

## Krasnaya Pobeda

### The Russian Revolutions & Civil War

1917-1922

#### Outline

#### I. Introduction:

- a. Things to think about as we study.
- b. Course structure and organization
- c. Opening remarks

#### II. A Short Primer on 300 years of Russian History

- a. In 1613, 16-year-old Mikhail Romanov, Boyer and son of a prominent churchman was named Tsar. This ended the "Time of Troubles" (1605-1613)
- b. Early Tsars were a weak and corrupt lot. Legal Code of 1649 codified serfdom. Russia however did expand rapidly (50 mi<sup>2</sup> /day for 300 years).
- c. Peter the Great (1682-1725)
  - i. Created a European style monarchy.
  - ii. Took control of the church (1700)
  - iii. Built St. Petersburg in 1703 (Russian capital and window on Europe)
  - iv. The Great Northern War (1700-1721) made Russia the dominant power in the Baltic region and a new major European power.
  - v. Much of what became Tsarist Russia can be traced to his reign.
- d. Catherine the Great (1762-1796; Russia's "Golden Age")
  - i. Reestablished Russia as a major power
  - ii. Rapid expansion in all directions.
  - iii. Under Catherine, Russia operated way beyond its means
    - a) It had a large effective army, large bureaucracy, and a splendid court (rivaling London or Paris).
    - b) But it was "a poor, backward, overwhelmingly agricultural, and illiterate country."
- e. Napoleonic War (1804-1812)
  - i. Tsar Alexander I changed sides 4 times.
    - a) Neutral
    - b) War of the 3d Coalition (1805)
    - c) Austerlitz and Treaty of Tilsit (1807)
    - d) Poland & the Continental system (1810)
    - e) Invasion, Borodino, Battle of the Nations, and the conquest of Paris (1812-1813)
    - f) The "Savior of Europe"

- f. Nicholas I (1825-1855)
  - i. The liberal Decembrist Revolt (December 1825)
  - ii. After crushing the revolt, Nicholas adopted the “**Triad of Official Nationality**”:
    - a) Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality
    - b) In this name, put down numerous revolts and fought several small wars.
  - iii. Allowed the army to become a show vice go force which became apparent in the Crimean War (1853-1856)
- g. The rise of populism (1860s & 70s)
  - i. Narodniks (middle class proto socialists calling for revolt)
  - ii. 1874 repression led to Narodnaya Volya (Terrorist)
  - iii. Helped prepare the way for revolutions of 1905 and 1917
- h. Alexander II (The Great Reformer) (1855-1881)
  - i. Emancipated serfs, reformed: judicial system, punishments, education, zemstvos, conscription, and ended many privileges for nobility.
  - ii. Continued expansion, sold Alaska, and joined the League of the Three Emperors.
  - iii. Increased Russification to prevent future rebellions.
  - iv. Assassinated in 1881 by the Narodnaya Volya thereby halting real reform for the rest of the Romanov rule.

### III. The March Towards Revolution (1881-1917)

- a. Marxism
  - i. Marx heavily influenced by George Hegel
    - a) Hegel was a dialectic idealist (the importance of ideas) who approached things from a three-part argument: thesis, antithesis, synthesis.
    - b) Marx however was a dialectic materialist (the importance of material conditions) using Hegel’s three-part argument.
    - c) Marx’s inevitable progression: slavery, serfdom, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, communism.
    - d) This march of history was driven by class struggle.
  - ii. By the time of Marx, capitalism has taken sway.
    - a) Two groups: proletariat (workers) and the bourgeoisie (elite owners of the means of production; profit takers)
    - b) Next step, the revolt (either violent or peaceful) of the proletariat to create a socialist society, a government controlled by the workers for the benefit of all.

- c) Then society will evolve into pure communism, a classless stateless society where “Each will work to his capacity and each will receive to his need”
    - d) **Key point:** This revolt can only occur in a fully industrialized country like Germany or Britain. This becomes a major sticking point for Russian Marxists. (Russia was an agrarian state)
    - e) This inconsistency would eventually give rise to Marxist-Leninism, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and democratic centralism (i.e. one-party rule)
  - iii. Opinion: Marx ignores basic human nature.
- b. Political opposition to Tsarism starts to become important (even though political parties are illegal)
  - i. This opposition ran the gamut from conservative monarchism all the way to pure anarchism.
- c. Alexander III (1881-1894)
  - i. Complete reactionary (as to be expected)
  - ii. Konstantin Pobedonostsev was tutor to Alexander III and Nicholas II. Taught them:
    - iii. to fear freedom of speech and press and to hate democracy, constitutions, and the parliamentary system.
    - iv. Also led major repression and Russification programs.
- d. Nicholas II (1894-1917)
  - i. Another complete reactionary
  - ii. Not very bright and completely unprepared to be Tsar.
  - iii. A non-strategic thinking micro-manager.
  - iv. Alexandra Feodorovna (1894-1917)
  - v. “Nicholas ruled as an Autocrat and was ruled in turn by his strong-willed if weak-witted wife.”
  - vi. Her adamant refusal to allow Nicholas to give up any authority whatsoever plus her complete faith in Rasputin hurt the dynasty severely.
- e. The Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905
  - i. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) although started by Japan, was caused by Tsar Nicholas.
    - a) Nichols refused early requests for negotiations
    - b) 17 major battles: 14 Japanese victories and 3 draws
    - c) Ended by The Treaty of Portsmouth in Sept 1905
    - d) Caused a serious decline in respect for Russia worldwide and for the Tsarist government throughout Russia.
    - e) Created major morale issues in the armed services

