

Introduction

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War was the path to Russia's wrenching transformations at the start of the 20th century. The First World War brought the collapse of the Russian Empire. The establishment of one-party dictatorship under Vladimir Il'ich Lenin's Bolsheviks required the Bolsheviks to fight and win another war: the Russian Civil War against the other contenders for power emerging in the wake of the tsarist regime. Often simplified as a two-sided clash between Lenin's Reds (his Bolshevik Party and their sympathizers) and their White opponents, the Civil War in fact involved a host of competing interests, a fact made abundantly clear in the chapters of these two books. For Lenin and his party to take power, hold power, and use that power to transform Russia into a new Soviet Union, it had to fight and win a vicious civil war, one that claimed the lives of some ten million Russians through violence, famine, and disease (by comparison with the two million who died in the First World War). The chapters collected here help to explain the Bolshevik victory and, just as importantly, the failure of their opponents. While much of that attention focuses on the Whites as traditionally understood—elites of the former Russian Empire, particularly military officers—many of these chapters also look at other anti-Bolshevik forces, including Russia's liberal and non-Bolshevik left-wing political parties, and particularly peasants who rejected both the Reds and Whites in favor of a vaguely defined political program of autonomy for the peasantry.

For English-speaking readers, the broad outlines of the course of the Russian Civil War are not difficult to find; there are a number of good English-language surveys of the Russian Civil War available. Excellent scholarly and highly readable books from Evan Mawdsley, Bruce Lincoln, Geoffrey Swain, and Jonathan Smele have covered the subject.¹ The goal of these books is different: to dive more deeply into particular aspects of the military side of

¹ Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (New York: Pegasus, 2007); W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); Geoffrey Swain, *Russia's Civil War* (Stroud, UK: The History Press, 2008); Jonathan

the Russian Civil War, whether to confirm and extend our understanding, to show the complexity of a problem previously oversimplified, or to revise positions no longer tenable. The chapters can stand alone for readers interested in particular topics; read as a whole, of course, they offer substantially more.

One of the books' noteworthy achievements is to bring a significant body of scholarship from Russian military historians to an English-speaking audience. The end of the Soviet Union and the opening of history to voices long suppressed had two major effects on the historiography of the Civil War as practiced in the former Soviet Union. First, it ended the "heroic myth" of the valiant Reds overcoming the traitorous and counterrevolutionary Whites, who were depicted as the puppets of outside intervening powers. The end of ideological constraints allowed for far more nuanced portrayals of the Civil War's daunting complexity. To be sure, the end of one heroic myth potentially allows the creation of another, turning the Whites into heroes and the Reds into villains. The chapters in these books avoid that trap.

The second major effect of the end of the Soviet Union was that a flood of primary sources, previously difficult or impossible to access in Russia, became available to readers and scholars there. The reprinted memoirs of White generals, alongside a host of other sources published abroad by émigrés who had fled Lenin's revolutionary regime, presented a new picture of the Civil War to Russian audiences. That wave of newly available old sources was soon followed by a flood of new scholarship by Russian historians taking advantage of far broader access to archival sources on the Civil War. Relatively little of that work, however, has been available in the West to those who cannot read Russian. The chapters collected here present a range of the fascinating work now being done in Russia and the former Soviet Union by some of the leading military historians in the region

Military history as practiced in the Soviet Union put a great deal of emphasis on military operations and military leadership, a characteristic still true today. In general, Russian military history focuses less attention than has become the norm in the West to the social, intellectual, and economic context of military affairs. To be sure, military history in the West, when written for a popular audience, often tends toward narratives of military operations and biographies of great captains. To be sure, there is a valuable place for operational military history. As suggested above, the creation of a new Soviet Russia required winning a civil war, and winning that war required battlefield victory. How and why those victories were achieved matters.

Two paired chapters, by Marat Khairulin on aviation and Nikita Kuznetsov on naval operations, illustrate the valuable contributions of this

operationally focused approach by providing in-depth explorations of topics poorly covered to date in English-language literature. Khairulin examines the use of air power in three campaigns. First, he briefly explores the Red effort to establish a connection between the Soviet heartland in central Russia and Red-held Central Asia, a connection blocked by the presence of the Orenburg Cossack Host. Next, he looks at the use of air power around Ufa from May to July 1919, as the retreating White forces of Admiral Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kolchak attempted to use a handful of aircraft to slow Red pursuit. Finally, he explores at length the White employment of airpower in June and July 1920 to halt and then rout a Red cavalry offensive under Dmitrii Petrovich Zhloba. In each case, Khairulin's narrative shows how a remarkably small number of aviators, flying aircraft of limited capability, managed to achieve substantial results.

