

**THE BRITISH INTERVENTION
IN SOUTH RUSSIA 1918-1920**

Lauri Kopisto

Academic Dissertation

To be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts
at the University of Helsinki, in Auditorium XII,
on 29th of April, 2011 at 12 o'clock.

The British Intervention in South Russia 1918-1920

© Lauri Kopisto

Cover illustration: British Mark V tank '*General Drozdovskii*' of the Volunteer Army, South Russia August 1919 (the State Museum of the Russian Political History, St. Petersburg).

ISBN 978-952-10-6922-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-952-10-6923-9 (pdf)

ISSN 0357-9549

Unigrafia

Helsinki 2011

Historical Studies from the University of Helsinki XXIV

Historiallisia tutkimuksia Helsingin yliopistosta XXIV

Historiska studier från Helsingfors universitetet XXIV

CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Acknowledgements	6
Abbreviations	8
Introduction	9
1. Geopolitical Area of South Russia and the Caucasus	
1.1. The Rivalry of the Empires	25
1.2. The Strategic Periphery	28
1.3. The Problem of Nationalities	33
2. The Great War and the Revolution	
2.1. The Collapse of the Eastern Front	38
2.2. Disintegration of the Russian Empire	44
2.3. First Moves towards the Intervention	48
3. Britain and the Russian Question after the Armistice	
3.1. The Lines of Policy	57
3.2. Lloyd George and the Prinkipo Proposal	62
3.3. Churchill's Crusade	66
4. Beginning of the Intervention	
4.1. The Arrival of the British and the Establishment of the Armed Forces of South Russia	71
4.2. The Start of Military Aid to Denikin	77
4.3. Political Difficulties	80

5. Denikin's War	
5.1. The March to Moscow	85
5.2. Nature of Warfare	89
5.3. Concentrating the Aid on Denikin	100
6. Arming the Counter-Revolution	
6.1. Supplying the White Army with British Weapons and Equipment	106
6.2. Training	112
6.3 Churchill's Private Warriors	115
6.4. 47th Squadron RAF	120
7. Awkward Brothers in Arms	
7.1. The Adventurers, the Businessmen and the Profession	126
7.2. Relations with the Russians	131
7.3. The Country of Murder and Loot	138
8. End of the Intervention	
8.1. Turn of the Tide	148
8.2. New British Policy Lines	154
8.3 Denikin's Defeat	161
8.4 Wrangel and the British	171
9. Conclusion	179
Appendix 1. General Holman's order, July 1919	190
Appendix 2. British matériel issued to the White forces in South Russia	191
Appendix 3 Map: Russia 1919	194
Sources and Bibliography	195

Abstract

The British Intervention in South Russia 1918-1920

Soon after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, a three-year civil war broke out in Russia. As in many other civil wars, foreign powers intervened in the conflict. Britain played a leading role in this intervention and had a significant effect on the course of the war. Without this intervention on the White side, the superiority of numbers in manpower and weaponry of the Bolsheviks would have quickly overwhelmed their opponents.

The aim of this dissertation is to explain the nature and role of the British intervention on the southern, and most decisive, front of the Civil War. The political decision making in London is studied as a background, but the focus of the dissertation is on the actual implementation of the British policy in Russia. The British military mission arrived in South Russia in late 1918, and started to provide General Denikin's White army with ample supplies. General Denikin would have not been able to build his army of more than 200,000 men or to make his operation against Moscow without the British matériel. The British mission also organized the training and equipping of the Russian troops with British weapons. This made the material aid much more effective. Many of the British instructors took part in fighting the Bolsheviks despite the orders of their government.

The study is based on primary sources produced by British departments of state and members of the British mission and military units in South Russia. Primary sources from the Whites, including the personal collections of several key figures of the White movement and official records of the Armed Forces of South Russia are also used to give a balanced picture of the course of events.

It is possible to draw some general conclusions from the White movement and reasons for their defeat from the study of the British intervention. In purely material terms the British aid placed Denikin's army in a far more favourable position than the Bolsheviks in 1919, but other military defects in the White army were numerous. The White commanders were unimaginative, their military thinking was obsolete, and they were incapable of organizing the logistics of their army. There were also fundamental defects in the morale of the White troops. In addition to all political mistakes of Denikin's movement and a general inability to adjust to the complex situation in Revolutionary Russia, the Whites suffered a clear military defeat. In South Russia the Whites were defeated not because of the lack of British aid, but rather in spite of it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great debt of gratitude to many people for their help in the process of completing this study.

First of all, I would like to thank my academic mentor, Professor Emeritus Erkki Kouri, who initially advised me to continue my research on the British intervention after I had completed my undergraduate studies at Helsinki. Throughout this long and at times very trying process, he has provided me with his uncompromising support and encouragement. It would have been difficult to accomplish this task without his help. I am also grateful to Professor Orlando Figes for supervising my studies at Cambridge. I feel honored to have benefited from his advice and insight into the Russian Revolution and Civil War.

My warmest thanks go to Professor Markku Peltonen for his most invaluable help at the final stages of the project. I am also thankful for the preliminary examiners of this dissertation, Professor Kalervo Hovi and Docent Kari Alenius, for their valuable and supportive comments. John Calton, whom I wish to thank most warmly, corrected the language of the main chapters of the manuscript of this study.

Many institutions have helped me in the research for this dissertation. I should like to thank the Finnish Academy, the Finnish Cultural Fund, the Alfred Kordelin Foundation, the Niilo Helander Foundation and St. Edmund's College of the University of Cambridge for their financial support. I would also like to thank the staff of the many archives and libraries, especially the Imperial War Museum in London, the Churchill Archives in Cambridge and the Hoover Institution in Stanford, at which I completed my research.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my family and friends. To my mother Sirkka Kopisto and my late father Aarne Kopisto go the warmest thanks for all their support and advice. Above all, I would like to thank my wife Elina, and our children Mikko, Anni and Tomi for their love, understanding and inspiration.

Helsinki, 13 March 2011

ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Admiralty
AFSR	Armed Forces of South Russia (<i>Vooruzhennye sily Iuga Rossii</i>)
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BMM	British Military Mission
CAB	Cabinet Office papers
CCAC	Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge
CHAR	Chartwell Collection, (Papers of Winston Churchill)
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
FO	Foreign Office
GS	General Staff
HIA	Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University
HQ	Headquarters
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
LHC	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London
NA	National Archives, London
NCO	Non-commissioned officer (all grades of corporals and sergeants)
PLA	Peter Liddle Archive, Leeds University
WO	War Office

INTRODUCTION

1. Perspective

Soon after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 a three-year civil war broke out in Russia. The initial phase of the war lasted for one year, and it was distinguished by rapidly shifting front lines and sporadic engagements by small units. In this 'Railway War' trainloads of Bolshevik revolutionaries travelled long distances from the industrial cities to root out centres of opposition in the periphery of the vast country. It began in the winter of 1917-18 with the formation of the anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army by Generals Alekseev and Kornilov in the Don Cossack region, thus creating the southern front of the war. Half a year later this was followed by the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion on the mid-Volga and Siberia, which assisted the formation of two anti-Bolshevik governments, each with its own army, the Komuch in Samara and the Siberian Government in Omsk. The Red Army of Lenin's Bolshevik government was properly formed to replace the irregular Red Guard partisan units only at the end of this phase in the fall of 1918.

The second and decisive stage of the Civil War lasted from March to December 1919. First, the White armies of Admiral Kolchak in Siberia and General Denikin in South Russia advanced resolutely toward Moscow. In the North-west General Iudenich attacked Petrograd.