- f. Revolution of 1905
  - i. Five primary causes
    - a) Newly emancipated peasants could not earn a living wage and were not allowed to sell their land
    - b) Russification
    - c) Worker class resentment of government support for repressive industrial practices
    - d) Rapid spread of radical ideas especially in universities.
    - e) Loss of standing as a result of the Russo-Japanese War
  - ii. December 1904: Major strikes in St. Petersburg
  - iii. January 1905: Bloody Sunday
    - a) Indignation results in massive strikes throughout Russia (~50% of all Russian workers on strike)
    - b) Naval strikes in June
    - c) By October, the country is essentially shut down
    - d) The St. Petersburg Soviet is formed demanding reforms and essentially taking control of the city.
  - iv. The October Manifesto: Nicholas agreed to:
    - a) Allow basic civil rights
    - b) Legalized political parties
    - c) Granted universal suffrage
    - d) Established the Duma.....
    - e) ...but then he immediately started working to weaken the manifesto (which he and his wife saw as a threat to his autocracy).
  - v. The end of the revolution
    - a) The army remained loyal and the war was over
    - b) The manifesto did not satisfy the radicals and the army was used to put down remaining unrest (≈ 14,000 people killed)
    - c) This led to a major increase in terrorism (7293 people killed between 1906 and 1909)
    - d) The Tsar prorogued the Duma after 73 days.
  - vi. Lenin called this “The Dress Rehearsal”
- g. The First World War (1914-1917)
  - i. Germany and Russia went to war because:
    - a) The Russian military recovery program
    - b) Russian desire for access to the Mediterranean
    - c) Russian desire to regain lost prestige
    - d) German fear of a two-front war
    - e) Lebensraum and Pan-Germanism

- f) Pan-Slavism and the “blank check”
- ii. There was initially significant enthusiasm in Russia for the war, but this soon waned:
  - a) Defeat at Tannenburg
  - b) 500,000 deaths by Nov 1914 (≈4000 deaths per day so far)
  - c) Gorlice-Tarnow and the “Great Retreat”
  - d) The Tsar’s decision to take direct control of the army.
- iii. Even with the temporary success of the Brusilov Offensive, by fall 1916, the Russian army and people were sick of the war.
  - a) Consistent military setbacks
  - b) 5M casualties by 1917
  - c) Inflation
  - d) Food shortages
  - e) Crime
  - f) Strikes
- iv. More than any other single thing, this fact will drive the events of 1917.
- v. The Duma wanted a “Government of National Confidence”. The Tsar refused.

#### IV. The February Revolution (1917)

- a. Some key points to keep in mind:
  - i. 82% of Russians are rural peasants (this also includes soldiers)
  - ii. Only 10% are workers, and the rest are nobles, large capitalists, and a miniscule middle class. This group is almost totally located in Moscow and St. Petersburg.
  - iii. This revolution broke out with no apparent leadership or planning. It simply happened when the people of Petrograd and the army had decided they had enough.
  - iv. (Opinion) If I were asked for a single causal statement of the Russian Revolution, I would reply “ The Russian people got sick and tired of being sick and tired.”
- b. Russian Politics by 1917
  - i. **Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets):** Founded by liberals associated with zemstvos in 1905. Wished to go beyond the October Manifesto to a full constitutional monarchy (à la Great Britain).
  - ii. **Union of October 17 (Octobrists):** Moderate constitutionalist who favored full support for the October Manifesto, an executive that answered only to the Tsar, and a Duma with real legislative power. Founded by more right-wing liberals also in 1905.

- iii. **Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs)**: Founded in 1902 as a left-wing party that supported violent revolution to achieve democratic socialism and strongly supported peasant goals (agrarian socialism). The SR faction called the SR Combat Organization carried out many assassinations of government officials. Supported the war effort (defensists)
- iv. **Trudoviks (Laboristes)**: Broke away from the SRs in 1906, they were similar to but to the left of the Kadets with more emphasis on supporting labor and peasant goals. Opposed violent revolution.
- v. **Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP)** (Also called the SDs) The precursor of the Russian Communist Party, it was founded in 1898 as a socialist party supporting revolution. Believed that socialism could only evolve after a period of bourgeois society with an urban (workers) proletariat. On this issue it split in 1903;
  - a) Soft SDs (**Mensheviks**): accepted the idea of intermediate bourgeois society and a non-violent revolution to achieve socialism. Supported the war effort.
  - b) Hard SDs (**Bolsheviks**): believed in violent revolution and the possibility of a “jump” over bourgeois society directly to a socialist society albeit one controlled by a dedicated revolutionary party cadre until it was ready for the further Marxian transition. Lenin’s party. Absolutely against the war from the start.
  - c) KEY POINT! All SDs believed that the example of revolution in Russia would lead to Marx’s world-wide revolution.
- vi. All these parties had internal division caused by conflicting attitudes towards the war:
  - a) **Defensists**: A confusing term but which was given to groups that supported Russia continued war effort.
  - b) **Internationalists**: Opposed continued support for the war effort.
- c. Causes of the February Revolution
  - i. Long-term: Failure to modernize the political system, spread of western ideas, institutionalized poor treatment of peasants and workers.
  - ii. Short-term:
    - a) World War One: Casualties, defeats, loss of bourgeois officers, rise of war weariness.
    - b) Tsar: Decision to take personal control of the army, Tsar’s family situation, his absolute refusal to give up the slightest bit of authority.
    - c) Other: famine, rampant inflation.
- d. Sequence (The focus was on Petrograd and to a lesser degree Moscow)
  - i. Bread rationing on 2/15
  - ii. Strike and protest break out at Putilov factory on 2/18

