

Russian Civil War

The **Russian Civil War** (Russian: Гражданская война в России, tr. *Grazhdanskaya voyna v Rossiyi*; November 1917 – October 1922)^[6] was a multi-party war in the former Russian Empire immediately after the Russian Revolutions of 1917, as many factions vied to determine Russia's political future. The two largest combatant groups were the Red Army, fighting for the Bolshevik form of socialism led by Vladimir Lenin, and the loosely allied forces known as the White Army, which included diverse interests favoring monarchism, capitalism and alternative forms of socialism, each with democratic and antidemocratic variants. In addition, rival militant socialists and nonideological Green armies fought against both the Bolsheviks and the Whites. Eight foreign nations intervened against the Red Army, notably the Allied Forces and the pro-German armies.^[7] The Red Army defeated the White Armed Forces of South Russia in Ukraine and the army led by Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak in Siberia in 1919. The remains of the White forces commanded by Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel were beaten in Crimea and evacuated in late 1920. Lesser battles of the war continued on the periphery for two more years, and minor skirmishes with the remnants of the White forces in the Far East continued well into 1923. The war ended in 1923 in the sense that Red control of the newly formed Soviet Union was now assured, although armed national resistance in Central Asia was not completely crushed until 1934. There were an estimated 7,000,000–12,000,000 casualties during the war, mostly civilians. The Russian Civil War has been described by some as the greatest national catastrophe that Europe had yet seen.^[8]

Many pro-independence movements emerged after the break-up of the Russian Empire and fought in the war.^[3] Several parts of the former Russian Empire—Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland—were established as sovereign states, with their own civil wars and wars of independence. The rest of the former Russian Empire was consolidated into the Soviet Union shortly afterwards.

Contents

Background

- February Revolution
- Formation of the Red Army
- Anti-Bolshevik movement

Geography and chronology

Russian Civil War	
	
Clockwise from top: Soldiers of the Don Army in 1919; a White infantry division in March 1920; soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Army; Leon Trotsky in 1918; hanging of workers in Yekaterinoslav by the Austro-Hungarian Army, April 1918	
Date	November 7, 1917 – October 25, 1922/June 16, 1923 ^{[1][2]} (Revolt against Soviet rule continued in Central Asia until 1934)
Location	Former Russian Empire, Galicia, Mongolia, Tuva, northern Persia
Result	Victory for the Red Army in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Tuva, and Mongolia; Victory for pro-independence movements in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland
Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine (1919–20) Left SR (until March 1918) Green armies (until 1919)	
Territorial	Establishment of the Soviet Union;

Warfare

- October Revolution
- Initial anti-Bolshevik uprisings
- Peace with the Central Powers
- Ukraine, South Russia, and Caucasus 1918
- Eastern Russia, Siberia and Far East of Russia, 1918
- Central Asia 1918
- Left SR uprising
- Estonia, Latvia and Petrograd
- Northern Russia 1919
- Siberia 1919
- South Russia 1919
- Central Asia 1919
- South Russia, Ukraine and Kronstadt 1920–21
- Siberia and the Far East 1920–22

Aftermath

- Ensuing rebellion
- Casualties
- Brief Timeline

In fiction

- Literature
- Film

See also

References

- Citations
- Bibliography

Further reading

External links

changes

- Independence of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland^[3]
- Cessation of Kars, Erzurum, Ardahan, Ağrı and Iğdır to Turkey
- Union of Bessarabia with Romania

Belligerents

 Soviet Russia and other Soviet republics	 White Movement
	Including
	Other new republics
	Including
	Allied intervention
	Including
	German-led intervention
	Including
	Other factions

Commanders and leaders

 Vladimir Lenin	 Alexander Kolchak
 Leon Trotsky	 Lavr Kornilov †
 Jukums Vācietis	 Anton Denikin
 Sergey Kamenev	 Pyotr Wrangel
 Nestor Makhno	 Nikolai Yudenich
	 Grigory Semyonov

Strength

5,427,273 (peak) ^[4]	2,400,000 White Russians
103,000 Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine	

Casualties and losses

1,212,824 casualties (records incomplete) ^[5]	At least 1,500,000
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Background

February Revolution

After the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, the Russian Provisional Government was established during the February Revolution of 1917.

Formation of the Red Army

From mid-1917 onwards, the Russian Army, the successor-organisation of the old Russian Imperial Army, started to disintegrate;^[9] the Bolsheviks used the volunteer-based Red Guards as their main military force, augmented by an armed military component of the Cheka (the Bolshevik state-security apparatus). In January 1918, after significant Bolshevik reverses in combat, the future People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs Leon Trotsky headed the reorganization of the Red Guards into a *Workers' and Peasants' Red Army* in order to create a more effective fighting force. The Bolsheviks appointed political commissars to each unit of the Red Army to maintain morale and to ensure loyalty

In June 1918, when it had become apparent that a revolutionary army composed solely of workers would not suffice, Trotsky instituted mandatory conscription of the rural peasantry into the Red Army.^[10] The Bolsheviks overcame opposition of rural Russians to Red-Army conscription units by taking hostages and shooting them when necessary in order to force compliance,^[11]

exactly the same practices used by the White Army officers.^[12] The Red Army utilized former Tsarist officers as "military specialists" (*voenspetsy*),^[13] sometimes their families were taken hostage in order to ensure their loyalty.^[14] At the start of the civil war, former Tsarist officers comprised three-quarters of the Red Army officer-corps.^[14] By its end, 83% of all Red Army divisional and corps commanders were ex-Tsarist soldiers.^[13]

Anti-Bolshevik movement

While resistance to the Red Guard began on the very day after the Bolshevik uprising, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the political ban became a catalyst^[15] for the formation of anti-Bolshevik groups both inside and outside Russia, pushing them into action against the new regime.

