

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 ^{areas} ~~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. ⁴ ~~MOST OF THE WHITE GOVTS, AND WHITE ARMIES,~~ ^{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 ~~usually~~ 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 Bolshevnik 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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