- iii. 2/23: International Women's Day, protesting increases and spreads, bread riots break out and become the focus of the protests.
- iv. By 2/25 city was shut down by 250,000 strikers. Tsar orders army to end the protest with "rifle fire" and prorogues the Duma. Army mutinies start breaking out. Public order collapses.
- v. On 2/27 the cabinet resigned and fled. The Petrograd Soviet (Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) was formed.
- vi. Order #1 issued on 3/1.
- vii. The Tsar attempted to return to Petrograd but was stopped and ended up meeting army and Duma leaders on 3/1. At their insistence he abdicated on 3/2.
- viii. On 3/3, a Provisional Government was announced.
- ix. This would usher in the period known as "Democratic Russia" which would last for 8 months.

#### **V. Democratic Russia (March – October 1917)**

- a. "Dual Power": two essentially competing power centers are now in place.
  - i. The Provisional government (PG)
    - a) Made up of liberal bourgeoisie elements from the Duma
    - b) Was recognized as the official government by all external and internal parties.
    - c) However, it felt that its only job was to hold things together until a "Constituent Assembly" could be empowered to develop a formal constitution.
    - d) While the PG probably had formal power, they refused to accept it or use it until there was a formal constitution.
    - e) Prince Lvov (a Kadet) was made the first head of state. A new cabinet was formed.
  - ii. The Petrograd Soviet
    - a) Made up of delegates elected by the workers and soldiers.
    - b) Modeled on the soviets created during the Revolution in 1905
    - c) Had no formal power but had real power as the workers & soldiers were willing to accept it as representing their interests.
      - 1. On 3/1, Order Number 1 was issued
      - 2. The Soviet decides to support decisions by the PG (if they were consistent with Soviet policy)
    - d) Many soviets were established throughout the country.

1. In June, an All-Russian Congress of Soviets was held which resulted in the creation of Central Executive Committee (ExCom) which really became the operative body of the soviets.
  - e) Although elected by soldiers and workers, most delegates were party functionaries of democratic and liberal leanings. They refused to take power but saw their job as pushing a liberal agenda onto the PG. They were nearly all SRs and Mensheviks with no Bolsheviks at all.
- iii. What did the PG with Soviet support get done?
  - a) Complete civil liberties; speech, press, assembly, strike
  - b) Freed all political prisoners
    1. Abolished the Okhrana and the police
    2. Abolished the death penalty
  - c) Ended restrictions on ethnicity and religion
  - d) Established the 8-hour day
  - e) Established "4-tailed" suffrage: universal (including women), direct, equal, and secret.
  - f) "The freest country in Europe" (This is why it was called Democratic Russia)
- iv. What didn't they do? (Waiting for the CA)
  - a) Did not end the war
  - b) Did not validate land seizures
  - c) Did not fix the economy
  - d) These failures would destroy the PG
- b. The life of Democratic Russia**
  - i. Alexander Kerensky, an SR member of the Soviet agreed to serve in the PG cabinet.
  - ii. 4/3, Lenin returns to Russia; The April Theses
    - a) "All power to the Soviets"
    - b) No Bolshevik cooperation with the PG
    - c) Become the Communist Party
      1. Abolition of the police, army, and bureaucracy
      2. Single unified bank
      3. Revolutionary defeatism (end the war)
      4. Jump directly to the "dictatorship of the proletariat"
      5. All land nationalized; Collective farming
      6. Establish a "Revolutionary International" (Comintern)
  - iii. 4/20, April Days: Anti-war riots in Petrograd and Moscow, the PG collapses. The Bolsheviks make gains in power and influence.



- iv. 5/5, First Coalition Government is formed, Kerensky is made Minister of War
- v. 7/1 - 19, The Kerensky Offensive was launched to increase support for the government (only the Bolsheviks opposed this offensive)
  - a) After some initial gains, the Germans counter-attacked and it turned into a disaster.
  - b) Led quickly to the "July Days" unrest (3-7 July).
  - c) Government blamed the Bolsheviks, and this resulted in a temporary loss of their standing. Lenin fled to Finland.
  - d) The PG arrested many Bolsheviks including all key remaining leaders, Lvov resigned, and Kerensky became Prime Minister. He immediately replaced Brusilov with Kornilov. The PG moved to a more conservative path.
- vi. 8/27 – 9/30, The Kornilov Affair; an attempted coup d'état by the head of the Russian army, General Lavr Kornilov.
  - a) The historiography of this affair is complex but we know for sure that:
    1. Kornilov planned a coup to remove Kerensky and establish himself as a conservative military dictator,
    2. OR; Kerensky planned a fake coup to remove the unpopular general in order to gain favor with the public,
    3. OR; Kerensky & Kornilov plotted to overthrow the PG and create a democratic government but Kerensky became convinced that Kornilov was going to destroy all traces of democracy and Kerensky himself.
  - b) In any case a common objective was the destruction of the Bolsheviks. In this objective, the plot backfired.
  - c) Kornilov led an army towards Petrograd but was stopped by the Bolshevik control of the railway workers unions. Also, the Bolsheviks led a highly successful internal propaganda effort within Kornilov's army.
  - d) Kerensky in a panic, released all Bolshevik prisoners and armed them.**
  - e) By 9/30 Kornilov's army collapsed and he lost all support. The PG lost all credibility and the Bolsheviks gain immensely in stature and power.

