5.3 percent.<sup>45</sup> Former Russian officers dominated senior and high command positions in the Polish army.

By March 1920, former Russian officers accounted for more than 59 percent of all Polish army generals and 61.5 percent of all colonels. Their share decreased at lower ranks: 44.8 percent of lieutenant colonels came from the Russian army, and the Austrian army dominated among majors. Over time, though, political considerations increased the weight of those who came from the Polish Legions and were thus close to Józef Piłsudski. Former legionnaires gradually occupied the predominant position in the Polish command. Initially, the commander in chief of the Polish army was Piłsudski's opponent, the authoritative former Russian army General Dovbor-Musnitskii, aiming at leadership of not only the army but also the country. After losing to the more politically experienced Piłsudski, Dovbor-Musnitskii was removed from power and forced to resign in March 1920. By September 1920, the ratio of officers shifted against those from the Russian army. Among generals, they now accounted for only 43.7 percent, although they remained the single largest group. Among colonels, they accounted for only 36.4 percent, among lieutenant colonels, 33.2 percent, and among majors, less than 24 percent. Thus, during 1920, the withdrawal of Russian generals and colonels, as well as the influx of officers from the Austrian army and Polish Legions, radically altered the composition of the Polish officer corps.

Nevertheless, in 1921, former Russian army officers (41) still represented 44 percent of generals.<sup>46</sup> By 1921, the total number of Polish officers reached 145 generals and 29,960 officers. In the transition to peacetime, 18,943 officers were retained and required recertification. In total, 18,172 generals and officers, including 6,426 officers from the Austro-Hungarian army, 5,079 from the Russian army, and 1,449 from the German army successfully passed. Failure meant dismissal or transfer to the reserves. In 1918–22, Poland created an en-

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<sup>45</sup> Background of higher and senior commanders of Polish army, March–September 1920 (CAW I.303.9.3, I. 7).

<sup>46</sup> Andrzej Wojtaszak, *Generalicja Wojska Polskiego, 1921–1926* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo naukowe uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2005), 122–23.

tire network of military schools in Poland as instructors from the French Military Mission helped to carry out the training and retraining of Polish officers.

## Finland

As in the Polish army, the Finnish Armed Forces could draw on a variety of sources for their officer corps. From 1918 to 1919, there were several hundred Russian army generals and officers in the Finnish army, some of whom were graduates of the General Staff Academy. As was the case with other national armies emerging from the wreckage of the Russian Empire, ethnic Russian officers were replaced by newly enlisted Finnish anti-Russian volunteers, often veterans of the Jaeger movement from the German army's Twenty-Seventh Jaeger Battalion.<sup>47</sup> The Jaegers distrusted former Russian officers as representatives of a state that had suppressed Finnish independence. Several dozen Jaegers received the rank of general in the Finnish army, and influenced its development until the second half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, former Russian officers occupied a number of important leadership positions. The founding father of Finnish statehood was the former Russian lieutenant general Baron Karl-Gustaf-Emil Mannerheim. The chief of Finland's General Staff was for some time a well-known military intelligence officer, Russian army Colonel Oskar Karlovich Enkel'. Former major general Pavel Karlovich von Gerikh headed Finnish military-educational institutions. General Staff officer Colonel Wilhelm Vladimirovich Teslev led the Jaegers, and in 1918 became the minister of war and commander in chief of the Finnish army. As early as 1920, the press sounded the call to expel former Russian army officers from the Finnish service. At the beginning of 1918, 84 Swedish officers joined the Finnish army, which also caused friction and language problems. Thus, three military traditions were combined in the Finnish army: Russian, Swedish, and German. In general, the Finnish officer corps was small. Taking into account reservists, in 1919 it numbered 880 men, and in 1921, 730.<sup>48</sup>

## Transcaucasia

Russian officers also served in Transcaucasian armies. A Provisional Government decision of 28 June 1917 sanctioned the creation of Transcaucasian

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<sup>47</sup> E. P. Laidinen and S. G. Verigin, *Finskaia razvedka protiv Sovetskoi Rossii: Spetsial'nye sluzhby finliandii i ikh razvedyvatel'naia deiatel'nost' na Severo-Zapade Rossii (1914–1939 gg.)* (Petrozavodsk: RIF, 2004), 83.