As in many other civil wars, foreign powers intervened in the conflict. Britain played a leading role in this intervention and had a significant effect on the course of the war. Without this foreign intervention on the White side, the superiority of numbers in manpower and weaponry of the Bolsheviks would have quickly overwhelmed their opponents. The whole picture of the Civil War would obviously have been different in that the large-scale field operations between the Whites

and the Reds would not have taken place. Neither of the two most important White commanders, Kolchak nor Denikin, would have been able to build up their armies and to launch their offensives without Allied war supplies in 1919. On the other hand, the major armament production areas and depots – Petrograd, Tula and Tsaritsyn – were supplying the growing Red Army.¹ Indeed the war would have been more or less confined to the Bolsheviks fighting against bands of peasant guerrillas, as was the case in the vast Russian countryside nominally under Bolshevik control.

Allied aid received by the anti-Bolshevik forces in South Russia was predominantly British, given that the French intervention in the Ukraine and Southwest Russia had ceased in April 1919 following humiliating evacuations in Odessa and the Crimea. The British Government sent a military mission to General Denikin immediately after the armistice as the route via the Dardanelles to the Black Sea was opened up. The Allies had originally decided to concentrate their support on Kolchak's army in Siberia. But during the spring and summer of 1919, Kolchak suffered several defeats and began his retreat to the east. In South Russia, meanwhile, Denikin's army was conquering city after city from the Reds and advancing fast towards Moscow. After reconsiderations in London, Denikin was indeed recognized as the only White commander with realistic capabilities and resources to defeat the Bolsheviks. British military aid therefore, was mostly assigned to his army.

¹ Kolchak's army was totally dependent on British arms and munitions which started to flow to Vladivostok soon after the Armistice, as there were no armament plants in Siberia. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 668-9. Denikin's situation was equally problematic. In the beginning of 1919 both Volunteer and Don Armies had run out of meagre supplies mainly captured from the Bolsheviks. See Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia II* pp. 22-4, and Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army and the Allied intervention*, pp. 216-21.

The final decisive battles of the Russian Civil war were fought on the Southern Front. In the end, General Denikin's army, the Armed Forces of South Russia, became the most powerful of the White armies, and the Bolsheviks' most dangerous enemy. Denikin started his offensive in late spring 1919 with a series of brilliant victories. During the summer, the Bolsheviks were on the defensive along the whole Southern Front, and eventually most of the Red Army was concentrated against Denikin's army. By autumn 1919, Denikin's offensive threatened Moscow, the heart of the Bolshevik state. It was only after months of heavy fighting that the Bolsheviks were able to stop and ultimately defeat Denikin. The White cause was already lost on the other fronts. Thus, the Bolsheviks had practically crushed the White movement by the spring of 1920.

In the final stage of the Civil War, the remnants of Denikin's forces managed, with British help, to fortify themselves on the Crimean Peninsula. This last White army commanded by General Wrangel held on for another six months, while the Reds were engaged in the war with Poland. As soon as it was over, the vastly superior Red Army invaded the Crimea. In November 1920, the Allied navies evacuated what was left of the White army to Constantinople and, as a military struggle between the Whites and the Bolsheviks, the Russian Civil War was over.

The following pages will endeavour to describe the British role in the course of these events. The political decision-making in London is studied as a background of the British actions in South Russia, concentrating on the role of the War Office and the General Staff as the authors of the British interventionist policy. One of the themes going through the whole of this study is indeed how the intervention policies in South Russia and elsewhere were conducted in many cases rather independently of official British Foreign policy. The focus of the study, however, is on the actual implementation of the British policy in South Russia. It will describe in detail what kind of matériel the British aid

consisted of and how the British Mission worked in South Russia not only supplying and training the White forces, but also actively taking part in the fighting against the Bolsheviks. The central question I am hoping to answer is the eventual effect and importance of the British aid to Denikin and thus the importance of the British role in the course of the whole Civil War. The study will also provide a 'British view' on the White movement and on the nature of the Civil War in the South more generally. This picture based on the sources produced by British Military and political representatives in Russia appears in many cases very different from the traditional interpretations in the ample White émigré literature or, on the other hand, in the Western or in the Soviet historiography. It also provides some alternative explanations for the White defeat. Most importantly I endeavour to dispute the traditionally acclaimed superiority in military competence of the Whites over the Reds.

2. Previous Research

The numerous existing studies on the Russian Civil War and the Allied intervention have given fairly limited space to the British activities in South Russia and in the Caucasus. No wide-scale research based on British archival sources exists. Most of the studies on the intervention concentrate on general political lines, 'high politics', and, moreover, they examine events in Northern Russia and Siberia. This shortcoming of earlier research forms the basis of this study.

Richard H. Ullman's classic study *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*, is a case in point. The first of the three volumes, *Intervention and War*, was written before the British National Archives (previously the Public Records Office) opened the material concerning the intervention. The latter parts are mainly based on War Cabinet papers, which are also supported by private papers and memoirs of some members of the Cabinet (Churchill's papers are actually missing, as they

were not public at the time). Ullman's work is an excellent survey of the official British Russian policy, but it is somewhat weaker in analysing the execution of the Cabinet policies on the field. It concentrates mainly on the events in Siberia and especially on the North Russian theatre of war. An obvious reason for the latter was the active role of the British troops in fighting the Bolsheviks at the Archangel-Murmansk front. The use of conscripted British soldiers in North Russia also caused a great deal of publicity in Britain during the operations and was actually the main reason for opposing the whole intervention. However, despite the battles the British fought and the casualties they took, North Russia was always a side-show of the Civil War and the two British brigades there never posed a real threat to the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, the decisive battles of the Russian Civil War were fought on the southern front, where the British aid to the Whites had a much more important role in the course of war.

Ullman crystallised the "official Western version" of the British intervention in his books.² They were written during some of the hottest years of the Cold War, partly in response to the accusations of Soviet historians, who described the intervention as the first move of Capitalistic Western aggression against the Soviet state. Ullman formulated a comprehensive explanation of the British intervention in Russia. He claimed that there was no consistent British policy to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. The basic aim of the British policy was to weaken Russia, and thus to prevent the re-emergence of the 19th-Century rivalry between the empires. This was implemented by supporting the detachment of the Border States from Russia. On the other hand, Ullman describes the accidental and ineffective nature of the intervention to support the Whites as piecemeal operations with limited

² Ullman's arguments are referred and repeated in many more recently published books such as Clifford Kinvig's *Churchill's Crusade* (2006) and Miles Hudson's *Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1920* (2004).

objectives.³ I will point out in this dissertation, however, that the War Office and its Secretary of State, Winston Churchill, certainly had a policy to counter Bolshevism and this plan was determinedly carried out, especially in South Russia. Moreover, what really made a difference as far as the war between the Whites and the Reds in Russia is concerned, were the hundreds of thousands of guns and millions of cartridges that the Whites received from Britain.

Another product of the Cold War era is George A. Brinkley's *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia 1917-1921*. Brinkley has used extensively material produced by the Whites, but the British archival sources are missing completely, as the book was written some years before the archives opened.⁴ This has biased the analysis to some extent, and the bitter opinion of the Whites can be observed in the description of 'the muddled and inadequate' action of the Allies. Brinkley also states how the Allies missed a genuine opportunity 'to reintegrate Russia in the community of the States with undoubtedly beneficial results both for herself and her neighbours', and to crush the violent dictatorship of the undemocratic Leninist offshoot of Marxism.⁵

Evan Mawdsley develops the theme regarding the marginal importance of the intervention further in his book, *The Russian Civil War*. This otherwise excellent overall study of the Civil War clearly understates the importance of Allied support to the Whites. Mawdsley argues that the most important intervention was not made by the Allies, but by the Central Powers in 1918. He also claims that the British aid arrived too late to have an effect on Denikin's early campaign in

³Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations II*, pp. 347-64.