## VI. The October Revolution (25 October 1917)

- a. Unlike the February Revolution, this one was planned and led by the Bolsheviks.

- b. During the summer months, unrest among workers, peasants and soldiers steadily increased. Over 1M workers went on strikes in Petrograd, Moscow, Donbas, Urals, Baku, and 44 different railways. The basic issues were inadequate food and wages.
- c. Peasant uprising over land distribution spread to 77% of the country.
- d. Underlying all this was a virulent anti-war movement led in large measure by soldiers' wives (and the army itself).
- e. The Bolsheviks led by Lenin were well placed to take advantage of all this:
  - i. They had steadily gained in political power especially in Petrograd and Moscow.
  - ii. They were heavily armed as a result of the Kornilov Affair
  - iii. The only serious political party to advocate an immediate end of the war.
  - iv. Well financed by the Germans (≈\$580 million)
- f. Sequence
  - i. 10/23, The Bolshevik Central Committee took three key steps:
    - a) Organized Red Guards under the direction of the "Revolutionary Military Committee (Trotsky) as their "army".
    - b) Passed a Lenin developed resolution (10-2) to stage an armed uprising.
    - c) Commenced detailed planning which they made little effort to keep secret.
  - ii. 10/24, Kerensky orders the army to take over all Bolshevik newspapers which they do. The Red Guards then take them back. By 3 pm clashes are occurring all over Petrograd for control of the city bridges and communications systems.
  - iii. 10/25, The Bolsheviks win control of the city
    - a) Kronstadt sends 5 warships, with marines and sailors all supporting the Bolsheviks
    - b) With this help, the Red Guards steadily take over all major government facilities and key communications installations.
    - c) Local army units join the Red Guards. The PG is now helpless.
    - d) The Winter Palace is captured at 2 am and the entire PG cabinet is arrested except Kerensky who had already fled.
  - iv. 10/25, The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets convenes with a substantial Bolshevik majority.
    - a) The SR's split with the Left SRs joining the Bolsheviks who now have a 75% majority.
    - b) The Mensheviks and Right SRs walk out.
    - c) An All-Russian Central Executive Committee is elected, and Lenin is made Chairman.

- d) The Congress votes all power to the Soviets, declares the PG ended.
- e) The Congress establishes a new Russian government called the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) with Lenin as Chairman. He is now officially head of state of the country now called Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR).
- f) On 10/27, the Sovnarkom passes a Peace Decree and a Land Decree and ends the Congress.
- v. The Bolsheviks are now firmly in control of Petrograd. Over the next three months, Bolshevik controlled Soviets will be voted into power (or imposed by Red Guards) in 52 regions of Russia. (the Sovdepiia)

## VII. **The End of Democracy**

- a. Lenin allows voting for the Constituent Assembly (11/12) believing that the Bolsheviks will have a majority. (Petrograd Myopia)
- b. Actual: SRs – 40%, Bolsheviks – 24% (essentially all from Petrograd & Moscow)
- c. The SRs now split with right SRs opposed to the Bolsheviks and the left SRs supporting them.
- d. It met on 1/5/18 at 4 pm and was sent home at 4:40 am after refusing to endorse Bolshevik proposals. The Sovdepiia then sent the Red Guard to lock the building and declare the CA dissolved. It was now the government of Russia and Lenin was the leader. There was “no mass reaction”.
- e. The “Hungry Spring” of 1918 gave the Bolsheviks an excuse for ever increasing one-party dictatorship.
- f. By late spring the only party supporting the Bolsheviks now were the left SRs. In July 1918, they attempted a coup by killing the German ambassador. This backfired badly and Lenin initiated mass arrests of the SRs. Russia was now a one-party government.
  - i. There were now 30 different declared governments in Russia, 29 of them anti-Bolshevik.
- g. War Communism is declared; its purpose was to immediately implement Communist economics and (or?) win the war.
  - i. Nationalization of all industries and the introduction of strict centralized management
  - ii. State control of foreign trade
  - iii. Strict discipline for workers, with strikes forbidden
  - iv. Obligatory labor duty by non-working classes
  - v. Prodravvyorstka – requisition of agricultural surplus (in excess of an absolute minimum) from peasants for centralized distribution among the remaining population
  - vi. Rationing of food and most commodities, with centralized distribution in urban centers

- vii. Private enterprise banned
- viii. Military-style control of the railways

**VIII. Creation of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Profiteering and Corruption (Cheka)**

- a. In December 1917, Sovnarkom set up the Cheka to ensure the security of revolutionary order, and to fight against counterrevolutionary activity in Petrograd.
- b. In February 1918, all soviets were ordered to create their own branches. There were 75 by August 1918.
- c. In terms of the civil war, the Cheka provided two key functions:
  - i. Provide “special” troops (blocking companies, punishment battalions, hunting deserters, etc.)
  - ii. In charge of the Red Terror.