On the one hand, Khairulin's account illustrates the collapse of Russian industry during the Civil War. Russia had built one of the world's largest air forces on the eve of the First World War, but after the revolutions of 1917 was barely capable of maintaining a small number of aircraft. On the other, it illustrates the vulnerability of the improvised Civil War armies to air attack, even by minuscule air forces. Relatively untrained and undisciplined soldiers, lacking any developed capability for anti-air defense, seem to have panicked easily under even quite limited pressure; subjection to attack from the air without any capability to respond meaningfully was extraordinarily demoralizing. Their supply services, relying extensively on horse-drawn carts and wagons, were likewise quite vulnerable to attack from the air.

Much the same picture of improvised forces thrown together from the remnants of the Russian imperial war machine, and sustained by the slim productive capability of postrevolutionary Russian military industry, characterizes the naval forces in Kuznetsov's chapter. Many of the most important battles of the Civil War took place far from the sea. While sea-borne supplies from the Entente were vital to White hopes for success, the vessels that brought them were not Russian. Despite this, Kuznetsov illustrates a number of ways in which naval forces were employed, including clashes between Red naval forces and Britain's Royal Navy in the Gulf of Finland in 1919. Much of the actual naval combat of the Civil War was littoral and riverine fighting, as scratch formations of White and Red vessels fought around the shores of the Sea of Azov and the Caspian Sea, or along the rivers—the Don, Dnepr, Volga, and Kama—that dominated the land theaters.

Four of the key operations that Kuznetsov describes were not actually combat missions, but instead evacuations. First, in March–April 1918, the Baltic Fleet evacuated Helsingfors for refuge in the island base at Kronstadt in order to avoid seizure by German forces occupying Finland. In April–May 1918,

a similar evacuation brought the Black Sea Fleet from Sevastopol' in Crimea, as in Finland under imminent threat of German seizure, to Novorossiisk. Some of the evacuated ships were returned under German threat and subsequently fell into Entente hands after German defeat; many of the remainder were scuttled. Finally, two evacuations were intended to save not ships, but White refugees. In November 1920, Vrangel's final holdout in the Crimea fell to the Bolsheviks, and the remnants of the Black Sea fleet carried 150,000 soldiers and civilians to exile in Constantinople. Finally, in the last events described in this collection, the White Siberian flotilla evacuated 10,000 Whites from Vladivostok in October 1922 on the eve of Bolshevik seizure, taking its refugees first to Japanese-occupied Korea and ultimately to the Philippines.

Operational history is far from the sole focus of the volume. To their credit, the chapters focusing on military campaigns put a great deal of emphasis on the political side of warfare, in particular, the specific challenges the Whites faced in dealing with the non-Russian nationalities of the Russian Empire, whose demands for autonomy or full independence form a recurring theme in many of the contributions. Literature on the Civil War has long suggested that adherence to the idea of a "Russia, one and indivisible" crippled the ability of the White generals to respond with sufficient flexibility to non-Russian nationalism. Given that White strongholds were often in the non-Russian periphery of the empire, the Whites' difficulty in formulating a coherent response to local nationalism became a recurring stumbling block.

Three chapters illustrate the particular problems of the White movement in dealing with local loyalties even within the Russian-speaking core of the Russian Empire. Ruslan Gagkuev's two chapters on the campaigns in southern Russia in 1918 and 1919 inevitably focus on the fraught relationship between the White commanders in the south—Lavr Georgievich Kornilov, Mikhail Vasil'evich Alekseev, and then, after their deaths, Anton Ivanovich Denikin—and the Cossacks of the Don and Kuban' hosts.² Orthodox Christian and Russian-speaking, the Cossacks cannot be in any meaningful sense called non-Russian. On the other hand, they proclaimed a distinctive identity and heritage vis-à-vis their compatriots, underwritten by their distinct and separate legal status within the Russian Empire as a military caste with particular privileges and strong elements of self-government. Taken together, their distinctive identity and legal status ultimately meant that their vigor-

² For earlier English-language work on the complex politics of the Don Cossacks in the Civil War, see Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918: The First Year of the Volunteer Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); and Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

ous defense of their own autonomy during the Civil War presented similar problems as those the Whites faced with non-Russian nationalities. Andrei Ganin's chapter on the Cossacks, extending its analysis to cover imperial Russia's roughly one dozen distinct Cossack hosts, illustrates more broadly the patterns that Gagkuev covers in microcosm.