<sup>48</sup> Taken from *Preliminär tjänstställningslista öfver aktiva officerare och reservofficerare i aktiv tjänst vid armen* (Helsinki: n.p., 1919); *Virkaikäluettelo upseereista vakinaisessa sotapalveluksessa* (1 March 1921).

national formations. In the autumn of 1917, due to the collapse of the Caucasus Front, the creation of national corps began—Armenian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Russian, all based on previous Russian army units. Later, the national armies of the independent Transcaucasian republics emerged from those national corps.

During the Civil War, the new Transcaucasian states employed active Russophobic propaganda, with the exception of Armenia, where Russophile sentiments were widespread. As such, Armenia supported the anti-Bolshevik forces in southern Russia. In response to anti-Russian hostility, on 9 November 1919, Denikin, commanding the White forces in southern Russia, decreed that “due to the Azerbaijani authorities’ hostile attitude to the Russian army and, due to the treacherous actions of Azerbaijani troops on Armenian land, I order all Russian officers in Azerbaijani forces to leave their ranks.”<sup>49</sup>

Similar to other national armies, a group of nationalist-minded senior Azeri officers, veterans of the Russian Imperial Army, formed the basis of the Azerbaijan army. The chief of the General Staff of the Azerbaijan Republic was General Staff officer Lieutenant General Suleiman Aleksandrovich Sul’kevich; the minister of war was artillery general Samed-Bek Sadykh-Bekogly Mekhmandarov; and his assistant was Lieutenant General Ali-Aga Ismail-Aga-ogly Shikhliniskii, who had previously commanded the Azerbaijan Corps. When the staff of the Azerbaijan Corps disbanded, they joined Azerbaijan’s Ministry of War.<sup>50</sup> Turkish instructors also contributed to the formation of the Azerbaijan army. With their help, a school for junior officers was opened in Ganja in June 1918. In November 1918, it was converted into a military school for 250 students, training infantry, and artillerymen. The first graduates were ready in October. In 1919–20, cavalry, artillery, and engineering schools opened, as well as aviation and military-medical schools.

Accelerated courses, however, did not prepare qualified officers. In addition to Azerbaijanis, Russian and Georgian officers also served in the Azerbaijan army.<sup>51</sup> Many did not know the language. Russian officers remaining on Azerbaijan territory went into the army due to a lack of other employment and were not bothered by receiving food rations and monetary rewards from their recent enemies, the Turks. The appearance of Russian officers in the army

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<sup>49</sup> “Prikaz glavnokomanduiushchego Vooruzhennymi silami na Iuge Rossii, no. 2623,” 9 November 1919 (RGVA. f. 39540 [Shtab glavnokomanduiushchego VSluR (russkoi armiei)], op. 1, d. 138, l. 64).

<sup>50</sup> A. Steklov, *Armiia musavatskogo Azerbaidzhana* (Baku: Azgiz, 1928), 16.

<sup>51</sup> P. G. Darabadi, “O vooruzhennykh silakh Azerbaidzhanskoi demokraticheskoi respubliki (1918–1920 gg.),” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk Azerbaidzhana: Istoriia, filosofiia i pravo*, no. 1 (1991): 29–30.

aroused dissatisfaction among Azeri nationalists. Moreover, Russian officers favored the Whites. The Azerbaijan army's leadership, including Minister of War Mekhmandarov, faced threats and discontent over its cooperation with Russians. In December 1918, there was an uprising in the Agdam garrison. Among the insurgent demands was the immediate removal of Russian officers from the army and their replacement by Turks.

The situation worsened after the scandalous arrest in April 1919 of Captain Aleksandr Sergeevich Chernyshev, who headed Denikin's intelligence network in the Azerbaijan army. Chernyshev's agents worked in the General Staff and even had access to the top leadership of the Azerbaijan Republic. Azerbaijan's military-political leadership was in a quandary: it had to rid itself of Russian officers, but there was no one to replace them, as the British hindered the recruitment of Turkish officers. During his interrogation, Chernyshev stated that he did not consider himself guilty since he worked on his own territory, i.e., on the territory of the former Russian Empire, while no one had yet recognized the existence of an independent Azerbaijan. In connection with this case, some Russian officers were deported to southern Russia via Georgia.

Azerbaijani officers were implicated in numerous cases of embezzlement and abuse of power. This usually took the form of exaggerating personnel figures in order to receive allowances for "dead souls," as well as the sale of weapons and ammunition. At the same time, the Azerbaijani authorities cultivated a cohesive corporate identity among officers.