A loose confederation of anti-Bolshevik forces aligned against the Communist government, including landowners, republicans, conservatives, middle-class citizens, reactionaries, pro-monarchists, liberals, army generals, non-Bolshevik socialists who still had grievances and democratic reformists voluntarily united only in their opposition to Bolshevik rule. Their military forces, bolstered by forced conscriptions and terror^[12] and by foreign influence and led by Gen. Yudenich, Adm. Kolchak and Gen. Denikin, became known as the White movement (sometimes referred to as the "White Army") and controlled significant parts of the former Russian Empire for most of the war

A Ukrainian nationalist movement was active in Ukraine during the war. More significant was the emergence of an anarchist political and military movement known as the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine or the Anarchist Black Army led by Nestor Makhno. The Black Army, which counted numerous Jews and Ukrainian peasants in its ranks, played a key part in halting Gen. Denikin's White Army offensive towards Moscow during 1919, later ejecting White forces from Crimea.

The remoteness of the Volga Region, the Ural Region, Siberia and the Far East was favorable for the anti-Bolshevik forces, and the Whites set up a number of organizations in the cities of these regions. Some of the military forces were set up on the basis of clandestine officers' organizations in the cities.

The Czechoslovak Legions had been part of the Russian army and numbered around 30,000 troops by October 1917. They had an agreement with the new Bolshevik government to be evacuated from the Eastern Front via the port of Vladivostok to France. The transport from the Eastern Front to Vladivostok slowed down in the chaos, and the troops became dispersed all along the Trans-Siberian Railway. Under pressure from the Central Powers, Totsky ordered the disarming and arrest of the legionaries, which created tensions with the Bolsheviks.

The Western Allies armed and supported opponents of the Bolsheviks. They were worried about (1) a possible Russo-German alliance, (2) the prospect of the Bolsheviks making good on their threats to default on Imperial Russia's massive foreign loans and (3) the possibility that the Communist revolutionary ideas would spread (a concern shared by many Central Powers). Hence, many of these countries expressed their support for the Whites, including the provision of troops and supplies. Winston Churchill declared that Bolshevism must be "strangled in its cradle".^[16] The British and French had supported Russia during World War I on a massive scale with war materials. After the treaty, it looked like much of that material would fall into the hands of the Germans. Under this pretext began Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War with the United Kingdom and France sending troops into Russian ports. There were violent clashes with troops loyal to the Bolsheviks.

The German Empire created several short-lived satellite buffer states within its sphere of influence after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk: the "United Baltic Duchy", "Duchy of Courland and Semigallia", "Kingdom of Lithuania", "Kingdom of Poland", the "Belarusian People's Republic", and the "Ukrainian State". Following the defeat of Germany in World War I in November 1918, these states were abolished.

Finland was the first republic that declared its independence from Russia in December 1917 and established itself in the ensuing Finnish Civil War from January–May 1918. The Second Polish Republic, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia formed their own armies immediately after the abolition of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the start of the Soviet westward offensive in November 1918.

Geography and chronology

In the European part of Russia the war was fought across three main fronts: the eastern, the southern and the northwestern. It can also be roughly split into the following periods.

The first period lasted from the Revolution until the Armistice. Already on the date of the Revolution, Cossack Gen. Kaledin refused to recognize it and assumed full governmental authority in the Don region,^[17] where the Volunteer Army began amassing support. The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk also resulted in direct Allied intervention in Russia and the arming of military forces opposed to the Bolshevik government. There were also many German commanders who offered support against the Bolsheviks, fearing a confrontation with them was impending as well.

During this first period the Bolsheviks took control of Central Asia out of the hands of the Provisional Government and White Army, setting up a base for the Communist Party in the Steppe and Turkestan, where nearly two million Russian settlers were located.^[18]



Anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army in South Russia, January 1918



Russian soldiers of the anti-Bolshevik Siberian Army in 1919

Most of the fighting in this first period was sporadic, involving only small groups amid a fluid and rapidly shifting strategic scene. Among the antagonists were the Czechs, known as the Czechoslovak Legion or "White Czechs",^[19] the Poles of the Polish 5th Rifle Division and the pro-Bolshevik Red Latvian riflemen

The second period of the war lasted from January to November 1919. At first the White armies' advances from the south (under Gen. Denikin), the east (under Adm. Kolchak) and the northwest (under Gen. Yudenich) were successful, forcing the Red Army and its allies back on all three fronts. In July 1919 the Red Army suffered another reverse after a mass defection of units in the Crimea to the anarchist Black Army under Nestor Makhno, enabling anarchist forces to consolidate power in Ukraine. Leon Trotsky soon reformed the Red Army, concluding the first of two

military alliances with the anarchists. In June the Red Army first checked Kolchak's advance. After a series of engagements, assisted by a Black Army offensive against White supply lines, the Red Army defeated Denikin's and Yudenich's armies in October and November.

