

THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War consisted of 3 wars that were going on simultaneously:

1. A war between Red Russians and White Russians -- i.e., between the Bols and their various political opponents.
2. A war between the Reds and the Foreign Interventionists.
3. A war between the Reds and the Non-Russian Nationalities.

I will deal with them one at a time.

1st -- the war between the Red Russians and the White Russians.

The Term "White Russians" -- as distinct from "Belorussians".

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~~THE CIVIL WAR~~

I. WHY WAS THERE A CIVIL WAR??

1. Bols Seized Power in only a few places in Nov. 1917 --

- Petrograd -- the capture of Petrograd did not mean the ~~capture~~ establishment of Bol rule ~~in~~ in the whole country.

It took the Bols years to establish their rule throughout the whole country.

2. Representatives of the Prov. Govt. in some <sup>areas</sup> ~~places~~ refused to recognize the Soviet Govt.

3. Other Govts Were Formed -- all over Russia, by political groups of every variety.

4. Bolsheviks Were a Minority --

The Bols attempted to establish their hegemony over Russia despite the fact that the majority of the population were not pro-Bolshevik.

-- Elections to Constituent Assembly -- had shown this.

5. Bols Endeavored to Establish Their Rule by Force -- rather than through democratic elections.

6. This Made a Civil War Inevitable --

- Since many people, perhaps the majority, did not want Bol rule, ~~they~~ they resisted this undemocratic usurpation of power.

- Force against force.

WHY DID THE BOLSHEVIKS WIN THE CIVIL WAR ??

If the Bols were a minority, and if they were opposed by so many elements of the population, why did they win the Civil War?

*Vietnam - similarities*

I. REDS WERE UNITED.

- Lenin's principles of Party organization -- Centralized, Disciplined
- "An organized minority can defeat an unorganized majority."

II. WHITES WERE DIVIDED.

1. Diversity -- Included every hue of the political rainbow from reactionary monarchists to wild-eyed anarchists.
2. Individual Parties were divided --
  - SR's -- who had the support of the majority of the population, could not cooperate even among themselves.
  - Some supported the Bols, at least for a while. (Left SR's)
3. Coalition Governments Formed by the Whites --
  - Consisting of conservatives, liberals, socialists.
  - Squabbled. Couldn't agree.
  - One faction, usually the conservatives, ~~was kicked out~~ kicked out the others.

III. <sup>4</sup> ~~MOST~~ MOST OF THE WHITE GOVTS, AND WHITE ARMIES, <sup>WERE</sup> ~~WERE~~ DOMINATED BY CONSERVATIVES.

1. Because the ~~white~~ Officer Corps was generally conservative.
  - Since a war had to be fought, it was natural that officers came to form the essential core of the White movement.
  - Leaders like Gen. Kornilov, Gen. Denikin, Yudenich, Wrangel, Admiral Kolchak.

5. Weakness of the Moderates --

- a. Liberals (Kadets) -- tended to become more conservative, worked with the monarchists.
- b. SR's -- divided among themselves.
- c. Mensheviks -- also divided. Some joined the Bolsheviks.

6. Polarization -- During a crisis, such as a war, political sentiment tends to become polarized between the two extremes of left and right.

-- Socialists -- of any variety tended to be looked upon as suspect, as possible allies of the Bols.

-- Thus those who opposed the Reds tended to move further to the right

~~Some people were frightened by the extreme radicalism of those by the bol. party.~~

-- Swing to the Right -- Many people were shocked by the excesses of the Bolsheviks and became more conservative.

And a: -- Swing to the Left, -- on the other extreme. The Bols themselves became more ~~more~~ extreme, more ruthless, less tolerant of other socialists.

From the point of view of the Soviet regime, unless you were a Bolshevik, you were suspect.

# Another reason for Bolshevik victory:

## IV. THE PEASANTS.

- Ultimately, the outcome of the Civil War had to depend upon the peasants, because they constituted close to 90% of the population, and they necessarily had to supply most of the troops for both sides.