The fifth edition of the Red Army command's "Summary of Information about the Enemy on the Caucasus Front," noted that as of 8 May 1920, the Azerbaijan army had a mixed composition and was poorly clothed. Junior officers were Turkish, while senior officers were Russian. Troops were short on cartridges and machine guns. As of April 1920, soldiers were expecting the arrival of the Red Army.<sup>52</sup> The Azerbaijan army proved to be unfit for action, and did not resist the Red Army units that occupied the country's territory in April 1920. Some officers joined the Red Army, among them General Shikhlinskii.

A common feature of Transcaucasian armies (with the exception of Georgia's) was an acute shortage of qualified officers. The abundance of officers in Georgia was due to the presence of the Caucasus Front's headquarters on Georgian territory, as well as Georgian aristocrats' traditional choice of the

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<sup>52</sup> "Svodka svedenii o protivnike na Kavkazskom fronte po dannym k 8 maia 1920 g." (RGVA f. 6 [Polevoi shtab RVSR], op. 4, d. 584, l. 216).

military as a career destination.<sup>53</sup> The overabundance of officers here forced the dismissal of many due to a lack of openings, while some transferred to the armies of neighboring Transcaucasian states.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the Tiflis Military School conducted a two-year training course.<sup>55</sup> After the Red Army's occupation of Georgia, some Georgian officers moved to Turkey and then Poland, where, after 1922, Piłsudski allowed them to enter Polish service.<sup>56</sup> Around 90 Georgian officers ultimately found themselves in the Polish army's ranks.

Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks played a particular role in the Georgian army and its officer corps. Georgian army officers, despite their overabundance, occupied a difficult position. A candidate's loyalty to socialism, rather than ability, often decided appointment to important positions. Thus, the commander of the Georgian Corps, Colonel Stepan Georgievich Akhmetelov, was the brother of an SR Party leader, while the chief of staff was a Socialist-Federalist, Captain Iosif Konstantinovich Gedevanishvili.<sup>57</sup> Politicians believed this would achieve a balanced representation of two parties within the military leadership.

In fact, the corps never took final shape. The central authorities, fearing Bonapartism, treated officers with suspicion, attempted to fracture and sow discord within the officer corps, and interfered in technical questions; the army itself encouraged political denunciations and carried out searches and arrests of officers. In contrast to the army, a more politically oriented National Guard was created, which was twice the size of the army. As the army expelled experienced officers, a younger, untrained generation took their place. The officers' financial situation was also deplorable. Those close to the government—members of socialist parties and sympathizers—acquired high ranks (often skipping ranks), awards, and appointments. Consequently, some officers deliberately joined leftist parties in order to advance faster and win the trust of civil authorities.

In Armenia, an order was issued on 16 November 1917 authorizing the formation of an Armenian Corps. On 20 November 1917, an officer congress was held in Erevan, establishing an Armenian national army. Many participants, however, believed the army's formation had begun too late. With the

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<sup>53</sup> G. I. Kvinitadze, *Moi vospominaniia v gody nezavisimosti Gruzii 1917–1921* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1985), 15; A. Iu. Bezugol'nyi, "Demokraticheskaia respublika Gruzii i ee vooruzhennye sily, 1918–1921 gg.," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 10 (2009): 91.

<sup>54</sup> Kvinitadze, *Moi vospominaniia*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Bezugol'nyi, "Demokraticheskaia respublika Gruzii," 91.

<sup>56</sup> A. O. Rukkas, "Georgian Servicemen in the Polish Armed Forces (1922–1939)," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 14, 3 (2001): 93–106.

<sup>57</sup> Kvinitadze, *Moi vospominaniia*, 20.

goal of controlling occupied territories and establishing an ethnically cleansed Turkish state, Turkish troops on the other side of the front had engaged in the ruthless destruction of the Armenian population. The Tatar/Azerbaijani population's behavior only aggravated the situation, as they took advantage of the weakened Armenian forces and, under Turkish cover, also attacked Armenians. Armenian troops often answered in kind. Nevertheless, in a situation where the enemy's forces were significantly superior, the issue of creating an Armenian national army became a question of survival in the face of total extermination. Former Russian army officers, both ethnic Armenians and representatives of other nationalities who served in the Armenian forces, played a most important role in this struggle.