**IX. Red Terror and White Terror**

- a. The difference between terror and terrorism.
- b. Terror was used by both sides throughout the war to ensure the local support.
- c. The Red Terror:
  - i. Was really initiated on August 30, 1918 following the simultaneous but unrelated attacks on the Head of the Petrograd Cheka and on Lenin.
  - ii. Communists considered terror essential because of their lack of support in the countryside.
  - iii. The terror was formalized by Lenin and assigned to the Cheka. Although torture, rape, and displacement were common, killing (often with extreme brutality) was the norm. Total killings were probably around 200,000 for the entire war.
- d. The White Terror:
  - i. Although White terror was not as formalized as Red, Generals Denikin and Kornilov certainly included the use of terror in their orders.
  - ii. The basic goals were to minimize desertion and insure local support.
  - iii. Soviet historians have tended to greatly overstate the magnitude of White terror; the best estimate is probably about 100,000 deaths. Torture was also quite common.

**X. Creation of the Red Army**

- a. By the time of the October revolution, the Russian army has completely disintegrated.
- b. The only military force available to the new government were the Red Guards plus a military component of the newly formed Cheka

- c. In January 1918, following some initial reverses inflicted by nascent counter-revolutionary forces, the Sovnarkom reorganized the Red Guards into the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army although it was made up of nearly all workers.
- d. Trotsky was named People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs.
- e. Trotsky assigned political commissars to each unit to insure loyalty.
- f. By June 1918, with civil war becoming inevitable, it was clear that more than workers were needed and Trotsky instituted peasant conscription in addition to starting to bring in ex-Tsarist officers (both often by force and by extortion)
- g. By late summer, 75% of all Red Army officers were ex-Tsarist. By the end of the war they made up 83% of all generals.

**XI. Treatment of the Jewish population**

- a. Tsarist Russia was severely anti-Semitic
- b. The Bolsheviks made some effort to assimilate their Jewish population
- c. The White forces were dogmatically anti-Semitic.

**XII. The end of World War One in the east.**

- a. On 12/15/17, soviet Russia signed on armistice with the Central Powers and began negotiations for a peace treaty.
- b. "No war – No peace"; Operation Faustschlag (the 11-day war).
- c. Lenin forces the Central Committee to sign the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (7 to 6).
  - i. **KEY POINT:** It was Lenin's belief that his actions were leading to a world-wide Marxist revolution that led to his signing Brest-Litovsk and disbanding the Russian Imperial Army.
- d. Signed on 3/3/18, it was incredibly onerous, but from Lenin's perspective, "it saved the world revolution". It turned out to be a disastrous mistake for the Germans.
- e. As a result of this treaty, the Romanov Empire was dismantled. Russia gave up all claims to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine. It also agreed to give up that territory it had acquired in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878). It had already given up its claims to Poland and Finland.
- f. The Finnish Civil War lasted from January to May of 1918
  - i. Involved a Bolshevik movement supported by the Russian troops against a White Nationalist movement led by Mannerheim and supported by German forces.
  - ii. In four major battles the White forces won a clear-cut victory and Lenin gave up claims to Finland.
  - iii. The German Surrender of Nov 1918 made Finland an independent democratic state.

**XIII. Background on the Russian Civil War**

- a. When did it start? (My opinion, October 1917)

- b. Who fought?
  - i. The Reds: Bolsheviks (Communists), Anarchists (The Black Army), radicalized Latvian troops, Kronstadt sailors, left SRs.
  - ii. The Whites: landowners, republicans, conservatives, middle-class citizens, reactionaries, pro-monarchists, liberals, the Orthodox Church, generals, admirals, non-Bolshevik socialists who still had grievances and democratic reformists, in other words anyone opposed to Bolshevik rule.
  - iii. Foreigners: Czechs, British, US, France, Japan, Greece, Estonia, Serbia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Finland.
  - iv. The Green Army: Peasant militias opposed to Reds, Whites, and Foreigners.
  - v. The Black Army: A force of anarchists made up largely of Ukrainian peasants and workers and under the leadership of Nestor Makhno. Their goal was to create a stateless communist society in the Ukraine and they had no loyalty to either side.
- c. The war was a throwback war in two senses:
  - i. It was a cavalry war of movement.
  - ii. Most casualties were caused by disease, not combat.
- d. There will be any number of battles and participants that we will not talk about because of unimportance to the conduct or outcome of the war. They would simply serve to increase confusion and waste time.