### 1. Were the Peasants Pro-Bolshevik?

- Originally, No. Traditionally they voted SR.

But - Decree on Land -- gave the peasants what they wanted, won many of them, perhaps most of them, either over to the Bol camp, or at least won their neutrality.

After 1917 most  
- ~~the~~ Peasants became Anti-Bolshevik. Why?

- Forced Requisitions.

### 2. Peasants Sometimes Formed their Own Armies -- "The Greens"

Makhno -- in the Ukraine. Fought both Reds and Whites.

Anarchistic.

But were ineffective. *only on a local scale.*

### 3. Whites Antagonized the Peasants even more than the Bols --

-- Landlords -- Arrived with the White Armies, took back their land.

### 4. Peasants Looked upon the Reds as the Lesser of 2 Evils --

-- If it were a choice between the Reds, who had given them the land, and the Whites, who took away the land, they ~~naturally~~ naturally preferred the Reds.

Peasants -- probably the ~~most~~ decisive factor in determining the outcome of the Civil War.

Another reason:

VI. LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP OF THE BOLSHEVIKS - better.

1. Lenin, Trotsky especially, on the Bolshevik side.

2. Trotsky as Commissar of War.

3. Tsarist Generals -- were drafted into service. Told that if they defected, their wives and children would be killed. Many served well.

LEADERSHIP OF THE WHITES.

1. Generals or Admirals -- Denikin, Kolchak, ~~Wrangel~~ Wrangel.

- Were not rabid reactionaries by any means.

- Denikin & Kolchak -- were not even members of the nobility.

*Denikin - The son of a serf.*  
- Wrangel -- a noble, but an enlightened one. A reformer.

2. Did Not understand Politics --

- Did not understand the ~~mass~~ minds of the masses.

- Narrow, old-fashioned views.

- Influenced too much by the conservatives who flocked around them.

- As is typical of military men, they looked upon the Civil War as a military enterprise, ~~and~~ and failed to comprehend fully the political and social aspects of the conflict.

- Did not realize that they had to out-bid the ~~Whites~~ the Bols in vying for popular support.

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VIII. REASONS FOR RED VICTORY IN CIVIL WAR.

(Chamberlin)

Having seized power in Nov, how was it possible for this small band of Bolsheviks, representing only a minority of the population, to retain control of the govt in spite of the opposition that faced them and the problems which they had to solve???

1. Reds united -- "Their salvation lay in the fact that, while they operated as a strongly disciplined, united force, their opponents were hopelessly divided."  
Monarchists vs. SRs. Peasants vs. Landlords.  
Great Russians vs. minorities.

9. 2. Strategic location -- Bols had advantage of internal lines, central geographic position. Whites widely separated. Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich never joined forces, did not coordinate their attacks. Attacked at different times.  
Poles attacked after most whites defeated.

10. 3. Supplies -- Chamberlin says that Reds had larger supplies of munitions and other war materials. Inherited govt stocks.

4. Weakness of Moderates -- A popular democratic movement, representing the desires of the great majority of the population, who were neither Bol nor Monarchist, failed to materialize.  
Cadets became more conservative, reactionary, worked w. monarchists.  
SR's could not agree among themselves, did not have a clear program or a disciplined party.

11. 5. Opposition to old regime -- Hatred of tsarist regime caused violent opposition to anything which seemed to promise a restoration of the old days.  
People willing to try anything new for a change.  
Bols made use of collected class hatreds.

12. 6. Steadfastness of Bols -- Bols showed the greatest strength and perseverance. "The Whites...displayed the decadence and weakness of a group on which history has already passed its sentence of condemnation...." The Reds "displayed in the main, more steadfastness, more devotion to their cause, more self-discipline, than the officers and civil officials of aristocratic or middle-class origin who came to the fore in the White govts."

Fighting for a new Utopia. Idealistic appeal.

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Historians' hold of foreigners.  
SRs & Whites (Bols big provinces)