The Armenian Corps was based on former Russian army Armenian battalions (expanded into regiments). The Armenian National Council and its military section designated appointees to senior military positions, confirming Major General Foma Ivanovich Nazarbekov as commander of the Armenian Corps. In creating a staff for the corps, Nazarbekov faced a lack of trained Armenian personnel. The difficulty lay not only in a lack of qualified officers but also in the fact that officers had to be acceptable to the politically minded National Council. For this reason, officers not completely loyal to the Council could not expect an appointment.<sup>58</sup> Those who received appointments were forced to tolerate constant interventions by military-section representatives in technical military issues. Moreover, officers themselves were corrupted by revolutionary events and, when they joined the armed forces, often put forward lists of demands, including appointments at a higher rank than they had held in the Russian army, or avoidance of service at the front or in remote regions.<sup>59</sup>

Ethnic Russian officers, identifying with the defense of Armenia, played an exceptional role in the creation of the Armenian army. In 1918, when the Armenian people were on the verge of annihilation, the efforts of these officers led to the creation of the Armenian National Army. In the most intense periods, the Armenian Corps headquarters officers worked from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until midnight with a three–four-hour break, which meant workdays of 13–14 hours.<sup>60</sup> The Armenian armed forces included both highly qualified Russian army officers with academic education and nationalist guerrilla leaders without education or training, such as the popular heroes An-dranik Ozanian and Drostamat Kanaian (Dro). These nationalist partisans,

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<sup>58</sup> National Archive of Armenia f. 45 (F. I. Nazarbekov), op. 1, d. 13, l. 22 (memoirs of F. I. Nazarbekov).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 24ob.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 15, l. 45ob.

relying on spirit and charisma, were extremely popular among the people, but this popularity led them to ignore the advice of experienced military professionals, violate discipline, and disobey orders with which they did not agree.

Of the Transcaucasian states, Armenia was the most closely aligned with Russia; during the Civil War, Russophile attitudes were strong here. Armenia thus allied itself with Denikin's anti-Bolshevik Armed Forces of Southern Russia. Until the fall of 1919, Russian officers occupied key positions in the Armenian army, later leaving to join the White cause in southern Russia.

When the threat to Armenia's security subsided, the expulsion of Russian officers began. In Armenia, as in other nationalist states, the political elite of the national Dashnak Party distrusted the military elite composed of former Russian Imperial Army officers and ethnic Russians. They tried to force Russians out under the pretext that officers lacked Armenian citizenship and were ignorant of the language.<sup>61</sup> Proximity to the national political elite, rather than competence or experience, dictated appointments. There were also, however, conscientious nonpartisan Armenian officers who were ready to serve together with and support their Russian counterparts.

The Military Council of the Armenian Republic was founded in 1918 as the supreme organ of military governance under Nazarbekov's chairmanship. There was also a military ministry, under which a military staff was established with combatant and mobilization departments.

Ivan Khristoforovich Bagramian, a former wartime officer who served in the Armenian army and later supported the Bolsheviks, subsequently became a marshal of the Soviet Union. During the Sovietization of Transcaucasia in 1920–21, the Red Army absorbed almost the entire officer corps of the Transcaucasian republics, except for those officers who emigrated. During the first three months of Soviet power in Armenia, 1,400 officers were arrested, including 20 generals and 30 colonels.<sup>62</sup> In early 1921, the Eleventh Army's Special Section shipped some Armenian army officers to a concentration camp in Riazan'. Individual members of the senior and high command staff were separated from junior officers and imprisoned. Several months later, these officers were released and amnestied; some joined the Armenian Red Army or the Red Army.

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<sup>61</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii f. R-5881 [Kollektsiia ot del'nykh dokumentov i memuarov emigrantov, 1859–1944], op. 1, d. 552, l. 87 (A. K. Shneur, "Vospominaniia o sobytiiakh v Armenii v 1918–1919 gg.").

<sup>62</sup> G. A. Martirosian, *Ofitsery Respubliki Armeniia v kontslagere goroda Riazan'* (Riazan': Zelenye ostrova, 2002), 15.

## The Baltics

National armies also emerged in the Russian Empire's former Baltic provinces. Despite the fact that these armies were relatively small, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia managed to maintain their independence during the Civil War.