#### **XIV. Foreign Intervention in the Russian Civil War**

- a. **The Czechoslovak Legion** was organized in 1914 to fight the Central Powers. With the addition of POWs, it was up to 60,000 men by the October Revolution.
  - i. In 2/18, the legion was granted permission to leave the Ukraine and sail from Vladivostok (to fight on the Western Front.)
  - ii. In 3/18, at the Battle of Bakhmach, the Legion defeated a German force assigned to destroy it.
  - iii. Trying to curry favor with the Germans Trotsky broke his agreement and order the legion disarmed and arrested. This leads to active combat between the Legion and Bolshevik troops.
  - iv. In April, the Czechs revolt and take Chelyabinsk (see Tran-Siberian RR map).
    - a) Czechs move on the take the entire Trans-Siberian railroad between Samara and Irkutsk by June.
    - b) This allows White forces to establish themselves at Omsk and Perm. On 6/13/18 the Provisional Siberian Government is declared.
    - c) Results in the July murder of the Romanov family at Yekaterinburg

- d) The Legion showed the weakness of the Red Guard and provided an excuse for US and other Allied intervention.
    - v. The Legion will continue fighting the Bolshevik forces along the RR and up into Siberia until it retreats west to Vladivostok and ships back to a newly declared country of Czechoslovakia. (Summer 1920)
  - b. Allied Intervention:** In the summer of 1918, the western Allies elected to intervene in Russia
    - i. Allied concerns included loss of the eastern front and possible destruction of the Czech legion, western equipment falling into German hands, the nature of the Communist government, and traditional imperialism.
    - ii. By the winter of 1918/1919, the total number of foreign troops operating in Russia was  $\approx$  203,000.
    - iii. Most of these troops spent their time guarding and supplying equipment to White forces. Only the Czechs were involved in major combat operations.
    - iv. History's verdict on the intervention is overwhelmingly negative.
      - a) It greatly extended the civil war resulting in many thousands of additional lives lost.
      - b) The Soviet Union never forgave or forgot that the west tried to strangle its revolution in the crib.
      - c) It was a major factor in the development of the Cold War.

## **XV. The Civil War (Part One: 1918 – 1920)**

- a. Sovdepiya is surrounded on three sides by White forces:
  - i. East Russia, Siberia, and the Far East controlled by various independent White forces. (The East)
  - ii. Estonia, Latvia, and Petrograd areas under command of General Yudenich (The Northwest)
  - iii. Ukraine, South Russia, and the Caucasus under General Kornilov. (The South)
- b. Initial actions**
  - i. Kerensky-Krasnov Revolt: As soon as the October Revolution broke out, Kerensky fled to Pskov (south of Petrograd) and attempted to raise an army in revolt against the Bolsheviks. The Red Guards (led by Latvian Riflemen) defeated him at the Battle of Pulkovo Heights and he fled Russia.
  - ii. Several local Cossack armies also rose against the Bolsheviks, specifically those in the Don region and in Siberia.
  - iii. The Don Cossacks successfully captured Kiev in December 1917; but Red Guards under General Muravyov recaptured it in late January.
- c. The East (1918)**

- i. Most of the heavy fighting in this area for the Whites during the first six months of 1918 was done by the Czech Legion. In June, the White forces (made up mostly of SRs) formed the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (Komuch) which was the official (White) government in the south.
- ii. Following several defeats, Trotsky instituted severe measures against his own troops.
- iii. In September, at Ufa, new Provisional All-Russian Government was declared which included the Komuch, the White Serbian Army, the Cossack armies, and several other anti-Soviet groups.
- iv. A much-improved Red Army began a campaign in the area driving the Whites out of Ufa and back to Omsk. At this point, Admiral Alexander Kolchak established himself as Dictator of the PG.
- v. In December, Kolchak, now self-declared "Supreme Ruler of Russia" took Perm from the Red Army.
- vi. Meanwhile in the area of today's Turkmenistan, the Red Army drove out the White forces. The British attempted three small invasions to try and drive out the Red Army forces there and were repulsed each time. By June, the Red Army had a solid lock on the area.

**d. The South (1918)**

- i. Immediately after the October revolution, Generals Alekseyev and Kornilov began recruiting what they called "The Volunteer Army" in the Donbas.
- ii. In December 1917, the Volunteer Army under Kornilov with only 500 men captured Rostov.
- iii. By February, a strong force of Reds attacked Rostov and drove the Whites out. This started the "Ice March" in the Kuban area. Kornilov was killed in April while attacking Yekaterinodar. General Denikin took over the army and headed back towards Rostov.
  - a) Denikin has served with distinction in WW1 and was Chief of Staff to the CINC during the period of Dual Government.
- iv. Joining with the Don Cossacks, and armed by Germany, he captured Rostov and seized control of the Kuban area over the next several months.
- v. By April, the Germans had cleared Ukraine of Red forces.
- vi. By June, The Volunteer Army was up to 12,000 men. It would grow to 100,000 men by December. Alekseyev died of illness in September 1918 and Denikin now was absolute leader in the south.
- vii. In September, Trotsky formed the Southern Front to deal with Denikin's army but contained only 17,000 men.