Gagkuev shows how in 1918, White efforts at a coherent military strategy for fighting the Reds were crippled by insistent Cossack defense of their autonomy. While the relationship between the White Volunteer Army and the Kuban' Cossack Host included major elements of tension, the two sides at least managed by March 1918 to reach an accommodation involving the Volunteer Army command and significant numbers of Kuban' Cossacks in the Volunteer Army. The Don Cossack Host, Russia's largest, was far less amenable to active cooperation. Cossack forces generally were reluctant to move beyond their home territory in the struggle against the Bolsheviks, and when they did, their morale was easily broken. Only the November 1918 German defeat in the First World War, removing Germany as patron and protector for the Whites and the Cossacks alike, compelled a January 1919 marriage of convenience between Denikin and the Don Cossacks.

Leontii Lannik's essay on the relationship between Germany and the Volunteer Army is particularly insightful here. The common understanding among historians had been that after imperial Germany extracted enormous territorial concessions from Lenin's new regime in the March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the German government did not want to risk those gains by giving any backing to the anti-Bolshevik Whites. The German ideological distaste for Lenin's Bolsheviks was not enough to overcome the concrete gains Germany had extracted from Lenin. German Foreign Minister Paul von Hintze rejected any efforts at cooperation with the Whites. What Lannik shows, however, is that Hintze's rejection of the Whites from his office in Berlin was undermined by local efforts on both sides in southern Russia. Alekseev sought to maintain relations with both Germany and the Entente powers. At the same time, German military officers overseeing the occupation of Ukraine actively sought to cooperate with the Whites against the Bolsheviks. Once Germany was defeated, however, hopes of German assistance proved empty, leaving the Whites and Don Cossacks few options.

By 1919, as Gagkuev demonstrates in his chapter on that year, even a formal arrangement to join the White Volunteer Army with the Don Cossack Host in the Armed Forces of Southern Russia did not resolve the long-standing tensions between White leadership and the Cossacks. To be sure, the fundamental issue for Denikin's spring and summer 1919 offensive against Moscow was his lack of resources. While a March 1919 Cossack uprising behind Red lines opened the possibility for an ambitious drive north to Moscow, De-

nikin simply did not have the soldiers to sustain it. Indeed, part of Denikin's motivation for such a risky undertaking was the hope that the glittering prize of Moscow might be enough to keep his fractious Cossacks unified behind his cause. Once Denikin's offensive reached its culminating point in September and October 1919, and the Red counteroffensive began, splits within Denikin's coalition and crumbling Cossack morale combined to render a sustained defense of the Don and North Caucasus impossible. The Whites had no choice but to evacuate their troops from the North Caucasus for a last stand in the Crimea.

Ganin's chapter looking at a dozen Cossack hosts across the expanse of the Russian Empire provides valuable insight into the numerous smaller and generally neglected hosts, while adding new depth to our understanding of the political dynamics within the Cossack polities and how they affected the Civil War more broadly. The political fissures between the traditional Cossack hierarchy—localist, conservative, and monarchist—and the more left-wing sympathies of younger front-line veterans had long been known and discussed even in classics of Soviet literature.³ Ganin's picture clearly supports the view that left-wing Cossacks were a significant force, though they remained a definite minority. They were important enough to hinder active Cossack resistance to the Bolsheviks in the initial months after Lenin's seizure of power.

Bolshevik heavy-handedness once in power alienated those elements of the Cossacks who might have been willing to accommodate themselves to the new regime. Pushed by Bolshevik policies, most of Russia's Cossack hosts moved into open opposition, whether with German assistance when the Central Powers occupied Ukraine in early 1918, or when the Bolsheviks lost control of Siberia in the wake of the May 1918 rebellion by Czech and Slovak troops being evacuated east along the Trans-Siberian railroad route. Even here, Ganin finds in an exhaustive survey of the hosts that Cossack localism continued to make any coherent resistance to the Reds impossible. While the Whites might rely on Cossack support at particular times and in particular places, that support was unreliable and at times degenerated into open internecine conflict. Thus, in October 1919, for example, Denikin engineered a coup to bring the Kuban' Cossack Host under control, and the Kuban' subsequently easily succumbed to Bolshevik conquest.

