

From the Introduction.

The best book on the Russian Civil War, William Henry Chamberlin's *The Russian Revolution*, was published in 1935. That this relatively short study has remained unsurpassed for over three decades, while Russian studies were expanding enormously, shows that the Civil War has received little attention from historians outside the borders of the Soviet Union.

The subject is immensely important. The Soviet Union was created as much by the Civil War as by the revolutions of 1917; indeed, the revolutions and the struggle that followed are inseparable. At the end of 1917, few people knew who the Bolsheviks were and what they wanted, and even Lenin and his followers could not have had very clear ideas about the nature of their future system; it was only in the long and merciless war that the foundations of the Soviet regime were laid. Perhaps Russian Communism would have evolved differently had the bitter necessities of the Civil War not forced the regime to develop some features that had nothing to do with Marxist ideology.

Aside from its historical significance, the Civil War is also a subject with great intrinsic interest. The country fell apart and almost every village had its own Civil War, sometimes focused on issues that were unrelated to the ideology of either Whites or Reds. A large variety of socialist and conservative ideologies, mutually exclusive nationalistic claims of people living in the territory of the Russian empire, foreign intervention—all of these had a role in deciding the final outcome. In this period of confusion political institutions collapsed, the values of a civilized society almost disappeared, and in some respects the country reverted to a state of fragmentation that had existed several centuries before. Modern European history provides no better example of anarchy and its effects on social institutions and human beings.

The complexity of the Civil War, which makes it a fascinating subject, also makes it a dim cult one for historical study. In all likelihood this difficulty is the primary cause for its neglect by Western historians. A comprehensive survey of the Civil War can hardly be undertaken until a number of detailed studies of limited areas and periods have been made. Only in such works can adequate attention be given to all or most of the important forces operating in any one area. Extrapolating from one part of Russia to the entire enormous country is perhaps the best way to become aware of the many different issues that were at stake, and of the difficulty of reducing the problems of the Civil War to simple formulae.

South Russia is a particularly good subject for a case study, because it was a microcosm in which one can see most of the ills of Russia, and because of the intrinsic importance of the events that took place there. It was there that the Civil War began and ended, there that the Whites put their most substantial and persistent armies into the field. In this area foreign intervention assumed greater importance than elsewhere; and perhaps nowhere else did the anti-Bolshevik movement suffer more from dissension and the competing claims of national minorities.

The outcome of the Civil War in South Russia, as in other sections, was decided by the struggle of a combination of local and national forces. The aim of the present study is to analyze these forces and their relationships to each other.

The chief actors of the drama were the ex-Imperial officers who came to the Don and the Kuban to take arms against Lenin's regime. For them the choice of a theater of operations was largely accidental; their thoughts were centered on Moscow and Petrograd. (For example, after a stay of almost two years they continued to observe Petrograd, as opposed to local, time). Who these officers were, how they came to decide to fight the Soviet regime, and how they envisaged Russia's future are among the crucial questions of the Civil War.

The officers formed the general staff of the anti-Bolshevik movement, in both its concrete and its figurative senses. They played a role far out of proportion to their numbers; they provided military and political leadership, and they were a nucleus around which other anti-Soviet groups could unite. However, on their own they would have been impotent. No matter how heroic and determined these few thousand men were, the Bolsheviks would have crushed them without difficulty. From the summer of 1918 on, the overwhelming majority of the White army was made

up of Cossacks. The Cossacks cared little about the rest of Russia; for them the Civil War was a struggle against the non-Cossack peasants, the so-called *inogorodnye*, who looked covetously at Cossack lands. Only a partial coincidence of interests existed between officers and Cossacks, and the two groups never understood each other. Consideration of the differences in views within the White camp, and of local circumstances, is essential to an understanding of the Civil War.

The role of the Allies is discussed only to the extent that is absolutely necessary for understanding the Volunteer Army's development. Foreign intervention is the sole aspect of the Civil War that has been adequately treated by historians—Russians and foreigners alike. The motivation of Soviet historians in emphasizing this subject is clear: they have wanted to present the history of the Bolsheviks as a victory not only over their domestic opponents but also over "world imperialism." By describing at different times the Germans, the French, the English, or the Americans as the real power behind the White movement, they have also wanted to serve immediate political goals, which of course, has nothing to do with the search for historical truth. The interest of Western historians in the participation of their countrymen in the Civil War of another nation is easily understandable. However, by stressing only one aspect of a very complex situation, Western historians have unwittingly furthered the aim of Soviet historiography—the casual reader might receive the impression that the war was fought between Russians and non-Russians. This picture, of course, is false: the Reds might have defeated their enemies sooner had they not had outside help, but the Allied contribution to the White Cause was far from being of critical importance.

The delineation of the topic has been a difficult task. Obviously, events in the South took place in a larger national and even international context. The Volunteer Army came to have an increasingly large influence on the Civil War in the Ukraine and in the Crimea, for example, and to appreciate that influence some understanding of the complex events in those areas is necessary. Also, to evaluate the performance of the Whites one must have some knowledge of the strategy and quality of the Red armies.

This study is devoted to the first year of the Civil War, the year of developing programs, of envisaging alternatives, of improvisations and enormous confusion. The end of the war in Europe altered the character of the struggle in Russia. Allied aid began to arrive at Black Sea ports and influenced the course of operations. But more important, the outlook of the participants changed. Not only Europeans but also White Russians had believed the Bolsheviks to be merely German agents, and they consequently regarded the fighting in Russia as an extension of the war in Europe. Now the Volunteer Army had to reconsider its *raison d'être*. The German defeat was soon followed by the withdrawal of occupation forces from a large part of the country, which then came to be contested by Whites and Reds. The scale of the war was ever widening: the size of the armies grew and the theaters of operations were enlarged, but the most important qualitative change had occurred by the end of 1918.