⁴ Brinkley, *Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention*, pp. 398-434. Brinkley's study covers an immense amount of White material from the Columbia University Russian Archives and the Hoover Institution, but his only British sources appear to be the rather selective *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* and some published parliamentary papers.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 275-83.

securing his position on Kuban and the Don, although it was of some importance in autumn 1919.⁶ This argument is not based on original research. In March 1919 Denikin's army was utterly exhausted. Moreover, it was certainly the British matériel and moral support that made the successful operations of May and June 1919 possible.

Richard Pipes's last volume of his trilogy on the Russian Revolution⁷, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, has provided some addition to the discussion on the intervention. Pipes clearly states the importance of the British intervention in several stages of the Civil War. Interestingly, he also discusses the effect of the allied plans and intervention – whether imagined or real – on Bolshevik actions. However, the two relevant chapters of Pipes' book are mere general analysis of the civil war and there is no detailed study of British actions in South Russia. He also maintains the idea of Allied intervention's ineptitude, and how the Allies left the Whites 'in the lurch' in the decisive moment, as one reason for the White defeat.⁸

Still today the most important Western study of the Civil War in the South is Peter Kenez's two-volume research, *The Civil War in South Russia*. It is also the most thorough study of any area under White rule during the Civil War. Kenez has based his research on a vast amount of White primary sources. The Red primary sources are absent due to the obvious difficulties in accessing the Soviet archives during the 1970s. However, British primary sources are also totally missing, though accessible from 1968 and 1972. Kenez's interpretation of British intervention and relations to Whites and Transcaucasian states is based

⁶ Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 283-4. Mawdsley maintains this argument and develops it further in his article *The Civil War: Military Campaigns* in the *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921*, p 99.

⁷ The former volumes being *Russia under the Old Regime* and *The Russian Revolution, 1899-1919*.

⁸ Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp. 128-33. Pipes derives his interpretation apparently from the various memoirs of the White generals.

on earlier studies, memoirs and printed documents.⁹ Perhaps due to a lack of sources, or indeed because of their one-sidedness, Kenez does not consider the British intervention as having played an important part in the events in South Russia. He mentions the matériel the Whites received and briefly describes the British role in the White-Georgian conflict. There is, however, no analysis of the work the British mission did for Denikin's Army, or of the growing influence of the British staff officers in Denikin's headquarters in the later stages of the campaign.

The research on the Allied intervention did not end with the Cold War. Several interesting studies considering especially the United States' intervention have been published.¹⁰ Far less, however, had been written about the much more important British role in the Civil War. Jonathan D. Smele's book *Civil War in Siberia* provides probably the most important academic contribution in the discussion. Although the study focuses on Kolchak's government and its policies, Smele demonstrates clearly the influence of the British officials, in particular General Knox, on the Russian political and especially military decision-making in the various stages of the Civil War. Smele's wider source base proves conclusively the role of General Knox and his officers to be much more important than described in Ullman's study.¹¹ Michael Kettle's massive *Russia and the Allies 1917-1920* also stresses the importance of the British role in the Civil War, but as a general history

⁹ Kenez uses extensively Denikin's memoirs, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, Brinkley's *Volunteer Army and the Allies* and interestingly some Soviet publications of documents such as *Krasnyi Arkhiv*.

¹⁰ Most important of these is David S. Foglesong's *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: US intervention in the Russian Civil War*. Several books based on personal recollections of American soldiers who served in Russia have also been published eg. R. L. Willet's *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War*.

¹¹ Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp.87-95 and 669-72.

of the Allied intervention does not include a detailed analysis of the events in South Russia and also has a somewhat selective source base.¹²

Two more recent studies on the topic are Miles Hudson's *Intervention in Russia 1918-1920, A Cautionary Tale* (2004) and Clifford Kinvig's *Churchill's Crusade; The British Invasion of Russia 1918-1920* (2006). Hudson's book describes British activities mostly on the basis of a fairly small number of personal recollections of British servicemen. The whole intervention is concluded as a tragic failure and as a warning example of which modern decision-makers should learn. Kinvig's study concentrates interestingly on Churchill's central role in the British policies, but when describing the actual intervention the study focuses largely – and understandably – on the British active military operations in the North Russia. The book is based partly on rather limited research on British governmental records and, in addition, published and unpublished memoirs of British servicemen. No Russian sources or literature have been, however, used, and the book does not attempt draw more general conclusions on the British role in the Russian Civil War. Both Kinvig's and Hudson's book have the problem of relying and building their arguments perhaps too much on limited amount of memoirs of individual British officers and not using other sources to verify them.

The Civil War was one of the most studied topics in Soviet historiography. This research began during the war itself, and following the Bolshevik victory the Soviet Government founded a special committee to research and to preserve the legacy of the Revolution and the Civil War. The problematic "official" picture of the war, already mentioned, developed from the theoretical writings of the Bolshevik leaders. To Lenin, for example, the term 'civil war' meant the global class conflict between the Bolsheviks acting as the vanguard of the

¹² Kettle's three volumes of *Russia and the Allies* only cover the period from March 1917 to July 1919, Kettle has used mainly 'high level' documents of the Cabinet, Foreign and War Offices.

World's proletariat and the international bourgeoisie. The military struggle was only one dimension of this 'class war'. The battles of the Civil War in Russia were basically described as the heroic survival story of the working classes of Russia, and more generally, as the first victory of socialism over capitalism and the beginning of the world revolution. There were also strong moralistic undertones of the triumph of the "good" Bolsheviks against the "bad" Whites and their imperialistic allies.

The first two official histories, Kakurin's *Kak srazhalas' revoliutsiia* and Bubnov's (ed.) *Grazhdanskaia voina* are, however, good studies of campaigns of the Red Army and they succeed in avoiding strong political interpretations. These books are somewhat weak in describing their enemies, both the Whites and the Allies, but still represent reasonably honest attempts to analyse the war. Later studies, especially those written under Stalin's regime, are unfortunately, more or less biased by Soviet and even nationalistic propaganda. The worst example is probably the *Istoriia RKP (b). Kratkii kurs*, 1938, which defined the Civil War in strong nationalistic terms merely as a series of campaigns of the Russian workers and peasants against the Entente. Thus the Civil War was not considered as an internal conflict but rather as the Russians fighting a defensive war against the Western Imperialists. After Stalin's death the history of the Civil War was also partly rewritten, but until the very end of the regime, Soviet histories remained firmly in the Marxist-Leninist traditions. The last wide-scale Soviet study *Grazhdanskaia voina*, by Azovtzev et al., still contains the classical picture of the imperialistic intervention of the Allies.

The break-up of the Soviet system provoked renewed discussion about the Civil War. The Whites, for example, started to receive considerable attention. Denikin's *Ocherki russkoi smuty* – naturally banned during the Soviet regime – was published first in the journal *Voprosy istorii* in 1990-94 and a few years later as a five-volume book. New editions of many other émigré memoirs and histories have

also been published. The two most important of these are perhaps the 1998 reprint of the five volume *Beloe Delo*, which consist of memoirs of the most important White commanders and V. A. Blagov's and S. A. Sapozhnikov's multivolume compilation of memoirs and White unit histories *Beloe dvizhenie*, published 2001-2006. Most relevant of the volumes in the latter is *Pokhod na Moskvu* (2004).

However, the situation of Russian historiography of the Civil war is no less complicated at the moment than it was in Soviet times. In the 1990's some historians from nationalistic circles have reversed the whole picture: the Whites became the saviours of Holy Russia, and the Bolsheviks have become state terrorists. The question of the Russian Empire and the independence of the Border States is also a highly politicised topic. After all, the new research possibilities and the opening of the archives have also produced good studies with a new level of objectivity and without commitment to politics, but these have so far considered the Civil War only on its North-Eastern and Northern Fronts. There has been no wide scale research of the British intervention in Russia either.