The third period of the war was the extended siege of the last White forces in the Crimea. Gen. Wrangel had gathered the remnants of Denikin's armies, occupying much of the Crimea. An attempted invasion of southern Ukraine was rebuffed by the anarchist Black Army under the command of Nestor Makhno. Pursued into the Crimea by Makhno's troops, Wrangel went over to the defensive in the Crimea. After an abortive move north against the Red Army, Wrangel's troops were forced south by Red Army and Black Army forces; Wrangel and the remains of his army were evacuated to Constantinople in November 1920.

Warfare

October Revolution

In the October Revolution the Bolshevik Party directed the Red Guard (armed groups of workers and Imperial army deserters) to seize control of Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) and immediately began the armed takeover of cities and villages throughout the former Russian Empire. In January 1918 the Bolsheviks dissolved the Russian Constituent Assembly and proclaimed the Soviets (workers' councils) as the new government of Russia.

Initial anti-Bolshevik uprisings

The first attempt to regain power from the Bolsheviks was made by the Kerensky-Krasnov uprising in October 1917. It was supported by the Junker Mutiny in Petrograd but was quickly put down by the Red Guard, notably the Latvian Rifle Division

The initial groups that fought against the Communists were local Cossack armies that had declared their loyalty to the Provisional Government. Gen. Kaledin of the Don Cossacks and Gen. Semenov of the Siberian Cossacks were prominent among them. The leading Tsarist officers of the old regime also started to resist. In November, Gen. Alekseev, the Tsar's Chief of Staff during the First World War, began to organize the Volunteer Army in Novocherkassk. Volunteers of this small army were mostly officers of the old Russian army, military cadets and students. In December 1917 Alekseev was joined by Gen. Kornilov, Denikin and other Tsarist officers who had escaped from the jail, where they had been imprisoned following the abortive Kornilov affair just before the Revolution.^[20] At the beginning of December 1917 groups of volunteers and Cossacks captured Rostov.

Having stated in the November 1917 "Declaration of Rights of Nations of Russia" that any nation under imperial Russian rule should be immediately given the power of self-determination, the Bolsheviks had begun to usurp the power of the Provisional Government in the territories of Central Asia soon after the establishment of the Turkestan Committee in Tashkent.^[21] In April 1917 the Provisional Government set up this committee, which was mostly made up of former Tsarist officials.^[22] The Bolsheviks attempted to take control of the Committee in Tashkent on 12 September 1917 but it was unsuccessful, and many leaders were arrested. However, because the Committee lacked representation of the native population and poor Russian settlers, they had to release the Bolshevik prisoners almost immediately due to public outcry, and a successful takeover of this government body took place two months later in November.^[23] The triumph of the Bolshevik party over the Provisional Government during 1917 was mostly due to the support they received from the working class of Central Asia. The Leagues of Mohammedan Working People, which Russian settlers and natives who had been sent to work behind the lines for the Tsarist government in 1916 formed in March 1917, had led numerous strikes in the industrial centers throughout September 1917.^[24] However, after the Bolshevik destruction of the Provisional Government in Tashkent, Muslim elites formed an autonomous government in Turkestan, commonly called the "Kokand autonomy" (or simply Kokand).^[25] The White Russians supported this government body, which lasted several months because of Bolshevik troop isolation from Moscow.^[26] In January 1918 the Soviet forces under Lt. Col. Muravyov invaded Ukraine and invested Kiev, where the Central Council of the Ukrainian People's Republic held power. With the help of the Kiev Arsenal Uprising the Bolsheviks captured the city on 26 January.^[27]

Peace with the Central Powers

The Bolsheviks decided to immediately make peace with the German Empire and the Central Powers, as they had promised the Russian people before the Revolution.^[28] Vladimir Lenin's political enemies attributed that decision to his sponsorship by the Foreign Office of Wilhelm II, German Emperor, offered to Lenin in hope that, with a revolution, Russia would withdraw from World War I. That suspicion was bolstered by the German Foreign Ministry's sponsorship of Lenin's return to Petrograd.^[29] However, after the military fiasco of the summer offensive (June 1917) by the Russian Provisional Government, and in particular after the failed summer offensive of the Provisional Government had devastated the structure of the Russian army, it became crucial that Lenin realize the promised peace.^{[30][31]} Even before the failed summer offensive the Russian population was very skeptical about the continuation of the war. Western socialists had promptly arrived from France and from the UK to convince the Russians to continue the fight, but could not change the new pacifist mood of Russia.^[32]



European theatre of the Russian Civil War

On 16 December 1917 an armistice was signed between Russia and the Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk and peace talks began.^[33] As a condition for peace, the proposed treaty by the Central Powers conceded huge portions of the former Russian Empire to the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire, greatly upsetting nationalists and conservatives. Leon Trotsky, representing the Bolsheviks, refused at first to sign the treaty while continuing to observe a unilateral cease-fire, following the policy of "No war, no peace".^[34]

In view of this, on 18 February 1918 the Germans began Operation Faustschlag on the Eastern Front, encountering virtually no resistance in a campaign that lasted 11 days.^[34] Signing a formal peace treaty was the only option in the eyes of the Bolsheviks because the Russian army was demobilized, and the newly formed Red Guard was incapable of stopping the advance. They also understood that the impending counterrevolutionary resistance was more dangerous than the concessions of the treaty, which Lenin viewed as temporary in the light of aspirations for a world revolution. The Soviets acceded to a peace treaty, and the formal agreement, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was ratified on 6 March. The Soviets viewed the treaty as merely a necessary and expedient means to end the war. Therefore, they ceded large amounts of territory to the German Empire.