Ganin's chapter on Kolchak and the White defeat in Siberia takes a slightly different tack on the difficulties facing the Whites. Western scholarship has rightly seen the thin population of Siberia, combined with incessant politi-

³ Most famously, Mikhail Sholokhov's *Tikhii Don* (1928–40), published in English as *And Quiet Flows the Don* (New York: Knopf, 1934) and *The Don Flows Home to the Sea* (New York: Knopf, 1940).

cal infighting and poor governance, as dooming the White effort in the east.⁴ While not denying the material weakness of the White movement in the vast region, nor the failures of White *political* leadership, Ganin instead focuses on *military* leadership. The Reds ultimately had to fight and win against White armies in the field, and Red military commanders simply proved more operationally effective. The White generals in the east were plagued by poor operational planning and execution, exacerbated by backbiting and insubordination, even in those isolated moments when they had manpower comparable to the Reds they fought, or adequate supplies courtesy of Allied shipments through Vladivostok. While Kolchak's chief of staff, Dmitrii Antonovich Lebedev, took much of the blame from his émigré compatriots, the problem ran much deeper. Kolchak's armies had chronic shortages of officers, and his general Radola Gajda was only the worst of multiple examples of failure to coordinate actions against the Reds. The result was disastrous collapse, and a tragic death march for thousands of White soldiers across Siberia.

Evgenii Naumov's chapter on desertion also examines the Eastern Front, but at a much earlier period, well prior to the White collapse and retreat across Siberia. It also changes the focus from the Whites to the Reds, and from the high command to the individual soldier and the struggle against desertion. All sides in the Civil War constantly had to battle against desertion by their largely peasant soldiers, who were unenthusiastic about fighting and eager to return to their homes. Naumov rightly notes that while the scope of the problem was clear at the time and to historians ever since, Soviet reticence to discuss the issue left a real gap in scholarly literature. While that has been rectified since the fall of the Soviet Union, there remains little in English to provide a clear sense of the nature of the problem.⁵ While Naumov looks to some degree at the conditions that provoke desertion, his primary emphasis is on how the Red Army fought desertion. Too often, discussion of the issue has focused exclusively on Lev Davidovich Trotskii, head of the Red Army, and his ostensibly ferocious and draconian response to desertion and other instances of indiscipline. Naumov finds this picture to be substantially exaggerated. Instead, what he argues that on the Eastern Front in 1918, Red Army commanders were forced into ill-coordinated and ad hoc policies in an

⁴ See N. G. O. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); and Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵ One exception, taking a similar regional focus, is Alistair S. Wright, "Stemming the Flow: The Red Army Anti-Desertion Campaign in Soviet Karelia (1919)," *Revolutionary Russia* 25, 2 (2012): 141–62. See also Orlando Figes, "The Red Army and Mass Mobilization during the Russian Civil War, 1918–1920," *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 168–211.

effort to deal with desertion. Bloodthirsty orders about treatment of deserters were almost always much softer in actual practice, in large part because of the terrible need for manpower. Local attempts at setting up disciplinary detachments, often from non-Russian minorities, became systematic only in August and September 1918 with the appearance of “flying dozens” and “flying hundreds.” These punitive units might catch individual deserters, but only more concerted action and ideological exhortation could halt the widespread phenomenon of entire units deserting or retreating en masse. At times, units would commandeer entire trains to ease their passage away from the front.

In terms of the military outcome of the Civil War, the Southern and Eastern fronts were central. As the chapters make abundantly clear, military outcomes depended enormously on the administrative and economic infrastructure to support armies in the field. The essays in the collection accordingly shed valuable light on questions of White politics, governance, and economic management, particularly in comparison with better understood Red governance. For decades, the scholarly consensus in both the Soviet Union and the West was that the Whites fell far short of the Reds in their ability to impose a common political vision and create the functioning state institutions necessary to fight and win the Civil War.⁶ To be sure, Lenin’s Bolsheviks enjoyed several concrete and objective advantages over their White opponents, none of which had anything to do with either Lenin’s political skills, or his party’s relative ability to impose ideological coherence through party discipline and repression. Simply by virtue of seizing power in central Russia, while the Whites coalesced around Russia’s periphery, Lenin’s party held Russia’s industrial heartland, the overwhelming majority of its military industry, a dominant position in Russia’s hub-and-spoke railroad system, and the governing bureaucratic machine created by imperial Russia, including much of the central administration of the tsarist armed forces.