3. Sources

This study is based mainly on primary sources produced by British departments of the state and members of the British missions and separate units of the services in South Russia and Transcaucasia. First, these include official documents such as memoranda, orders and operational and intelligence reports, which are mainly housed in the British National Archives, London. A considerable portion of this material, especially the papers of the military missions¹³, has not been

¹³ The war diary of the British military mission to Denikin is located in the National Archives in the War Office collection WO 95 and the RAF mission in Air Ministry's AIR 1.

used in research before. The personal archives of Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson¹⁴ contain similarly mostly unused material as far as the intervention is considered. Papers of these key figures provide an invaluable contribution to this study, clarifying the crucial role of the War Office in the decision-making process. Churchill's extensive personal collection of reports and telegraphs from Russia also contains several interesting documents, which cannot be found in the official records in the National Archives.¹⁵

The personal collections of British servicemen who served in Russia during the civil war are of equal importance. I have been most fortunate to locate over fifty of these collections. They contain diaries, letters and unpublished memoirs, including descriptions of events not mentioned in official documents. Among these personal papers there are also copies of interesting official documents that otherwise may have been destroyed. The main archives for these collections are the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum in London and the large private archive, Peter Liddle's 1914-18 Personal Experience Archive located at Leeds University which also contains several interviews with soldiers who served in Russia during the intervention.

These papers and recollections of British servicemen provide a fascinating insight into events in South Russia describing, for example, the relations between the British and the Whites. The perspective of these accounts of individual officers and NCOs is naturally subjective but it is possible to draw more general conclusions by using them together with official mission reports. This comparison with other type

¹⁴ Churchill's papers can be found in the Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, and Wilson's papers in the Imperial War Museum.

¹⁵ Churchill Archive's files CHAR 16 (Russia) contain, for example, numerous intelligence reports that, for some reason, cannot be found in the official War Office's WO 106 (Departments of Military Operations and Intelligence, Reports) and 157 (Intelligence Summaries) files at the National Archives. Unfortunately some intelligence documents had also been weeded out by the British Government from the Churchill collection before it was opened to the public in 1991.

sources also makes it possible to verify the information of individual personal accounts.¹⁶

The personal collections together with military mission war diaries and intelligence reports provide also more accurate and less biased information than memoirs published even decades after the actual events which are so often used in research on the intervention. A good example is Marion Aten's *Last Train over Rostov Bridge* (1961). This 'first hand account' has been used as a source on the RAF's 47th Squadron's activities in Russia, for example, in Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations II* and Wrangel's *Russia's White Crusader*, and even more recently in the collection of documents *Rostov in the Civil War*.¹⁷ Aten's book proved, however, highly unreliable when compared to official documents of the RAF in the National Archives. Aten gives a vivid description of the battle of Tsaritsyn in June - July 1919 and even falsely claims the first air victory of the Squadron during the same battle. In fact Aten did not arrive in Russia until the end of August and joined the 'B' Flight of the Squadron in September. A somewhat similar case is Williamson's *Farewell to the Don* (1971). There are considerable differences between these published memoirs and Brigadier Williamson's original diary and letters preserved in the Imperial War Museum.

It has been possible to gather new knowledge about the topic through these sources. The story these papers tell about the intervention is very different from the original plans of the War Cabinet or its

¹⁶ P. Liddle and M. Richardson have completed an extensive survey about the reliability and accuracy of personal recollections as source material and rather convincingly prove their value in the research of the First World War. See Liddle & Richardson, *Voices from the past*.

¹⁷ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations II*, pp. 212-16. Wrangel, A, *Russia's White Crusader*, pp.167-79. Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920. The Key to Victory*.

statements to Parliament. Furthermore, the information in monthly operational and intelligence reports written by the commanding officers of units to the chiefs of military missions often differs greatly from the final reports of missions to the War Cabinet, which are commonly used in research.

To keep a balanced perspective and to create a more objective picture of the British policies and actions it is also important to study sources from the Russian side. The most important collections of primary sources from the Whites, including the personal collections of several key figures of the White movement and also most of the remaining official records of the Armed Forces of South Russia, are located at the Hoover Institution in Stanford. In addition to these, there are a number of published memoirs of the Whites, which often contain valuable printed documentary material.

I have considered a large-scale study of primary sources from the Bolshevik side unnecessary within the scope of this study, as it concentrates primarily on the relations between Britain and the Whites of South Russia, and only secondarily on British-Soviet relations. Moreover, both studies written on British-Soviet relations and published collections of documents are voluminous.¹⁸

¹⁸ Again, Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations* is the most important study. An extensive collection of Soviet documents is printed in *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR, vols. 1-3*. There are also two British collections: the somewhat selective *Documents on British Foreign Policy* and the more recent *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, the latter containing papers from the Foreign Office confidential print.

4. Periodization and Definitions

When did the British commitment in South Russia actually start and end? To be exact, the first British Military Mission arrived at General Denikin's headquarters in Kuban in late November 1918 and the British Mission attached to General Wrangel's army in the Crimea was evacuated in June 1920. The present study is indeed focused on this period. I shall, however, describe to some extent also the history of British-Russian relations, especially during the last stages of the Great War and during the Russian Revolution as the necessary background and explanation for the British policy and its implementation in South Russia.

I am using throughout the study the general term South Russia, to define the area of the south-western part of the old Russian Empire. This may be considered somewhat misleading and incorrect geographically, since the area stretching from the Romanian border to the Volga also covers parts of the Ukraine and the Caucasus. The reason for this is simply that both the British and the Russians used the term South Russia or *Iuga Rossiia* during the period concerned in the study.

'White' (*belye*) is used to describe the various conservative, officer-dominated anti-Bolshevik armies of the Civil War, such as the Volunteer Army of South Russia, Kolchak's Siberian Army and Iudenich's North-western Army. This term was first used by the Bolsheviks to discredit their opponents referring to the standard of the Bourbons and the French monarchists. It was however soon accepted by these anti-Bolsheviks themselves, and also the Allies used it. I refer to Lenin's party as the 'Bolsheviks' throughout the study despite the fact that they changed their name officially to the All Russian Communist Party in early 1918. The term 'Bolshevik' was kept in use during the Civil War and even later by their enemies and by themselves too.

Names of the cities mentioned in the study have changed several times during the history. I use the version which was in general

use during the Civil War and the more modern versions are shown in brackets, for example Ekaterinodar (Krasnodar).

5. Dates and Transliteration

All dates in the study are given according to the Gregorian, or Western calendar, unless otherwise indicated. In the transliteration of the Cyrillic names and words, I have generally followed the Library of Congress system. The only exceptions are names which have widely used Western versions, for example, Kerensky instead of Kerenskii and Wrangel instead of Vrangel'.

1. THE GEOPOLITICAL AREA OF SOUTH RUSSIA AND THE CAUCASUS

1.1. The Rivalry of the Empires

The great Anglo-Russian antagonism was one of the dominant features of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century international politics. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century Britain and Russia became the two most formidable powers in the whole of Eurasia. The aggressive and expansive empire- building of these countries in Asia caused their relationship to develop into one of mutual mistrust and hostility. The British considered Russia as a threat to India. On the other hand, in St. Petersburg the vital interests of the Russian Empire were recognized to be at stake on the Black Sea coast and in the Caucasus because of the British actions. Tension between the two empires erupted only once into open war in the form of the Crimean War. 'The Great Game', as contemporaries called it, was essentially a competition for influence and control over the decaying Ottoman and Persian Empires.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, as the British were securing their control over India, Russia gained a permanent foothold in the Black Sea area as a result of several victorious wars against the Ottoman Empire. In the treaties of 1774 and 1791 the fertile steppelands from the Dniestre to the Kuban rivers were ceded to Russia, and, more importantly, a sea route was opened up for Russian ships to the Black Sea and further through the Straits to the Mediterranean. Russian forces had also crossed the Caucasus mountain range and come in contact with the Christian nation of the Georgians. Georgia was at first declared a Russian protectorate, but later, in 1801, annexed to Russia. Russian armies now had a permanent base on the southern side of the Caucasus Mountains, but the Ottoman and the Persian Empires had lost their secure northern border.