Soviet delegation with Trotsky greeted by German officers at Brest-Litovsk, 8 January 1918

Ukraine, South Russia, and Caucasus 1918

Under Soviet pressure, the Volunteer Army embarked on the epic Ice March from Yekaterinodar to Kuban on 22 February 1918, where they joined with the Kuban Cossacks to mount an abortive assault on Yekaterinodar.^[35] The Soviets recaptured Rostov on the next day.^[36] Gen. Kornilov was killed in the fighting on 13 April, and Gen. Denikin took over command. Fighting off its pursuers without respite, the army succeeded in breaking its way through back towards the Don, where the Cossack uprising against Bolsheviks had started.

The Baku Soviet Commune was established on 13 April. Germany landed its Caucasus Expedition troops in Poti on 8 June. The Ottoman Army of Islam (in coalition with Azerbaijan) drove them out of Baku on 26 July 1918. Subsequently, the Dashnaks, Right SRs and Mensheviks started negotiations with Gen. Dunsterville, the commander of the British troops in Persia. The Bolsheviks and their Left SR allies were opposed to it, but on 25 July the majority of the Soviet voted to call in the British and the Bolsheviks resigned. The Baku Soviet Commune ended its existence and was replaced by the Central Caspian Dictatorship.

In June 1918 the Volunteer Army, numbering some 9,000 men, started its second Kuban campaign. Yekaterinodar was encircled on 1 August and fell on the 3rd. In September–October, heavy fighting took place at Armavir and Stavropol. On 13 October Gen. Kazanovich's division took Armavir, and on 1 November Gen. Pyotr Wrangel secured Stavropol. This time Red forces had no escape, and by the beginning of 1919 the whole Northern Caucasus was controlled by the Volunteer Army.

In October Gen. Alekseev, the leader of the White armies in southern Russia, died of a heart attack. An agreement was reached between Denikin, head of the Volunteer Army, and Pyotr Krasnov, Ataman of the Don Cossacks, which united their forces under the sole command of Denikin. The Armed Forces of South Russia were thus created.



February 1918 article from *The New York Times* showing a map of the Russian Imperial territories claimed by the Ukrainian People's Republic at the time, before the annexation of the Austro-Hungarian lands of the West Ukrainian People's Republic

Eastern Russia, Siberia and Far East of Russia, 1918

The revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion broke out in May 1918,^[37] and the legionaries took control of Chelyabinsk in June. Simultaneously Russian officers' organizations overthrew the Bolsheviks in Petropavlovsk (in present-day Kazakhstan) and in Omsk. Within a month the Whites controlled most of the Trans-Siberian Railroad between Lake Baikal and the Ural regions. During the summer Bolshevik power in Siberia was eliminated. The Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia formed in Omsk. By the end of July the Whites had extended their gains westwards, capturing Ekaterinburg on 26 July 1918. Shortly before the fall of Yekaterinburg on 17 July 1918, the former Tsar and his family were murdered by the Ural Soviet to prevent them falling into the hands of the Whites.

Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries supported peasants fighting against Soviet control of food supplies.^[38] In May 1918, with the support of the Czechoslovak Legion, they took Samara and Saratov, establishing the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly—known as the "Komuch". By July the authority of the Komuch extended over much of the area controlled by the Czechoslovak Legion. The Komuch pursued an ambivalent social policy, combining democratic and socialist measures, such as the institution of an eight-hour working day, with "restorative" actions, such as returning both factories and land to their former owners. After the fall of Kazan, Vladimir Lenin called for the dispatch of Petrograd workers to the Kazan Front: "We must send down the *maximum* number of Petrograd workers: (1) a few dozen 'leaders' like Kayurov; (2) a few thousand militants 'from the ranks'".^[39]

After a series of reverses at the front, the Bolsheviks' War Commissar, Trotsky, instituted increasingly harsh measures in order to prevent unauthorized withdrawals, desertions and mutinies in the Red Army. In the field the Cheka special investigations forces, termed the *Special Punitive Department of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combat of Counter-Revolution and Sabotage* or *Special Punitive Brigades*, followed the Red Army, conducting field tribunals and summary executions of soldiers and officers who deserted, retreated from their positions or failed to display sufficient offensive zeal.^{[40][41]} Trotsky extended the use of the death penalty to the occasional political commissar whose detachment retreated or broke in the face of the enemy.^[42] In August, frustrated at continued reports of Red Army troops breaking under fire, Trotsky authorized the formation of barrier troops - stationed behind unreliable Red Army units and given with orders to shoot anyone withdrawing from the battle line without authorization.^[43]

In September 1918 Komuch, the Siberian Provisional Government and other local anti-Soviet governments met in Ufa and agreed to form a new Provisional All-Russian Government in Omsk, headed by a Directory of five: two Socialist-Revolutionaries (Nikolai Avksentiev and Vladimir Zenzinov), two Kadets (V. A. Vinogradov and PV Vologodskii) and General Vasily Boldyrev.

By the fall of 1918 anti-Bolshevik White forces in the east included the People's Army (Komuch), the Siberian Army (of the Siberian Provisional Government) and insurgent Cossack units of Orenburg, Ural, Siberia, Semirechye, Baikal, Amur and Ussuri Cossacks, nominally under the orders of Gen. V.G. Boldyrev, Commander-in-Chief, appointed by the Ufa Directorate.