The first Latvian army commander in chief was David Petrovich Simonson, a major general and graduate of the General Staff Academy. In 1919, Simonson became minister of war and was replaced as commander in chief by Jānis Balodis, a captain in the Imperial Army, who headed the struggle against the Germans and Whites and remained in post until 1921. Latvian officers who entered the Latvian army often had little knowledge of their native language. Latvia opened a military school to replenish its officer ranks. The Latvian army contained 11 graduates from the Nikolai Military Academy. Lacking their own military academy, Latvian officers seeking military education were sent to foreign schools. In fall 1919, a military school opened in Riga, producing an initial graduating class of 300 students in May 1920.<sup>63</sup> By 1920, the Latvian officer corps numbered more than 1,800.<sup>64</sup>

By the fall of 1917, about 3,000 ethnic Estonian officers were serving in the Russian army, of whom about two-thirds served the Estonian National Army after 1918. Several hundred officers transferred from Estonian national units in the Russian army to the Estonian army. This group of officers was the most active during the Civil War, possessing a relatively high level of national self-awareness. From 1918 to 1920, 76 percent of Estonian army officers had held wartime commissions in the tsarist army, and many had ended their Russian service as staff captains. They were relatively young, only superficially integrated into the Russian army's officer culture, and retained a stronger connection to their homeland, in contrast to senior ethnic Estonian officers, who were less nationalist. Of 3 ethnic Estonian generals, none fought for Estonian independence, and of 22 Estonian colonels and 32 lieutenant colonels, only 4 of each participated. Thus, out of 57 ethnically Estonian generals and staff officers, the Estonian army was only able to employ 8.<sup>65</sup> In the Russian army by 1917 there were up to 17 ethnic Estonian General Staff officers, of whom only 6 found themselves in the Estonian army. Given this, Lieutenant Colonel Johan Laidoner, a Russian army officer and graduate of the General Staff Academy,

<sup>63</sup> J. Rutkiewicz, *Wojsko Łotewskie, 1918–1940* (Warsaw: Barwa i Broń, 2005), 133.

<sup>64</sup> Ē. Jēkabsons and V. Ščerbinskis, *Latvijas armijas augstākie virsnieki 1918–1940: Biogrāfiska vārdnīca* (Riga: Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, 1998), 522.

<sup>65</sup> Andres Seene, ed., *Juhid ja juhtimine Eesti Vabadussõjas 1918–1920* (Tartu: Elmatar, 2010), 608.

became the commander in chief of the Estonian army at the age of 34. He can be considered the creator of the Estonian armed forces.

The German occupation of the province of Estland in 1918 created the conditions for the birth of the Estonian National Army. Several General Staff officers, who had served in the Russian army, managed to unite younger nationalist-minded officers around themselves and create a national army. In November 1918, about 2,000 officers in the Estonian army took part in the Estonian War of Independence. By July 1919 there were 1,109 officers left in the army.

The Estonian army suffered from an acute shortage of highly qualified personnel, especially General Staff officers and those with serious command experience. Particularly serious was the lack of General Staff officers in the central organs of military command and in division headquarters. As a result, military command organs (headquarters of the commander in chief, the General Staff, and division staff) were filled with junior officers who lacked the necessary training or experience for their new positions. In the entire Estonian army, only two officers had experience of regimental command in the Russian army. There were no officers with brigade and division command experience. Commander in Chief Laidoner had himself been a division chief of staff. The search for suitable personnel for artillery and technical units raised a separate issue, since Estonian officers had only served in junior positions in those units in the Russian army. Estonian officers were on average quite young. Brigade and independent battalion commanders were on average 32 years old, while division commanders were 35. At least 80 percent of Estonian army officers during the Civil War were under 30. Soldiers and officers were not as sharply distinct from each other as in the old army.

Due to the shortage of senior officers, there was almost no rotation in leadership. Estonian military historians estimate that during 1918–20 there were from one to three officers at the brigade command level. Senior officers were overwhelmed with responsibilities. When comparing the officer cadres of the Estonian and Red armies, Estonian military historians recognized the Red Army officer corps' superiority at the front, army, and division level, but simultaneously noted the superiority of Estonian brigade, battalion, and company commanders.<sup>66</sup> This is likely correct, as qualified commanders were dispersed among the multimillion-strong Red Army, whereas they were concentrated in the much more compact Estonian armed forces. However, such an army could not win a protracted war with the Reds.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 611.

Some officers entered Estonian ranks after the defeat of Iudenich's White Northwestern Army. In total, at least 250 Red Army officers and 500 officers from White armies joined the Estonian army.