Russia's misfortunes in the war against Napoleon I encouraged the Turks and the Persians to attack the Russian army in order to drive it back over the Caucasus Mountains. The Russians had to fight hard for their position. The situation worsened as the Moslem mountain peoples revolted in the Russian rear. However, in the long run the obsolete Ottoman and Persian armies were defeated. Russia was now the definite ruler of the Caucasus area. Several more wars were fought between Russia and the Ottomans and every time more territory was annexed to the Russian Empire. The final borderlines with Persia and Turkey were drawn in the treaties of Adrianople (1829) and San Stephano (1878).¹⁹

The growing Russian influence in the Black Sea and over the Ottoman Empire alarmed the British. The situation developed into the "Eastern Question" as the British, and later the Austrians and the French, started to increase their own influence over the Turks to counter the Russian actions. The British usually supported the Ottoman Empire in her disputes with Russia. The conflict escalated into an open war as the Turks, counting on Western help, attacked Russia in 1853. Soon, after the Ottoman army had suffered a series of defeats, the British and the French joined the war. The British and French fleets sailed to the Black Sea and landed their armies on the Crimean peninsula where the major land battles were also fought, and so this war of 1854-1856 came to be known as the Crimean War. The war was a consequence of misjudgements and overreaching policies (rather than not of strategic planning) from both the British and the Russians.²⁰ A very similar situation, 'the Eastern Crisis', developed as the Turks and the Russians went to war in 1877, and again the British assumed the Russians to be occupying Constantinople and considered intervening by sending the

¹⁹Allen & Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, gives a detailed account with excellent maps on the Russian conquest of the Caucasus.

²⁰Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, pp. 125-35.

navy to the Straits. This time war was, however, prevented by last moment negotiations.

Despite the most pessimistic Western calculations Russian policy did not aim at destroying the Ottoman Empire, but to preserve it under predominantly Russian influence. The focal point of the Russian policy towards the Ottomans was the question of the Straits. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles were of vital strategic and economic interest for Russia. At first this 'Gateway to Russia' was seen as a passage for hostile forces into vulnerable southern coast of Russia, as was clearly demonstrated in the Crimean War. Later, as South Russia and the Caucasus region were developing into economically invaluable areas, the Straits became an important export route to Russian agricultural and industrial products. By the turn of the century nearly half of all Russian exports were shipped through the Straits and their blockade would have had catastrophic consequences for the entire Russian economy. On the Transcaucasian border, the Russians remained purely defensive towards the Ottoman Empire after the treaty of 1878, and were mostly occupied in the internal security problems of the Caucasus and in furtherance of the Russian influence over northern Persia.²¹

The Anglo-Russian dispute over the Straits was closely connected to the question of India. The conquest of Transcaucasia had brought Russian armies to the Persian border and after the conquest in Central Asia the Russians had also arrived at the Afghanistan border. However, it is obvious, notwithstanding some fantastic plans and speeches of Russian ministers that Russia never really intended to invade India. The cornerstone of Russian eastern policy was the Straits, but by using the threat of invading India the Russians hoped to eliminate or at least reduce the British influence in the Near East. Meanwhile, the basis of British policy toward Russia was to safeguard India and communications to the eastern parts of the Empire (the Suez Canal and

²¹Bodger, *Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 84-9.

the Persian Gulf). Keeping Russia employed in the Near East was thought to more or less inhibit her actions in Central Asia.²²

The Anglo-Russian disputes in the Near East and Asia were not settled until Germany started to threaten equally the interests of both Empires. The German naval programme and the establishment of bases as far away as China alarmed the British. Moreover, Germany began to increase her influence over the Ottoman Empire economically and by modernizing and arming the Ottoman Army. In addition to the German threat, Russia had already allied with France, and the British saw the danger of having to fight against at least two major powers simultaneously. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 formally buried the hundred year-long rivalry. Persia was divided into spheres of influence and thus the Caucasian border was secured. Afghanistan and Tibet were defined as buffer zones for the further defence of India.²³

Only ten years later the situation changed dramatically as a consequence of the Russian Revolution and Russia's defeat in the World War. The armies of the Central Powers invaded the southern areas of the Russian Empire. The British policies needed to be completely revised. However, the reflections of the 'Great Game' were not without influence in the British-Russian, whether White or Soviet, relations regarding South Russia and the Caucasus.

1.2. The Strategic Periphery

On the eve of the Russian capitulation, 23 December 1917, a 'Convention between France and England on the subject of activity in southern Russia' was signed. This agreement divided the southern part

²² Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations*, pp. 17-19, Kent, *Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 172-8.

²³ Gillard, David, *The Struggle for Asia*, pp.173-8.

of Russia into zones of influence. France was assigned Bessarabia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. The British zone was to be the Cossack Territories and the Caucasus area.²⁴ This south-eastern part of the Russian Empire, which was soon to be the stage for British intervention, had not only strategic but also great economic importance.

Topographically, the British 'zone of influence' can be divided into three different parts. The northmost part of the zone was the Don Cossack Territory (*Oblast' voiska donskogo*)²⁵ situated around the Don River between the Ukraine and the Volga area. The Don territory was the ancient south-eastern borderland of Russia and a buffer zone against the Moslem peoples. The Don Cossack Host was originally founded to defend the border. The Cossacks were still the most prominent feature of the region though accounting for less than half of the total population at the beginning of the twentieth-century.

The Don Cossacks were ethnic Russians but they clearly distinguished themselves from the non-Cossack population. Although working the land as farmers they considered themselves essentially as warriors serving the Tsar in their own regionally organized regiments. The Don Territory provided the Imperial Army with a total of sixty cavalry regiments at the beginning of the First World War.²⁶ According to a peculiar feudal system, the military service conferred the land on the Cossacks, and they had a distinctive "autonomous" representative administration of the Cossack Host, which had, however, been gradually integrated into Russia's governing system. Most of the non-Cossack population in the Don territory was Russian or Ukrainian peasants. They lacked the privileges and culture of the Cossacks and were administered in a similar way to the people in other provinces of Russia.

²⁴ The text of the convention is printed in *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, series I, vol III, pp. 369-70.

²⁵ It no longer exists as an administrative entity as the Soviet government dismembered it after the Civil War.

²⁶ Lehovich, *Red against White*, pp. 176-7.

The Don Territory was rich farming land and about three-quarters of its population were committed to agriculture. In addition, there were several large urban and industrial areas. Rostov on Don was one of the largest cities in Russia and a very important industrial and commercial centre. Two other important industrial centres were the towns of Taganrog and Azov. Moreover, the eastern part of the Donbass region with important coal, iron and manganese ore mines belonged administratively to the Don territory, too. Thus, the Don Territory formed a curious combination of the Cossacks and peasants with their traditional views of life on the one hand, and on the other, a part of the most modern industrialized Russia.

Further to the south, across the Manych river began the Russian Governor-Generalship of Caucasus (*Kavkaz*), which consisted of two main regions: the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. The North Caucasus (*Severnyi Kavkaz*) on the northern side of the Caucasus mountain range was divided administratively into the province (*guberniia*) of Chernomore and the territories (*oblasti*) of Kuban, Terek and Daghestan. These areas were also populated by the Cossacks having their own hosts of Kuban and Terek and Russian peasant immigrants; both were settled in the region to guarantee the Russian conquests. In addition, there were a number of different native peoples living in the mountainous regions of the provinces, mainly in eastern Terek and Daghestan.