Bolsheviks killed by Czechoslovak legionaries of the 8th Regiment at Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, 1918

On the Volga, Col. Kappel's White detachment captured Kazan on 7 August, but the Reds re-captured the city on 8 September 1918 following a counteroffensive. On the 11th Simbirsk fell, and on 8 October Samara. The Whites fell back eastwards to Ufa and Orenburg.

In Omsk the Russian Provisional Government quickly came under the influence - then the dominance - of its new War Minister, Rear-Admiral Kolchak. On 18 November a coup d'état established Kolchak as dictator. The members of the Directory were arrested and Kolchak proclaimed the "Supreme Ruler of Russia". By mid-December 1918 White armies had to leave Ufa, but they balanced this failure with a successful drive towards Perm, which they took on 24 December

Central Asia 1918

In February 1918 the Red Army overthrew the White Russian-supported Kokand autonomy of Turkestan.^[44] Although this move seemed to solidify Bolshevik power in Central Asia, more troubles soon arose for the Red Army as the Allied Forces began to intervene. British support of the White Army provided the greatest threat to the Red Army in Central Asia during 1918. Great Britain sent three prominent military leaders to the area. One was Lt. Col. Bailey, who recorded a mission to Tashkent, from where the Bolsheviks forced him to flee. Another was Gen. Malleson, leading the Malleson Mission, who assisted the Mensheviks in Ashkhabad (now the capital of Turkmenistan) with a small Anglo-Indian force. However, he failed to gain control of Tashkent, Bukhara and Khiva. The third was Maj. Gen. Dunsterville, who the Bolsheviks drove out of Central Asia only a month after his arrival in August 1918.^[45] Despite setbacks due to British invasions during 1918, the Bolsheviks continued to make progress in bringing the Central Asian population under their influence. The first regional congress of the Russian Communist Party convened in the city of Tashkent in June 1918 in order to build support for a local Bolshevik Party^[46]

Left SR uprising

In July two Left SR and Cheka employees, Blyumkin and Andreyev, assassinated the German ambassador, Count Mirbach. In Moscow a Left SR uprising was put down by the Bolsheviks, using Cheka military detachments. Lenin personally apologized to the Germans for the assassination. Mass arrests of Socialist-Revolutionaries followed.

Estonia, Latvia and Petrograd

Estonia cleared its territory of the Red Army by January 1919.^[47] Baltic German volunteers captured Riga from the Red Latvian Riflemen on 22 May, but the Estonian 3rd Division defeated the Baltic Germans a month later, aiding the establishment of the Republic of Latvia^[48]

This rendered possible another threat to the Red Army—one from Gen. Yudenich, who had spent the summer organizing the Northwestern Army in Estonia with local and British support. In October 1919 he tried to capture Petrograd in a sudden assault with a force of around 20,000 men. The attack was well-executed, using night attacks and lightning cavalry maneuvers to turn the flanks of the defending Red Army. Yudenich also had six British tanks, which caused panic whenever they appeared. The Allies gave large quantities of aid to Yudenich, who, however, complained that he was receiving insufficient support.

By 19 October Yudenich's troops had reached the outskirts of the city. Some members of the Bolshevik central committee in Moscow were willing to give up Petrograd, but Trotsky refused to accept the loss of the city and personally organized its defenses. Trotsky himself declared, "It is impossible for a little army of 15,000 ex-officers to master a working-class capital of 700,000 inhabitants." He settled on a strategy of urban defense, proclaiming that the city would "defend itself on its own ground" and that the White Army would be lost in a labyrinth of fortified streets and there "meet its grave"^[49]

Trotsky armed all available workers, men and women, ordering the transfer of military forces from Moscow. Within a few weeks the Red Army defending Petrograd had tripled in size and outnumbered Yudenich three to one. At this point Yudenich, short of supplies, decided to call off the siege of the city and withdrew, repeatedly asking permission to withdraw his army across the border to Estonia. However, units retreating across the border were disarmed and interned by order of the Estonian government, which had entered into peace negotiations with the Soviet Government on 16 September and had been informed by the Soviet authorities of their 6 November decision that, should the White Army be allowed to retreat into Estonia, it would be pursued across the border by the Reds.^[50] In fact, the Reds attacked Estonian army positions and fighting continued until a cease-fire went into effect on 3 January 1920. Following the Treaty of Tartu most of Yudenich's soldiers went into exile. Former Imperial Russian and now Finnish Gen. Mannerheim planned an intervention to help the Whites in Russia capture Petrograd. He did not, however, gain the necessary support for the endeavor. Lenin considered it "completely certain, that the slightest aid from Finland would have determined the fate of Petrograd".

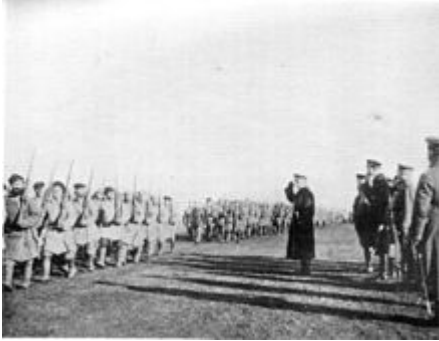


London Geographical Institute's 1919 map of Europe after the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Batum and before the treaties of Tartu, Kars, and Riga

Northern Russia 1919

The British occupied Murmansk and, alongside the Americans, seized Arkhangelsk. With the retreat of Kolchak in Siberia, they pulled their troops out of the cities before the winter trapped them in the port. The remaining White forces under Yevgenii Miller evacuated the region in February 1920.