In addition to Estonians themselves, officers from other nationalities also served in the Estonian army, including Russians, Germans, Latvians, Finns, Swedes, and Poles. Most non-Estonian officers served in the navy, and far fewer in infantry units. As in other national armies, the Estonian army's leadership was disappointed by the large percentage of officers who could not speak the national language. At the end of May 1920, by order of the minister of war, all officers, under threat of demotion, were instructed to learn Estonian within six months. During 1922–24, 183 officers and military officials were dismissed for lack of knowledge of Estonian and 13 were demoted to the rank and file. Estonians also served in other armies during the Civil War—Red, White, and Ukrainian.<sup>67</sup> Individual officers managed to serve in all three Baltic national armies during the Civil War, including General Staff officer Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Antonovich Ozol.

After Estonia concluded a peace treaty with Soviet Russia in 1920, a few former officers from the Red Army transferred to Estonia, including the military scholar and General Staff officer Dmitrii Kapitonovich Lebedev. A similar process took place in other republics. For instance, major general and General Staff officer Andrei Ivanovich Auzan, who previously commanded the corps of military topographers in the Red Army, left for Latvia in 1923.

On 22 April 1919, Laidoner created a military school to train officer cadres modeled on the Russian army's training of wartime junior officers. The first class of 106 students graduated on 3 August 1919. In 1921, after the Civil War (for Estonia, the War of Independence), a training course for General Staff officers began, and in 1925 the institution was renamed as the Higher Military School.<sup>68</sup> During 1921–40, a total of 232 officers trained there, including 3 Finns and 3 Latvians.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Lithuanians' national consciousness was much lower than that of Latvians and Estonians, while Polish influence was strong. There were few Lithuanian officers: these were primarily junior officers who lacked experience. Nevertheless, in late 1918 a Lithuanian army began to form, including several dozen officers. The minister of war and commander in chief of the young army was Russian army Major General Silvestras Žukauskas (Zhukovskii). By 3 May 1919, there were already 440 officers,

<sup>67</sup> M. Kröönström, *Eesti sõjaväe juhtivkoosseis Vabadussõjas 1918–1920* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2008), 303–09; R. Abisogomian, "Rol' russkikh voennykh deiatelei v obshchestvennoi i kul'turnoi zhizni Estonskoi respubliki 1920–1930-kh gg. i ikh literaturnoe nasledie" (MA thesis, University of Tartu, 2007), 45–46.

<sup>68</sup> Seene, *Juhid ja juhtimine eesti vabadussõjas*, 602.

127 administrators, and 10,729 soldiers. On 25 January 1919, a military school opened in Kaunas that graduated 89 officers and 7 sergeants on 6 July 1919 and another 200 officers and 24 sergeants on 16 December 1919. By 25 September 1919, the Lithuanian Army's officer corps numbered 676, and by 1 July 1920, 957.<sup>69</sup>

After the annexation of the Baltic states by the USSR in 1940, many of the surviving former Russian Army officers were deported deep into the Soviet Union. Among those deported and later arrested were the commanders in chief of the Latvian and Estonian armies of the Civil War period, Jānis Balodis and Johan Laidoner, who were imprisoned for 12–13 years. Laidoner died during his imprisonment.

The following table shows summary information for the total number of former Russian officers in national armies:

**Table 4.** The number of former Russian army officers in the armies of national states during the Civil War (1917–22).

State	Former Russian Army Officers
Ukraine	Up to 12,000
Poland	6,204
Finland	250
Latvia	514
Lithuania	440
Estonia	2,000
Georgia	A few thousand
Armenia	1,500
Azerbaijan	No more than 1,000 (?)
Total:	Up to 27,000

Russian Army officers who transferred into the forces of newly-independent states thus numbered up to 27,000, most of whom had received their commissions during wartime. All of these national armies saw attempts by nationalist politicians to force ethnic-Russian officers out of leadership positions, particularly after the end of the Civil War and wars for national independence. In some armies, as in Finland, where there were almost no ethnic Russian officers, expulsions focused instead on coethnics who had served in

<sup>69</sup> A. I. Rudichenko and Ia. Iu. Tynchenko, *Nagrady i znaki natsional'nykh armii i pravitel'stv: Ukraina, Belorussia, Litva* (Kyiv: Logos, 2011), 386–87, 432.

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the Russian Imperial Army. Typically, these officers lacked knowledge of the national language, particularly in Ukraine and Transcaucasia. As a result, administrative work was often conducted in Russian, which everyone understood. This phenomenon did not exist among officers in Poland and Finland, where national development and knowledge of the respective national languages was more widespread.

*Translated by Yan Mann*