Most of the population of the North Caucasus was employed in agriculture, the Kuban being one of the richest grain-producing regions of Russia. However, the economic character of the region changed considerably when rich oil wells were founded in the Groznyi area at the turn of the century. The Groznyi oilfield soon developed into the second largest oil centre of Russia with an annual production of 1.2 million tons, which was actually more than could be transported by rail to the harbours of Novorossiisk, Rostov or Petrovsk. Like the larger part of industry in Russia, the North Caucasian oil production was financed

by foreign capital. After the year 1910 the oil production in Groznyi and Maikop fields was in the hands of British companies.²⁷

To the south side of the mountains lies Transcaucasia (*Zakavkaz*). This land mass was divided by the Tsarist government into the provinces of Suchum, Kutais, Batum, Kars, Tiflis, Elizavetpol and Baku. The main nationalities of Transcaucasia later to form their own states were the Armenians, the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis.

Unlike the Don Territory, the Caucasus had only a relatively short history as a part of the Russian Empire. During the 19th century Russia had gradually conquered the region, which had been under Ottoman and Persian domination for centuries. The new Russian rule over the Transcaucasian peoples was often even more heavy-handed. However, economic integration into the Russian Empire, which started gradually after the conquest, spelt a considerable development in the region. Agricultural products unique to the area found huge new markets. Increasing demand made it possible to specialize in certain products like wheat, tea and cotton. In the last decades of the 19th century the difficult transport conditions of Transcaucasia improved dramatically with the construction of railway across the Isthmus from Poti via Tiflis to Baku. The original reason for building the railway was naturally military-strategic, but the effect on economic development was also enormous. Finally, the area was connected to the main Russian railway system when the line from Rostov on Don to Baku was opened in the year 1900.²⁸

Transcaucasia had been famous for its natural resources for centuries. A considerable mining industry developed in Tiflis and Batum

²⁷Lt-Col. Blackwood: Report on Visit of British Military Mission to the Volunteer Army under General Denikin in South Russia. November-December 1918, W0 106/1191, NA. The companies were named in the Report as follows: North Caucasian Oilfields Ltd in Groznyi, The Russian-English Maikop Petroleum and Trading Co and Oil Field Industry Society Spiess.

²⁸Zürer, *Kaukasien*, pp. 5-6.

at the turn of the century with manganese and copper as the main products. Most important of all, however, was oil. The first oil wells were drilled near Baku in 1869. In 1890 the Baku oilfields produced more oil than all the fields in the United States. Eventually, however, Baku lost out in the competition for world markets. Obsolete technology, stringent taxation and, probably most importantly, labour unrest during the revolutions suppressed production drastically. However, Baku remained the richest single oilfield in the world and was invaluable for the entire Russian economy. During the last years before the First World War most of the eight million tons of oil produced in Baku was consumed in Russia and only 15% was pumped through the pipeline to Batum and exported to Europe and the Middle East.²⁹

Local Armenian and Azerbaijani entrepreneurs had started the development of the oil industry under the protection of the Russian government, but soon after the government abolished the state monopoly foreign capital started to flow to the Baku oilfields. As a precondition to further development of the industry, the flow of foreign capital caused the ultimate control of the oil industry to fall into foreign hands. Finally, as in the North Caucasus the British had the largest investments in the Baku fields. In 1914 42.4 per cent of the oil was pumped and refined by British companies.³⁰

The exploitation of natural resources turned the Caucasus from just another hostile borderland inhabited by constantly rebelling natives to one of the key areas of the Russian economy. In the turmoil, which followed the collapse of the Russian Empire, there were many takers for these riches.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-8, Hassman, *Oil in the Soviet Union*, pp. 25-30.

³⁰ Kentmann, *Der Kaukasus*, pp. 257-61, Miller, *The Economic Development of Russia*, pp. 266.

1.3. The Problem of Nationalities

One of most difficult problems the British were to face during their intervention was the conflict between the numerous nationalities populating South Russia and especially the Caucasus. There is probably no territory of equal size anywhere in the world with a comparable diversity of languages and races. The integration of these areas into the Russian Empire had certainly not been complete, and as the decaying central government began to lose its control, strong nationalistic movements started to press for independence from Russia.

It is a paradox that during the first hundred years of Russian rule the efforts of tsarist governors to Russify Transcaucasia did not result in the assimilation of the local people; it resulted instead in the creation of nationalities. This was especially the case in Georgia. The centralized Russian administration actually reunited the divided and defeated Georgians, first politically and then economically. The national formation of the Georgians, as an ancient kingdom, had traditionally been shaped by the contacts and confrontations with other nationalities. In the nineteenth century, in addition to the Russian rulers, it was the wealthy bourgeoisie of Armenians that worked as a stimulant to Georgian self-definition. The economic status of the Georgians was gradually pushed down and they were also almost totally without political power. The traditional Georgian leaders, the gentry, failed to exercise leadership in the new situation, and their backward-looking nostalgic nationalism found little response among westernized Georgian liberals or among more radical elements attracted by populist and Marxist revolutionary programs in the context of the 'all-Russian' movement against autocracy. Eventually, it was the Marxists, developed into Mensheviks, who became the leaders of the Georgian movement of national liberation at the turn of the century. Marxism provided the Georgians with an ideology focused on the economic situation and at the same time aimed against their ethnic enemies, the Russian autocracy and

the Armenian bourgeoisie.³¹ However the Georgian Mensheviks remained politically within the sphere of the all-Russian movement, and after the collapse of the autocratic state in 1917, their goal was not at first independent nationhood, but for Georgia to become an autonomous part of a future Russian Federal Republic. Only later, after the Bolsheviks had seized power in the central Russia, did the Georgian government declare independence.

In contrast to Marxist hegemony over the Georgian national movement, the Armenians were torn between a socialist intelligentsia in the Russian Caucasus, a purely nationalistic element of the Ottoman Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and the bourgeoisie, who were unwilling to become involved in any kind of nationalistic struggle. The Dashnaktsutiun, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, was an attempt to unite the Armenian nation. The most important point in the party's programme was the liberation of the Armenians first from the Ottoman rule and eventually also from Russian rule. This, it was hoped, would be assisted by the European Powers and by the International and Russian revolutionary movements. The Dashnaktsutiun soon developed into a conspiratorial and para-military movement, taking actions both in Turkey and in Russia. Consequently, the Ottoman government replied harshly starting the massacres of the Armenians, which developed into a genocide during the World War.³² The Armenian national movement formed on the basis of the fight for survival against the Ottomans and this was closely connected to their conflict with the Transcaucasian Turkish people of the Azerbaijanis.

The national identity of the largest of the three Transcaucasian peoples, the Azerbaijanis, developed partly along similar lines to their neighbours. Particularist tendencies were weakened by the

³¹ Suny, 'The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia', *Transcaucasia*, pp.109-119, and 138-140.

³² Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, pp. 28-40, Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, pp. 8-19.

Russian administration in rural areas and the industrial centre of Baku brought rapid economic development to the area. In addition, the national development had an important Islamic element and was related to the Pan-Turkish movement. As in Georgia there was a conflict between the dominant Armenian bourgeoisie and the native middle-class and rural population. This tension developed, partly because of the aggressive politics of the Dashnaktsutiun, to large-scale inter-communal violence during the revolutionary years of 1905 and 1906. The blows suffered at the hands of the armed bands of Armenians finally persuaded the Azerbaijanis organize politically. The development began among the intelligentsia in the urban centres like Baku. The Marxist movement never gained mass support among the Moslems and the most important Azerbaijani party, Musavat, soon adopted clearly Nationalistic and Pan-Islamistic lines. Pan-Turkism, however, lost its attractiveness soon after the beginning of the World War as the disasters suffered by the Ottoman army revealed the weakness of Turkey. Azerbaijani Moslems remained fairly loyal to the Russian state until the end of the war and, like the Georgians, only began making progress towards independence after the revolutions of 1917.³³