Siberia 1919



Admiral Kolchak reviewing the troops, 1919



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Gen. Nikolai Yudenich

At the beginning of March 1919 the general offensive of the Whites on the eastern front began. Ufa was retaken on 13 March; by mid-April, the White Army stopped at the Glazov–Chistopol–Bugulma–Buguruslan–Sharlyk line. Reds started their counteroffensive against Kolchak's forces at the end of April. The Red 5th Army, led by the capable commander Tukhachevsky, captured Elabuga on 26 May, Sarapul on 2 June and Izevsk on the 7th and continued to push forward. Both sides had victories and losses, but by the middle of summer the Red Army was larger than the White Army and had managed to recapture territory previously lost.

Following the abortive offensive at Chelyabinsk, the White armies withdrew beyond the Tobol. In September 1919 a White offensive was launched against the Tobol front, the last attempt to change the course of events. However, on 14 October the Reds counterattacked, and thus began the uninterrupted retreat of the Whites to the east

On 14 November 1919 the Red Army captured Omsk.^[51] Adm. Kolchak lost control of his government shortly after this defeat; White Army forces in Siberia essentially ceased to exist by December. Retreat of the eastern front by White armies lasted three months, until mid-February 1920, when the survivors, after crossing Lake Baikal, reached Chita area and joined Ataman Semenov's forces.

South Russia 1919

The Cossacks had been unable to organize and capitalize on their successes at the end of 1918. By 1919 they had begun to run short of supplies. Consequently, when the Soviet counteroffensive began in January 1919 under the Bolshevik leader Antonov-Ovseenko the Cossack forces rapidly fell apart. The Red Army captured Kiev on 3 February 1919.

Gen. Denikin's military strength continued to grow in the spring of 1919. During several months in winter and spring of 1919, hard fighting with doubtful outcomes took place in the Donbass, where the attacking Bolsheviks met White forces. At the same time Denikin's Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR) completed the elimination of Red forces in the northern Caucasus and advanced towards Tsaritsyn. At the end of April and beginning of May the AFSR attacked on all fronts from the Dnepr to the Volga, and by the beginning of the summer they had won numerous battles. French forces landed in Odessa but, after having done almost no fighting, withdrew on 8 April 1919. By mid-June the Reds were chased from the Crimea and the Odessa area. Denikin's troops took the cities of Kharkov and Belgorod. At the same time White troops under Wrangel's command took Tsaritsyn on 17 June 1919. On 20 June Denikin issued his Moscow directive, ordering all AFSR units to prepare for a decisive offensive to take Moscow

Although Great Britain had withdrawn its own troops from the theater, it continued to give significant military aid (money, weapons, food, ammunition and some military advisors) to the White Armies during 1919. Major Ewen Cameron Bruce of the British Army had volunteered to command a British tank mission assisting the White Army. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order^[52] for his bravery during the June 1919 battle of Tsaritsyn for single-handedly storming and capturing the fortified city of Tsaritsyn, under heavy shell fire in a single tank; this led to the capture of over 40,000 prisoners.^[53] The fall of Tsaritsyn is viewed "as one of the key battles of the Russian Civil War" which greatly helped the White Russian cause.^[53] Notable historian Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart comments that Bruce's tank action during this battle is to be seen as "one of the most remarkable feats in the whole history of the Tank Corps".^[54]

After the capture of Tsaritsyn, Wrangel pushed towards Saratov but Trotsky, seeing the danger of the union with Kolchak, against whom the Red command was concentrating large masses of troops, repulsed his attempts with heavy losses. When Kolchak's army in the east began to retreat in June and July, the bulk of the Red Army, free now from any serious danger from Siberia, was directed against Denikin.

Denikin's forces constituted a real threat and for a time threatened to reach Moscow. The Red Army, stretched thin by fighting on all fronts, was forced out of Kiev on 30 August. Kursk and Orel were taken, on 20 September and 14 October, respectively. The latter, only 205 miles (330 km) from Moscow, was the closest the AFSR would come to its target.^[55] The Cossack Don Army under the command of Gen. Vladimir Sidorin continued north towards Voronezh, but there Semyon Budyonny's cavalrymen defeated them on 24 October. This allowed the Red Army to cross the Don River, threatening to split the Don and Volunteer Armies. Fierce fighting took place at the key rail junction of Kastornoye, which was taken on 15 November; Kursk was retaken two days later.^[56]

The high tide of the White movement against the Soviets had been reached in September 1919. By this time Denikin's forces were dangerously overextended. The White front had no depth or stability—it had become a series of patrols with occasional columns of slowly advancing troops without reserves. Lacking ammunition, artillery and fresh reinforcements, Denikin's army was decisively defeated in a series of battles in October and November 1919. The Red Army recaptured Kiev on 17 December and the defeated Cossacks fled back towards the Black Sea.

While the White armies were being routed in the center and the east, they had succeeded in driving Nestor Makhno's anarchist Black Army (formally known as the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine) out of part of southern Ukraine and the Crimea. Despite this setback, Moscow was loath to aid Makhno and the Black Army and refused to provide arms to anarchist forces in Ukraine. The main body of White forces, the Volunteers and the Don Army, pulled back towards the Don, to Rostov. The smaller body (Kiev and Odessa troops) withdrew to Odessa and the Crimea, which it had managed to protect from the Bolsheviks during the winter of 1919–1920.