While these chapters in no way overturn that general picture, they do introduce important nuances to the question. In terms of White politics, a number of the chapters demonstrate that White leadership was more subtle and flexible, at least in some regions, than has been evident in our general picture of the Civil War. In its early stages, in 1918, the Civil War had not yet become primarily a two-sided struggle between the Reds and the Whites. Instead, a third force of moderate socialists, aiming at a left-wing program but rejecting the power-hungry tendencies they saw in Lenin and the Bolsheviks, attempted to consolidate democratic socialism as a middle way.⁷ In the territory under Soviet control, Bolshevik one-party dictatorship quickly ended

⁶ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920*, makes this argument explicit.

⁷ Geoffrey Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War* (Essex: Longman, 1996).

this as a political alternative. Outside of Lenin's reach, however, the story may have been different. One standard interpretation of White leadership, particularly once power shifted away from civilian politicians who came from parties active in the last years of the Russian Empire and instead toward former tsarist generals, holds that White leadership was intolerant of two political alternatives that might have broadened the appeal of the White movement more generally. On the one hand, White generals rejected the left-wing programs and policies that might have swayed workers and peasants away from the Reds and toward the Whites. Fundamental peasant hostility to the Whites and their agenda, perceived as a return of the landlords, also gave the Reds a key advantage.⁸ On the other hand, the Whites' ostensibly rigid position on Russia "one and indivisible," denying any possibility of independence or autonomy for non-Russian nationalities, created ongoing tensions with movements and newly formed states that might have produced substantial cooperation against the Bolsheviks.

The chapters in these two books do not overturn that verdict. Kolchak and Denikin in particular seem to conform to the picture of men too rigid on political questions to be fully effective in the atmosphere of civil war. This is a verdict that Ganin's summarizing chapter on the factors behind Red victory strongly endorses. That said, however, leadership on other White fronts showed more flexibility on political questions, perhaps as a result of dire necessity. Goldin's chapter on the Northern Front, for example, demonstrates the same internal tensions between left-wing political movements and right-wing military officers that characterized other White fronts. In Arkhangel'sk, a September 1918 coup led by naval officer Georgii Ermolaevich Chaplin arrested the left-leaning Supreme Directorate, including long-time political activist Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii. While this was entirely in keeping with White politics in other regions, in this case those arrested were returned to power (albeit under British pressure), and the left-right divide papered over. Though tension and hostility remained, at least a modicum of cooperation between left and right was maintained for another year. In 1919, the desperate White regime in the north both expanded its political base by adding additional political figures from the populist and pro-peasant Socialist-Revolutionary Party, and simultaneously moved to full military mobilization through mass conscription. In short, there were tantalizing examples of potential uneasy cooperation between moderate socialists and White military officers well past 1918. Goldin also demonstrates the central role of the Entente powers in dictating the course of events on the smaller and weaker White fronts.

⁸ See, for example, Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

Those twin themes of political compromise, at times dictated by the interventions of the Entente powers, recur in Tsvetkov's chapter on Iudenich and the Northwestern Front. Politics between Russians in the northwest could not be separated from the role played by outside powers, not only the Entente (especially the British) but also by the newly independent states of Estonia and Finland. As Tsvetkov stresses, civil and military authority in the northwest cooperated much more harmoniously than in the White south and east. The Whites also reconciled themselves to Estonia's *de facto* independence, signing a cooperation agreement in December 1918, and accepted Finnish autonomy as an established fact. The Whites of the northwest also pressed Kolchak's regime in Omsk and the Russian Political Conference in Paris to speed negotiations with the breakaway states of the former Russian Empire to expedite cooperation against the Bolsheviks. By September 1919, the multiparty Northwestern government had accepted the "absolute independence of Estonia" and "the independence of Finland as a sovereign state" in principle, and declared a political program with substantial democratic and left-wing elements. Despite this political flexibility, achieved under substantial British pressure, Iudenich's fall 1919 offensive against Petrograd ultimately failed, after initial successes, through simple lack of sufficient reserves of manpower to take and hold a major city against much larger Red forces.

The saga of the Whites' general failure concludes chronologically with two chapters that further underline political themes of the possibility of White political flexibility, at least when compelled by difficult circumstances, and the incredible complexity of Civil War politics. Anthony Kröner's chapter on Baron Petr Nikolaevich Vrangeli's last stand in the Crimea in 1920 marks the final large-scale conventional military clashes of the Civil War, and Geoffrey Hosking explores the complex history of Russia's Far East, and specifically the Far Eastern Republic, the nominally democratic and independent buffer state set up by the Bolsheviks to finesse the delicate game of getting Japanese occupation troops off the Russian mainland. Kröner notes the desperate situation Vrangeli inherited when he took over command from Denikin in spring 1920: as Vrangeli himself declared, only British intervention could achieve victory. The rump White forces confined to the Crimea also counted on British and French protection for their own preservation, even as the Entente powers were increasingly eager to wash their hands of intervention. Vrangeli was not, however, simply a placeholder. In parallel with liberal or left-wing policies proclaimed in White territory in the north and northwest, he instituted an ambitious policy of land reform, albeit limited to the tiny territory under his control. This accompanied a quixotic offensive to expand his Crimean enclave into mainland Ukraine, an offensive doomed by his lack of resources. Once the Soviet state was no longer distracted by larger White armies or the 1920