**e. Going into 1919:**



- i. The Reds are in serious trouble. They are surrounded by three armies:
  - a) In the south, the Volunteer Army combined with the Don Army, the Crimean-Azov Army, the Forces of Northern Caucasus, and the Turkestan Army to form the Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR)
    - 1. It has 51,000 infantry and 34,000 cavalry. By June it will number 104,000 infantry and 56,000 cavalry.
  - b) In the northwest, the Northwest Army under the leadership of General Yudenich, a highly successful Russian general from the First World War with about 20,000 experienced soldiers was in Estonia threatening Petrograd.
    - 1. This threat resulted in the decision to move the Russian capital to Moscow.
  - c) In the east, Admiral Kolchak was now military dictator (“Supreme Ruler of Russia”) in Omsk in southern Siberia.
    - 1. Although without land warfare experience, he commanded four armies (145,000 men) under four (WW1) experienced generals spread out over three fronts; northern, center, and southern.
- ii. **1919 would be the critical and deciding year of the war!**

f. The East (1919 – Kolchak’s Offensive)

- i. Kolchak decides to stage a major offensive in two directions: Recognizing that Communist strength was essentially in Petrograd and Moscow he elects to attack in both directions simultaneously.
  - a) Success would end the Communist government.
  - b) Additionally, the Red supreme command has decided to attack the other two fronts which it deems as the more dangerous and has starved the east of men and supplies.
  - c) Kolchak enjoys a 5 to 1 manpower advantage in the north, and but a 2½ to 1 disadvantage in the south and rough equality in the center.
- ii. The attack starts in March and had advanced some 250 miles in eight weeks. Then the *rasputitsa* (spring rains) arrived and stopped all progress.
- iii. During this time the Reds sent significant reinforcements to the east.
- iv. At the end of April General Frunze who would prove arguably the best Red general launched a major attack in the south that rapidly forced the White forces back some 80 miles.
- v. In June Red forces under the other superb Red general, Tukhachevsky broke through White lines in the north.

- vi. The resultant central bulge was then crushed by Red forces under General Gai. By May 29, red forces had totally defeated the Whites, and Kolchak ordered a general retreat.
  - a) This disastrous retreat is known as the Great Siberian Ice March.
  - b) It ended in Chita in March 1920 with the remains of the White army protected by Japanese forces.
  - c) Kolchak tried to escape along the Trans-Siberian RR but was caught by the Czech legion, turned over to local SR officials and executed.
- vii. This was a major turning point in the war. Why was Kolchak defeated?
  - a) Poor strategy. Had he simply stayed put the Communists would have had to come after him as a rival government and on defense, he might very well have defeated them especially if he built up equipment from the Allies via the Trans-Siberian RR which he controlled from Omsk to Vladivostok.
  - b) Poor government: Through inexperience he failed to get any local support in the area he “controlled”. This made it difficult to get supplies and impossible to recruit men. His use of White terror to alleviate this problem only made it worse.
  - c) Put simply, he was in over his head both as a general and as a political leader.
  
- g. The North (1919)
  - i. After spending the summer organizing with significant British aid, Yudenich attacked Petrograd in October.
  - ii. Trotsky took personal command of the defenses and using forces freed up by Kolchak’s defeat, moved significant Red forces into the city eventually giving him a 3 to 1 advantage in strength.
  - iii. Realizing he could no longer prevail without expected Finnish help (which did not materialize), Yudenich retreated into Estonia where he was disarmed and allowed to exile by Estonian authorities.
- h. The South (1919)
  - i. During the first few months of 1919, there were several battles in the Donbass region between Red units and various unaligned White forces.
  - ii. During this time, Denikin cleared the Reds from the northern Caucasus, gained strength and established a strong southern front running east west.
  - iii. At the end of April, he launched a major attack along the entire front running from the Dnepr to the Volga. By mid-June, the AFSR had taken Kharkov and Tsaritsyn (later to be called Stalingrad)

- a) In this advance, he was heavily supported with much British equipment and even some troops (specifically tanks).
- b) On June 20, Denikin ordered the entire AFSR to move towards and capture Moscow.
- c) This drive was initially highly successful taking Orel by mid-October (only 200 miles from Moscow)
- iv. Then, the wheels started coming off:
  - a) One of Denikin's general, Wrangle push to link up with Kolchak's forces in Siberia but was heavily repulsed at Saratov.
  - b) Trotsky made an agreement with the leader of the "Black Army", Nestor Makhno who immediately started attacking Denikin's extended supply lines. This forced the AFSR to start retreating south.
  - c) During this retreat Red forces inflicted a major defeat on the AFSR at Orel in late October.
  - d) The AFSR would then retreat steadily until entering the Crimea in March 1920.
  - e) As soon as the threat from the AFSR was gone, the Soviets reneged on their agreement with the Black Army.
- v. By the end of 1919, the Soviet Government was in good position having successfully defended the Sovdepiia and ejected the three important White military commands (Yudenich, Kolchak, and Denikin) from their respective bases of operations and support. WHY?
  - a) Unlike the Whites, the Reds were able to gather local support and specifically recruit (conscript) men. At its peak the Red Army would have 5 ½ Million troops compared to a combined total of only 2 ½ Million White troops.
  - b) Trotsky turned out to be a pretty good strategist.

## **XVI. The Polish-Soviet War (1919-1921)**

- a. The basic cause of this war was the two different views of the place of Poland in Europe:
  - i. Lenin: Poland was to serve as a bridge to allow the Communist revolution to expand into central and western Europe.
  - ii. Piłsudski: Wanted to build an *Intermarium*, a federation of eastern and northern European states under the leadership of Poland to act as a buffer against German or Russian expansion.
- b. During 1919, both sides crept into war. By mid-summer 1919, the Soviets had established themselves in the Ukraine. In the spring of 1920, Poland launched an

attack against Red forces in Ukraine which was beaten off in June. Having defeated Denikin, Lenin now saw an opportunity to take Poland.