Central Asia 1919

By February 1919 the British government had pulled its military forces out of Central Asia.^[57] Despite this success for the Red Army, the White Army's assaults in European Russia and other areas broke communication between Moscow and Tashkent. For a time Central Asia was completely cut off from Red Army forces in Siberia.^[58] Although this communication failure weakened the Red Army, the Bolsheviks continued their efforts to gain support for the Bolshevik Party in Central Asia by holding a second regional



White propaganda poster "For united Russia" representing the Bolsheviks as a fallen communist dragon and the White Cause as a crusading knight



American troops in Vladivostok during the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War (August 1918)

conference in March. During this conference a regional bureau of Muslim organizations of the Russian Bolshevik Party was formed. The Bolshevik Party continued to try to gain support among the native population by giving them the impression of better representation for the Central Asian population and throughout the end of the year were able to maintain harmony with the Central Asian people.^[59]

Communication difficulties with Red Army forces in Siberia and European Russia ceased to be a problem by mid-November 1919. Due to Red Army successes north of Central Asia, communication with Moscow was re-established and the Bolsheviks were able to claim victory over the White Army in Tirkistan.^[58]

South Russia, Ukraine and Kronstadt 1920–21

By the beginning of 1920 the main body of the Armed Forces of South Russia was rapidly retreating towards the Don, to Rostov. Denikin hoped to hold the crossings of the Don, then rest and reform his troops, but the White Army was not able to hold the Don area and at the end of February 1920, started a retreat across Kuban towards Novorossiysk. Slipshod evacuation of Novorossiysk proved to be a dark event for the White Army. About 40,000 men were evacuated by Russian and Allied ships from Novorossiysk to the Crimea, without horses or any heavy equipment, while about 20,000 men were left behind and either dispersed or captured by the Red Army. Following the disastrous Novorossiysk evacuation, Denikin stepped down and the military council elected Wrangel as the new Commander-in-Chief of the White Army. He was able to restore order to the dispirited troops and reshape an army that could fight as a regular force again. This remained an organized force in the Crimea throughout 1920.



Victims of the Russian famine of 1921

After Moscow's Bolshevik government signed a military and political alliance with Nestor Makhno and the Ukrainian anarchists, the Black Army attacked and defeated several regiments of Wrangel's troops in southern Ukraine, forcing him to retreat before he could capture that year's grain harvest.^[60] Stymied in his efforts to consolidate his hold, Wrangel then attacked north in an attempt to take advantage of recent Red Army defeats at the close of the Polish–Soviet War of 1919–1920. This offensive was eventually halted by the Red Army, and Wrangel's troops were forced to retreat to the Crimea in November 1920 pursued by both the Red and Black cavalry and infantry. Wrangel and the remains of his army were evacuated from the Crimea to Constantinople on 14 November 1920. Thus ended the struggle of Reds and Whites in Southern Russia.

After the defeat of Wrangel, the Red Army immediately repudiated its 1920 treaty of alliance with Nestor Makhno and attacked the anarchist Black Army; the campaign to liquidate Makhno and the Ukrainian anarchists began with an attempted assassination of Makhno by Cheka agents. Angered by continued repression by the Bolshevik Communist government and its liberal use of the Cheka to put down anarchist elements, a naval mutiny erupted at Kronstadt, followed by peasant revolts. Red Army attacks on the anarchist forces and their sympathizers increased in ferocity throughout 1921.



Red Army troops attack Kronstadt sailors in March 1921

Siberia and the Far East 1920–22

In Siberia, Adm. Kolchak's army had disintegrated. He himself gave up command after the loss of Omsk and designated Gen. Grigory Semyonov as the new leader of the White Army in Siberia. Not long after this Kolchak was arrested by the disaffected Czechoslovak Corps as he traveled towards Irkutsk without the protection of the army, and turned over to the socialist Political Centre in Irkutsk. Six days later this regime was replaced by a Bolshevik-dominated Military-Revolutionary Committee. On 6–7 February Kolchak and his prime minister Victor Pepelyaev were shot and their bodies thrown through the ice of the frozen Angara River just before the arrival of the White Army in the area.^[61]

Remnants of Kolchak's army reached Transbaikalia and joined Semyonov's troops, forming the Far Eastern army. With the support of the Japanese army it was able to hold Chita, but after withdrawal of Japanese soldiers from Transbaikalia, Semenov's position became untenable, and in November 1920 he was driven by the Red Army from Transbaikalia and took refuge in China. The Japanese, who had plans to annex the Amur Krai, finally pulled their troops out as Bolshevik forces gradually asserted control over the Russian Far East. On 25 October 1922 Vladivostok fell to the Red Army and the Provisional Priamur Government was extinguished.

Aftermath

Ensuing rebellion

In central Asia Red Army troops continued to face resistance into 1923, where basmachis (armed bands of Islamic guerrillas) had formed to fight the Bolshevik takeover. The Soviets engaged non-Russian peoples in Central Asia, like Magaza Masanchi, commander of the Dungan Cavalry Regiment, to fight against the Basmachis. The Communist Party did not completely dismantle this group until 1934.^[62]

Gen. Anatoly Pepelyayev continued armed resistance in the Ayano-Maysky District until June 1923. The regions of Kamchatka and Northern Sakhalin remained under Japanese occupation until their treaty with the Soviet Union in 1925, when their forces were finally withdrawn.