war with Poland, the massive resources it could bring to bear ensured that Vrangél's cause was hopeless, and he and his soldiers had to evacuate the Crimea and flee into exile.

Once the fighting of the Civil War was complete, the intervening Entente powers also evacuated Russia. The exception, for a time, was the Japanese, who still hoped to maintain some presence in the Russian Far East. As described in Geoffrey Hosking's closing chapter, Lenin's regime created a buffer Far Eastern Republic to serve as a placeholder pending some final resolution, hoping to avoid a direct clash with Japan. Russia's east was a chaotic *mélange* of fleeing Whites, Red partisans, bloodthirsty warlords, and foreign occupying troops, defying any attempt at coherent description. While a Bolshevik-engineered Far Eastern Republic government proclaimed itself at Verkhneudinsk in April 1920 and quickly won adherence from local Red organizations, a non-Bolshevik government established itself in Vladivostok, occupied at the time by Americans and Czechs in addition to the Japanese. Over the spring of 1920, even under the watchful eye of the hostile Japanese, the Vladivostok government came to be increasingly dominated by local Bolsheviks and their left-wing sympathizers, who operated under Moscow's instructions to maintain a broad front. This approach led Vladivostok to accept the authority of the Far Eastern Republic, and produced a broadly democratic constitution and multiparty state in 1921. To make matters even more complex, fleeing White soldiers then engineered a coup in Vladivostok, installing a new right-wing government that soon degenerated into back-biting and mutual recrimination. Power finally fell into the hands of veteran tsarist General Mikhail Konstantinovich Diterikhs, obsessed by religious mysticism, monarchism, and medieval Russia. This combination was ill-suited for managing the politics of civil war, particularly when the Japanese decided in June 1922 that further occupation of the Russian Far East was no longer viable. As the Japanese evacuated, Diterikhs's regime collapsed. The Red Army marched triumphantly into Vladivostok on 25 October 1922, bringing a formal close to the Civil War.

A number of chapters look beyond military operations to institutions, both their evolution and their effects on the Civil War overall. Gagkuev and Ganin, in a pair of chapters on the officer corps of the White, Red, and new national armies, remain generally in line with previous understandings, while providing rich empirical data to deepen our understanding of how individual officers met the challenge of the Revolution and subsequent Civil War. While the creation of a new Soviet officer corps drawn both from the officers of the old tsarist army (the "military specialists") and from newly trained Bolshevik supporters (the "Red commanders") has been studied in some depth in English-language scholarship, the parallel processes in the White and new

national armies are much less understood.⁹ Ganin's work stresses the deep divisions within the prerevolutionary Russian officer corps and their effects on the Civil War. In particular, the officers who entered service prior to World War I, even though no longer exclusively nobles, were generally traditionalist, conservative, and monarchical. The enormous expansion of the officer corps during World War I broadened the social base of the officer corps, swamping the older cohort in a flood of hastily trained officers, even as the prewar elite continued to dominate the higher ranks and enjoyed a near-monopoly on particular sorts of technical training such as general-staff work. The result, under pressure of civil war, was that many officers followed their ideological convictions into the White or Red or new national armies, while many others followed their material interests into whichever army was in position to feed them and their families. When the Red regime was threatened by foreign enemies—the Germans in 1918 and the Poles in 1920—Russian patriotism could lead even traditionalist officers to serve the Bolsheviks.

The result was a striking fluidity in loyalty. The Bolshevik leadership, led by Lenin and Trotskii, quickly came to realize that they had no choice but to draw upon the military specialists for the technical skills that more ideologically sympathetic younger officers simply did not possess. They constantly had to fight a rearguard action against their own Red commanders and their sympathizers among the Bolshevik leadership, who could quite rightly point to a number of spectacular betrayals by military specialists who had abandoned the Bolsheviks. The result was the creation of a whole series of institutions and practices, most notably the political commissar, in an effort to guarantee loyalty. There were, at best, only partly successful.