The North Caucasian peoples had no clearly defined political orientation despite the fact that they were far less assimilated and more dissatisfied with Russian rule than the peoples of Transcaucasia. The mountains of the Caucasus had been conquered by Russia in one of the bloodiest campaigns of its history. The deep-rooted hatred towards the Russians was not, however, sufficient to produce a common national movement. The numerous nationalities had no ethnic unity or cultural community, and they even feuded among themselves. The Kabardians, the former rulers of the North Caucasus, were still the richest people in the area owning more land than the Cossacks. The Ossetians on the other hand were mostly Christians and had a sizeable intelligentsia. The

³³Swietochowski, 'National Consciousness and Political Orientations in Azerbaijan, 1905-1920', *Transcaucasia*, pp. 209-19.

real problem of the region was the Chechens and the Ingushi, who were warlike peoples expelled from valleys to live in poverty in the mountains. They were only waiting for the day when they might get revenge and regain their lost lands. The native resistance against the Russians, and indeed against some peoples like the Kabardians, was fused by religious fanaticism. The mountain tribes led by religious leaders, the imams, had vague goal of establishing a theocratic Muslim state.³⁴

The situation in the North Caucasus also differed from the one in Transcaucasia, in that a large Russian population had immigrated there according to the imperialistic policies. The Russian population of the Terek *oblast'*, about half of the entire population, was divided into two groups: the Terek Cossacks and the *inogorodnye* who were peasants who had immigrated to the area during the last decades of the nineteenth century or workers in the new oil industry in Groznyi and Maikop. The Cossacks and the *inogorodnye* did not get along well and the situation developed into a three-cornered struggle between two groups of Russians and the mountain peoples. A very complex situation developed immediately after the collapse of the Russian central government as the Cossacks supported the White counter-revolutionaries, the *inogorodnye* co-operated with the Bolsheviks and the natives fought against Russians and each other in temporary alliances with the Azerbaijanis, the Georgians and the Bolsheviks.³⁵

In the Don Cossack Territory, though populated mainly by Russians, the situation was not clear either. The conflict between the Cossacks and the *inogorodnye* was fundamentally a social one. However, the Cossacks had developed a vague nationalistic ideology, which was a form of local patriotism based on the idea of the Cossacks' ethnic and cultural superiority over the Russian peasants and the

³⁴Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 94-7.

³⁵Ibid.

glorious past of the free Cossacks. In addition to local conflict with the *inogorodnye*, Cossack "Nationalism" which developed later into separatism from the Russian Central Government was to cause serious problems within the White movement.

After the revolutions of 1917 attempts at co-operation were made between the different nationalities in South Russia and the Caucasus. The main parties of the three Transcaucasian nations founded a federal parliament and government, the Transcaucasian Commissariat. However, the Commissariat broke up after only few months, and relations between the Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaizhanis developed into an open conflict. Similarly, the various Cossack hosts attempted to work together against the Bolsheviks. The *ataman* of the Don, Petr Krasnov, even hatched plans for a Cossack state including the Don, Kuban, Terek and Astrakhan Hosts. These plans were never fulfilled because of the fierce resistance offered by the Denikin's White government.³⁶

The problematic relations between the nationalities were to be one of the fundamental elements of the Civil War and the incompetence and unwillingness of both the various nationalities and the Whites to solve the situation was to have serious consequences partially causing their defeat in the war against the Bolsheviks. It was also one of the problems the British had to tackle during the intervention.

³⁶Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia II*, pp. 128-9.

2. THE GREAT WAR AND THE REVOLUTION

2.1. The Collapse of the Eastern Front

The March Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the Russian army changed the nature of the alliance between the Western powers and Russia. Russia had constituted a main pillar in the entente strategy, but now she was threatening to jeopardize the whole Allied campaign against the Central Powers. This change of status immediately affected British policies. The British government was well aware of the diminishing fighting capabilities of the Russian Army under the Provisional Government and began to modify its strategy accordingly. The British considered, however, the continued presence of Russia in the war – tying down still dozens of German divisions – as most important. The prospect of Germany concentrating all her forces on the Western Front was too dreadful to contemplate. The British had exhausted themselves in ceaseless offensives from Arras to Passchendaele throughout the year 1917, and the French Army was in need of recuperation after the unsuccessful Nivelle offensive which had led to mutinies. Though the United States had entered the war in April 1917, the effect of her entry would not become apparent until well into 1918. As the Russian Provisional government appeared incapable of fulfilling its task in the command of the army the British gradually turned their attention to right-wing forces willing, and perhaps more capable, of reviving the army and so continuing the war. Finally, the Bolshevik coup d'état in November and their declaration to end the alliance and to seek peace with the Central Powers caused the British government to take the first steps towards intervention.

The British attitude towards the March revolution and the abdication of the Tsar was largely neutral. In effect, the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, had advised the Tsar about the acute need for reform. What mattered was the impact of the political changes

inside Russia on its war effort. The War Cabinet quickly recognized the new Russian Provisional Government that had confirmed its allegiance to the entente. The British and their French allies were, however, well aware that the Provisional Government that had been formed by the Duma, the *Stavka* (the Supreme Headquarters) generals and the industrialists did not rule Russia alone but in reality shared the power with a system of Soviets that had come into existence throughout the country. The Soviets' revolutionary influence was especially strong in the army; in many units soldiers formed, for example, committees that held meetings on strategy and on whether to obey their officers' orders. All this made the Allies very pessimistic about the promises of improvements in the Russian armed forces made by the Provisional Government.³⁷

Britain had been supporting the Russian army with a vast amount of war supplies and monetary loans since the beginning of the war. The use of supplies had, however, been entirely unsatisfactory. Indeed, the reorganization of supply had already been discussed earlier in 1917 in the Petrograd conference. Brigadier F.C. Poole (who was later to play a prominent role in the intervention as the head of British missions first in North and later in South Russia), was appointed as the head of the British mission to organize the distribution of matériel. Late in March 1917, an inter-departmental committee, Milner's committee, was set up in London to co-operate with Poole in Petrograd. In addition to its original task, Milner's committee held most of the discussions which prepared the Cabinet decisions on Russian policy up until the Armistice, November 1918. The deepening decay of the Russian army made the sending of valuable war material very dubious. However, aid

³⁷ War Cabinet 16 March 1917, Cab 23/2, NA, Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations I*, pp. 38-46.

was continued, albeit in limited amounts, until late autumn 1917 to encourage the Russians to keep fighting.³⁸

The much-awaited Russian summer offensive proved to be a deadly blow to the Russian army. The initial successes, indeed unexpected in Britain, spurred the War Cabinet temporarily to reconsider its policy and to increase the supply back to its pre-revolutionary level. But soon the offensive turned into an uncontrolled retreat as the Germans counterattacked the dispirited Russian troops. When the scale of disaster became visible, the attitudes of both the Cabinet and the British military representatives in Russia hardened once again. General Barter, the British attaché in the *Stavka*, informed the Russian Commander in Chief, General Alekseev that the continuation of Allied support was totally dependent on reinstatement of firm discipline in the Russian army.³⁹

In this difficult situation, the Provisional Government, headed since June 1917 by Aleksandr Kerensky, appointed General Lavr Kornilov as the new Commander-in-Chief in an attempt to restore the army's morale. Kornilov had made himself famous by using drastic measures to contain revolution in his own troops on the south-eastern front. The British representatives enthusiastically welcomed the appointment. After a few meetings with the new commander, General Barter reported him as being "the only hope" of saving the Russian Army.⁴⁰ Barter urged the British government to inform Kerensky of its approval for Kornilov's policy – restoring the death penalty and abolishing the soldier's committees.⁴¹ The Cabinet was careful not to interfere officially in the policy of the Provisional Government, but

³⁸ Brig. F.C. Poole: Report of the Work of British Military Equipment Section in Russia, 1 February 1918, CAB 27/189/16, NA, and Neilson, *Strategy and Supply*, pp. 238-41 and 255-6.

³⁹ Barter to Robertson, 31 July 1917, CAB 24/1583 GT, NA.

⁴⁰ Barter's Report, 13th August 1917, CAB 24/1751 GT, NA.