Casualties

The results of the civil war were momentous. Soviet demographer Boris Uralnis estimated the total number of men killed in action in the Civil War and Polish–Soviet War as 300,000 (125,000 in the Red Army, 175,500 White armies and Poles) and the total number of military personnel dead from disease (on both sides) as 450,000.^[63]

During the Red Terror, estimates of Cheka executions range from 12,733 to 1.7 million. William Henry Chamberlin suspected that there were about 50,000.^[64] Evan Mawdsley suspected that there were more than 12,733, and less than 200,000.^[65] Some sources claimed at least 250,000 summary executions of "enemies of the people" with estimates reaching above a million.^{[66][67][68][69]} More modest estimates put the numbers executed by the Bolsheviks between December 1917 and February 1922 at around 28,000 per year, with roughly 10,000 executions during the Red Terror.^[70]

Some 300,000–500,000 Cossacks were killed or deported during decossackization out of a population of around three million.^[71] An estimated 100,000 Jews were killed in Ukraine, mostly by the White Army.^[72] Punitive organs of the All Great Don Cossack Hosts sentenced 25,000 people to death between May 1918 and January 1919.^[73] Kolchak's government shot 25,000 people in Ekaterinburg province alone.^[74] "White terror" has killed about 300,000 people in total.^[75]

At the end of the Civil War the Russian SFSR was exhausted and near ruin. The droughts of 1920 and 1921, as well as the 1921 famine, worsened the disaster still further. Disease had reached pandemic proportions, with 3,000,000 dying of typhus alone in 1920. Millions more also died of widespread starvation, wholesale massacres by both sides and pogroms against Jews in Ukraine and southern Russia. By 1922 there were at least 7,000,000 street children in Russia as a result of nearly ten years of devastation from the Great War and the civil war^[76]



Victims of the *Red Terror* in Crimea, 1918



Street children during the Russian Civil War

Another one to two million people, known as the White émigrés, fled Russia, many with Gen. Wrangel—some through the Far East, others west into the newly independent Baltic countries. These émigrés included a large percentage of the educated and skilled population of Russia.

The Russian economy was devastated by the war, with factories and bridges destroyed, cattle and raw materials pillaged, mines flooded and machines damaged. The industrial production value descended to one-seventh of the value of 1913 and agriculture to one-third. According to *Pravda*, "The workers of the towns and some of the villages choke in the throes of hunger. The railways barely crawl. The houses are crumbling. The towns are full of refuse. Epidemics spread and death strikes—industry is ruined." It is estimated that the total output of mines and factories in 1921 had fallen to 20% of the pre-World War level, and many crucial items experienced an even more drastic decline. For example, cotton production fell to 5%, and iron to 2%, of pre-war levels.



Refugees on flatcars

War Communism saved the Soviet government during the Civil War, but much of the Russian economy had ground to a standstill. The peasants responded to requisitions by refusing to till the land. By 1921 cultivated land had shrunk to 62% of the pre-war area, and the harvest yield was only about 37% of normal. The number of horses declined from 35 million in 1916 to 24 million in 1920 and cattle from 58 to 37 million. The exchange rate with the US dollar declined from two rubles in 1914 to 1,200 in 1920.

With the end of the war the Communist Party no longer faced an acute military threat to its existence and power. However, the perceived threat of another intervention, combined with the failure of socialist revolutions in other countries—most notably the German Revolution—contributed to the continued militarization of Soviet society. Although Russia experienced extremely rapid^[77] economic growth in the 1930s, the combined effect of World War I and the Civil War left a lasting scar on Russian society and had permanent effects on the development of the Soviet Union.

British historian Orlando Figes has contended that the root of the Whites' defeat was their inability to dispel the popular image that they were dually associated with Tsarist Russia and supportive of a Tsarist restoration.^[78]

Brief Timeline

- 25 October 1917—Alexander Kerensky and his supporters flee Petrograd.
- 5 January 1918—The Red Guard breaks up a meeting of the Constituent Assembly on Lenin's orders.
- 28 January 1918—Trotsky sets up the Red army.
- March 1918—Bolsheviks move the Russian capital to Moscow from Petrograd for protection and better communications, as it is in the center of their territory.
- 14 October 1919—Gen. Denikin's army reaches Orel 300 km from Moscow.
- 22 October 1919—White forces reach the outskirts of Petrograd. Trotsky organizes a counterattack.
- Early November 1919—Western allies pull the plug on support for the Whites. Troops begin to desert.
- 7 February 1920—Kolchak is executed by the Bolsheviks after being handed over by the Czech Legion.
- April 1920—Poles are driven back into Poland by the Bolsheviks
- 19 March 1921—Kronstadt uprising crushed
- 25 October 1922—Provisional Priamurye Government dissolved.
- 16 June 1923—Yakut revolt put down, ending the last White resistance in Russia.
- 1934—Basmachi Revolt finally put down.



1920 Nikolayevsk incident Yakov Triapitsyn massacred most of the inhabitants of the town of Nikolayevsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East.

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- *Byzantium Endures*(1981) by Michael Moorcock
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See also

- Revolutionary Mass Festivals
- Timeline of the Russian Civil War

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