Even that partial success, however, marks the Bolsheviks as more able than the Whites. A standard trope of the White armies in the Civil War contends that they were dominated by a surplus of officers and a deficit of rank-and-file soldiers. Gagkuev's chapter on the White officer corps points out that while this holds true for the White movement in southern Russia, where many officers fled after the October Revolution, it was not at all true of the other White fronts, which suffered instead from a shortage of officers. To make matters worse, though, the Whites seemed far less willing to accept officers changing sides than the Reds. Relative Bolshevik flexibility, combined with mechanisms to compel loyalty, gave them a distinct comparative advantage

⁹ D. Fedotoff White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944); John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military Political History, 1918–1941* (New York: St. Martin's, 1962); Francesco Benvenuti, *The Bolsheviks and the Red Army, 1918–1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

over their White opponents. Only after Denikin's Armed Forces of Southern Russia were clearly on the path to total defeat did they soften their policy on those who had crossed over from the Red Army. In White territory along the Volga and in the Urals in 1918, hostility between officers and the left-leaning Komuch government hurt recruitment of leaders for the nascent White Front. After Kolchak took over as Supreme Ruler in eastern Russia in November 1918, the ideological hostility between military officers and the new right-wing regime diminished, but the east still suffered from a crippling shortage of experienced officers. Nonetheless, Kolchak's regime remained as hostile as that of Denikin to captives and defectors from the Red Army.

Ganin's chapter also adds the important dimension of the armies of the new national states on the periphery of the new Soviet state, echoed in Koval'chuk's chapter on military formations in Ukraine. The same rifts along lines of social background and wartime experience were superimposed on conflicting national loyalties, producing an even more complicated mix. In many new states, national armies were built not only from the legacies of the Russian Empire, but also on men who had fought for the German or Habsburg empires, creating further fissures in the new structures. In Ukraine in particular, identity and loyalty proved especially complex, as knowledge of Ukrainian and commitment to a specific Ukrainian identity, as distinct from the Russian Empire, varied enormously.

This theme of relative levels of paranoia about political reliability between the Reds and Whites arises again in Ganin's chapter on intelligence services. As repressive as Lenin's regime undoubtedly was, the Whites were not much better at policing their own ranks and recruiting able servitors. The subject of intelligence is inherently difficult to study. Much of the potential source base remains shrouded in secrecy and inaccessible to scholars even today and, as a result, scholars have been compelled to turn at least in part to memoir sources of mixed and dubious reliability. In contrast to military institutions, which by their nature require some degree of hierarchy and centralization, intelligence structures are often deliberately fragmented. Ganin does an admirable job of documenting the bewildering array of intelligence organizations, particularly on the Bolshevik side, including multiple intelligence branches within the Red Army itself, the Communist International (which had a substantial intelligence role in addition to its ostensible role as a coordinating body for world Communism), and the feared Cheka. The Whites, already divided geographically, exhibited a similar pattern of fragmentation among their own intelligence services. As with military affairs more generally, the story that Ganin presents is one of improvised structures on both sides of the Civil War divide, in which the Reds were able steadily to build more effective institutions than the Whites, who remained plagued by systematic problems of governance. In

1917 and 1918, the Bolsheviks engaged in rampant backbiting and campaigns against intelligence professionals and bourgeois specialists, and were in fact plagued by large numbers of astoundingly well-placed double agents. Over time, though, most of those White agents were arrested or fled to White territory, and by 1920 the Bolsheviks had built reasonably efficient intelligence services, a task that the Whites never quite mastered.

Stephen Brown's chapter on propaganda falls in line with this picture of Red administrative effectiveness, at least in comparison to the Whites. Red agitation (aimed at mass audiences) and propaganda (for more sophisticated audiences) was both more ubiquitous and more effective than White propaganda, as scholars have long believed and as Ganin affirms in his chapter about the Red victory.¹⁰ Brown's chapter underlines the enormous magnitude of the Red propaganda effort in its myriad forms. It also stresses how that agitation and propaganda had real substance behind it: fear of the return of landlords and capitalists served to mobilize workers and peasants far more to the Reds than to the Whites. That said, Brown also notes the rampant and inevitable cynicism with which Red soldiers, like soldiers everywhere, greeted efforts at indoctrination, and the cultural gulf between the peasants who made up the bulk of the Red Army and the *intelligentsia* who were devising the propaganda. At the same time, Brown shows that White propaganda was not nearly as ineffective as portrayed. The Whites themselves created the myth of absolute Bolshevik superiority in propaganda, in part as a result of their ethos of honor and sacrifice overcome by lies and distortion. In fact, Denikin's Volunteer Army created a substantial Information and Agitation Department (OSVAG) to carry out its own propaganda, based on themes of the Reds as Jewish-dominated usurpers. To be sure, this does not at all amount to arguing that White propaganda approached Red propaganda in its effectiveness, crippled as it was by the twin traps of Great Russian nationalism and unease with social transformation.