- i. At this point the Russians has 900,000 troops and the Poles 740,000.
- c. The Russians made steady progress to the west and by early August the Poles were in full retreat falling back on Warsaw.
  - i. On 12 August the Russians launched their attack on Warsaw and walked into a brilliant trap set by Piłsudski. The Russian army was destroyed in heavy fighting (losing 120,000 men to Poland's 36,000)
  - ii. "The Miracle on the Vistula"
- d. On October 12, an armistice was signed ending the fighting and Lenin's dream of spreading his revolution into Europe in the near term.

## XVII. The Civil War (Part 2: 1920-1922)

- a. The East
  - i. With Kolchak's army destroyed and Kolchak executed, the remnants of his army tried to hold out in Chita with Japanese support.
  - ii. In November 1920, the Japanese withdrew, and Soviet forces immediately attacked and drove the Whites into China where they disbanded completely.
- b. The South
  - i. Denikin was now trapped in Crimea and after a poorly executed attempt to evacuate, he stepped down and General Wrangel was appointed to command all White remaining White forces in Russia.
  - ii. Wrangel spent much of 1920 reorganizing his forces and making advances into Ukraine while the Red Army was much engaged in Poland.
    - a) To counter this, the Soviet government made another deal with Nestor Makhno (who didn't learn his lesson) and the Black Army commenced a series of attacks that tied up the White forces.
    - b) With the end of fighting in Poland, the Red Army now launched a major attack against Wrangel's heavily outnumbered forces which drove his army down into Crimea.
    - c) On 14 November 1921, Wrangel and his army evacuated from Sevastopol to Constantinople and the Civil War between Red and White forces was over.
- c. Continuing warfare
  - i. In March 1921, the Kronstadt rebellion broke out. The purpose was to protest War Communism which was kept in place even though by now it was clear the Red Army would win the war. It was crushed in a 12-day campaign by 30,000 Red Army troops.
    - a) ≈ 3000 sailors & soldiers were killed

- b) Major factor in moving from War Communism to the New Economic Policy.
- ii. The only remaining threat to Communist power now was a continuing series of uprisings protesting various government policies. The most serious of these was the Tambov Rebellion of 1920-1921.
  - a) This was an armed uprising in August 1920 against forced confiscation of grain (prodrazvyorstka).
  - b) At its height the Tambovs had 70,000 fighters. The Soviet government could do little to quell it until the Polish-Russian War and the campaign against general Wrangel were ended.
  - c) In February 1921, the government replaced prodrazvyorstka with the less onerous prodnalog policy (a grain tax).
  - d) In the spring, Lenin order 100,000 Red Army troops into the area which put down the rebellion with extreme brutality. About 240,000 people were killed.
- iii. Sporadic uprisings would continue until 1934 but any real threat to Communist one-party rule was over.
- iv. In March 1921, War Communism was replaced by the NEP
- v. In December 1922, the RSFSR is officially replaced by the USSR
- vi. Lenin dies in January, 1924 to be replaced by Stalin.

## XVIII. Summary

### a. Damage to Russian society

- i. Economic: (Compared to 1913)
  - a) Agricultural Production – 1/3
  - b) Industrial production – 1/7 (Cotton – 1/5) (Iron – 1/50)
  - c) Inflation (from 1917- to 1920) – 600%
- ii. Population:
  - a) Total loss of population was ≈7 Million people.
    - 1. Includes ≈ 2 Million military deaths (≈260,000 in actual combat, the rest disease and missing.)
    - 2. ≈5 Million civilian deaths mostly due to disease
  - b) About 2 Million Russians fled the country
- iii. Net result was a drag on the development of the USSR that was never adequately overcome (and never could be using Communist economic principles).

b. Why did the Communists win?

- i. Historian Orlando Figes (see bibliography) captures it best:

"At the root of the Whites' defeat was a failure of politics. They proved to be both unable and unwilling to frame policies capable of getting the mass of the population on their side. Their movement was based, in Wrangel's phrase, on "the cruel sword of vengeance"; their only idea was to put the clock back to the "happy days" before 1917; and they failed to see the need to adapt themselves to the realities of the revolution."

c. Final Questions: What was the real objective of Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, et al.?

- i. What caused the revolution(s)?  
ii. What was Lenin's real role in all this? What if Lenin hadn't died in 1924?  
iii. How did an unpopular, extremely weak and completely outnumbered Bolshevik government win the civil war?  
iv. Was the resultant Soviet Union Marxist, Communist, Socialist, all the these or something completely different?

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Krasnaya Pobeda

The Russian Revolution & Civil War

1917-1922

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2. The Russian Revolution: A New History; (Sean McMeekin, 2017) Another new book based on recent scholarship. Less opinionated than Miéville and an easier read but loaded with facts and details.
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7. The Romanovs: 1613-1918, (Simon Sebag Montefiore, 2016); If you are looking for a general history of the Romanov Dynasty this book is probably your best bet. It is well written and well researched.

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v.











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# 3

-  Under Bolshevik rule until February 1918
-  Maximum advance of the anti-Bolshevik forces
-  Under Bolshevik rule Summer 1918
-  Cities gained by Bolsheviks by coup
-  Under Bolshevik rule Summer 1918
-  LATVIA Emerging countries