Finally, illustrating the theme of the Russian Civil War's irreducible complexity, these two books offer a number of contributions on the Civil War in Ukraine. A pair of chapters on the phenomenon of the *ataman* (Ukrainian *otaman*), or "warlord," by Christopher Gilley and the late Alexander Prusin look deeply at one particular characteristic of Ukrainian politics in the postrevolution period, while Mykhailo Koval'chuk provides an invaluable overview of the armed formations of Civil War Ukraine. Eric Landis's work on peasant war in various parts of the former Russian Empire fits well with these, as the Ukrainian national movement was characterized by peasant motifs and

¹⁰ See, for example, Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

conceptions, and had considerable overlap with peasant movements in Russia proper.

All three of the chapters that deal with Ukraine specifically capture the extraordinary violence and fluidity of the Civil War there, with repeated pogroms against Jews, and individual warlords shifting allegiances from moment to moment. The chapters also note how *otaman* warlords controlled their bands with a particular blend of personal, charismatic authority combined with genuine if inchoate revolutionary and nationalist programs. The chapters complement one another, though there are certainly differences of emphasis and some clashes of interpretation. Koval'chuk's systematic cataloging of the fighting factions of the Civil War in Ukraine provides essential background to understanding the complex sequence of events. Prusin focuses more attention on the massive Soviet counterinsurgency effort to pacify Ukraine once the major conventional fighting of the Civil War was largely complete. His explanation of the fickle allegiance of Ukrainian warlords relies in part on seeing Ukrainian national sentiment as still weak, particularly among the mass of peasantry, though nonetheless growing in response to the popular sense of outsiders imposing their will on the Ukrainian countryside. Gilley looks instead at the political constraints around any individual *otaman*, trying to maintain authority over an inherently anarchistic movement. While the warlords indeed lacked a fully coherent ideological program, that was equally true of the urban intellectuals who made of the original core of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Though the essays collected here do not generally draw much on the cultural turn in recent historiography, Gilley does note the prominent place in *otaman* rhetoric and self-presentation of a particular cultural vision of Ukrainian nationhood, deliberately centered on both the Ukrainian peasantry and on the Cossack heritage. In this, the warlords followed precedents set by both the earlier regimes of the Central Rada and Pavlo Petrovych Skoropads'kyi's Hetmanate.

Landis's chapter on peasant war across the former Russian Empire echoes many of the themes of Gilley's particular look at Ukraine. Landis is the author of a previous study on the Antonovshchina, a 1920–21 anti-Soviet peasant uprising in the Tambov region.¹¹ He found in that case a rebellion incited by harsh government policies, enabled by weak government policing, and structured by political organization provided by elements of the prerevolutionary Socialist-Revolutionary party. He argues that inchoate and largely

¹¹ Eric C. Landis, *Bandits and Partisans: The Antonov Movement in the Russian Civil War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008). On peasant uprisings as a key element in the Civil War, see also Vladimir N. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of Civil War: Political Parties and Social Movements in Russia, 1918–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

spontaneous peasant resistance to conscription and seizures of food, whether carried out by Reds or Whites, was characteristic of the early years of the Civil War. By 1920, though, peasant resistance had grown from those early disturbances to become much more organized and politically conscious, often led by military veterans and low-level activists of left-wing political parties, particularly the Socialist-Revolutionaries. While the Antonovshchina was the culmination of this process of self-organization and self-conscious implementation of a concrete political program, it existed to a lesser degree in other peasant uprisings, complicating Bolshevik efforts at pacification in the wake of the defeat of major White formations.

While the chapters in this collection offer important insights into the Russian Civil War, a great deal of work remains to be done. Many of these chapters give tantalizing glimpses into questions of White administration and governance, but much of the concrete operations of the various White regimes remains obscure. The insights of new cultural history, evident in many of the other volumes in the Russia's Great War and Revolution series, have not yet been fully integrated with military history. As such, the chapters in these two books can provide a broad and valuable opening of the conversations, but it will not close the discussion.