⁴¹ Barter to Robertson, 12th August, CAB 24/1705 GT, NA.

instructed Buchanan to speak to Kerensky about conceding Kornilov's demands if he felt it would improve the situation.⁴² Eventually, Buchanan, though obviously also sympathetic to Kornilov, did not believe in the success of a coup d'état the General was rumoured to be planning, and did not want to encourage such action by providing diplomatic support from the British Government.

No doubt, the situation was perceived differently in revolutionary Petrograd and at the *Stavka* in Mogilev, which was surrounded by troops loyal to Kornilov. After the Moscow State Conference, where Kornilov made a speech declaring his demands to the Provisional government, General Barter was even more convinced of his importance to the Allied cause. Barter suggested some high British decorations for Kornilov as recognition of his policy and to counter Buchanan's views reported, 'I am afraid that the Ambassador does not realize that the situation can only be saved by vigorous measures.'⁴³ But Kornilov was not to receive political support from the British government until it was too late. Relations between Kerensky and Kornilov continued to worsen, and on 9 September 1917 after being dismissed from his post, Kornilov started his abortive march towards Petrograd. Alarmed by the news, the Cabinet, on Buchanan's lines, decided to appeal to Kerensky to come to an understanding with Kornilov.⁴⁴ By this time Kornilov's advance had already failed as the soldiers had ceased to obey his orders.

The Allied involvement in the Kornilov Affair has been amply discussed in earlier scholarship. The general line of Western historiography has been to admit sympathies, but to deny any actual support for Kornilov by the Allies. Kerensky, for his part, made strong

⁴² War Cabinet 15 August 1917, CAB 23/3, NA.

⁴³ Barter to Robertson 26th August 1917, CAB 24/1828 GT, and Barter's report 2nd Sept 1917, CAB 24/2021 GT, NA.

⁴⁴ War Cabinet 12 September 1917, CAB 23/4, NA.

accusations that the whole ‘counter-revolutionary’ movement led by Kornilov had been financed by British agents. Indeed, Soviet historiography put forward a similar picture.⁴⁵ These ‘conspiratorial’ interpretations are not supported by any documentation. The only actual evidence presented about the British role is General Barter’s reports to his superiors. Barter’s actions probably encouraged Kornilov to make his final move.

What has remained undiscussed, however, is the connection between the mysterious Mr. Alad’in and the British government. Alad’in was one of the background figures in the Kornilov movement and later worked under General Denikin’s regime. The strong influence of this journalist and former member of the *Duma* on Kornilov has been clearly admitted by historians. Alad’in had spent several years attached to the British Expeditionary Force on the Western front. On 12 July 1917, the British attaché in Petrograd, General Knox, was informed about Alad’in’s return to Russia. His record was said to have been ‘rather satisfactory’, and Knox was advised to co-operate with him.⁴⁶ Whether Mr. Alad’in was on the payroll of the British intelligence and what his actual mission was remains uncertain – that is to say, as long as the archives of the British Secret Service of this period remain inaccessible. Alad’in may have been paid for information, but that he had been paid for organizing a coup d’état is unlikely.

The consequences of the infamous Kornilov Affair were far more dramatic than the affair itself. It was a disaster for the move towards democratic society in Russia as the gap between the military and the democratic political parties deepened. The forces opposing the

⁴⁵ For the Western view see e.g. Katkov, *Kornilov Affair*, Figes, *A Peoples Tragedy*, pp. 442-53, and Swain, *Origins of the Russian Civil War*, pp. 102-3. Kerensky’s accusations are in his *Crucifixion of Liberty*, p. 351. An exemplary Soviet study is *Bol’sheviki-organizatory razgromy Kornilovshchiny* by Bromberg and Iakushev.

⁴⁶ Katkov, *Kornilov Affair*, pp. 61-62. Robertson to Knox, 12th July 1917, WO 106/1037, NA.

Bolsheviks were not able to form a unified front. On the other hand, the popular view of Kornilov's coup as evidence of a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy' provided the Bolsheviks with useful propaganda for their 'pre-emptive' seizure of power in November 1917. Kornilov's failure to restore the moral of the Russian army was also a disaster for the Allied war effort. The behaviour of the troops during the attempted coup proved that there was no hope of restoring discipline in the army. The British assistant military attaché, Colonel Blair, reported that Russia could offer no further assistance to the Allies, and would probably seek peace in a few months time. He was also aware of the increasing power of the Bolsheviks, whom he declared the only winners of the 'Affair'.⁴⁷ The British had lost their faith in Kerensky and seemed actually to share the view of Kornilov's supporters that a Bolshevik coup was preferable. The Bolsheviks were not believed to stay in power for long, and once they were defeated, socialism would be entirely discredited. Thus, the way would be cleared for a strong military government, which would restore order in Russia and make possible its continued presence in the war.⁴⁸

During the actual Bolshevik take-over, the Allied representatives in Russia, though negative in their attitudes towards the Bolsheviks, remained neutral as they had been during the March revolution. The new government was not recognized by any of the Allied powers, but they wanted to avoid open conflict with the Bolsheviks. At first, the Bolshevik regime was not expected to last long. And later, after Kerensky had been clearly defeated, the Allied governments hoped that the Bolsheviks would eventually be persuaded to remain in the alliance, either by Allied pressure or as a result of unfavourable conditions in the peace negotiations with the Central Powers. The Russians were not expected to play an active part in the war

⁴⁷ Col. Blair's Report on Kornilov's Coup d'Etat, 15th Sept. 1917, WO 106/1036, NA.

⁴⁸ Figes & Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, pp. 94-5.

anymore, and Germany had actually started to transfer her troops to the Western Front already in August 1917. But what the Allies were afraid of was the growing influence of the Germans in Russia. It was feared that the Germans would nullify the Allied blockade and eventually turn the war in their favour by exploiting the vast resources of Russia – minerals, cereals and oil.⁴⁹ In addition to the obvious interest in keeping Russia on their side, the Allies had important financial and economic interests in the country. Pre-war and war credits had cost Britain, France and lately the United States considerable sums, all of which would possibly be lost if an open conflict occurred between the Allies and Bolshevik Russia. Thus, for the next three months contact was maintained with the new regime, but at the same time the Allies began to support forces opposing the Bolsheviks in hopes that somehow a Russian ally would emerge.

2.2. Disintegration of the Russian Empire

The Russian Empire, a vast conglomeration of nationalities, had already begun to fall apart during the period of the Provisional Government. With the disappearance of the strong central government, personified by the Tsar, the subordinate nationalities like the Ukrainians, the Cossacks and the Caucasian Nationalities had begun to demand their rights in the form of political and cultural autonomy within the new ‘democratic state’. The emergence of Bolshevik power only strengthened the determination of the peripheral nationalities to govern themselves. The reason for this was not simply the propagandist Bolshevik declaration of national self-determination but to prevent the anarchy in central Russia from spreading to relatively stable borderlands. The national governments soon proved to be formed on a predominantly non-Bolshevik basis. In South Russia the interests of the

⁴⁹ ‘Notes on the present situation in Russia’ by Balfour, 9 Dec 1917, CAB GT 24/2932,NA.

new governments and the Bolsheviks immediately conflicted and, consequently, these areas provided the base for the formation of anti-Bolshevik movements whom the Allies began to support. The break-up of the Empire into national governments also coincided with the Central Powers' attack following the unsuccessful peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks.

In the Ukraine Kerensky had recognized the *Rada* as an autonomous government in September 1917. Following the Bolshevik coup, the *Rada* no longer recognized the new Soviet government of Petrograd as the authority over the Ukraine, but instead declared the independent Ukrainian People's Republic on 20 November 1917. However, the Bolsheviks could not see how Russia would survive without Ukrainian grain and raw materials. In addition they were aware of *Rada's* plans for seeking Germany's assistance. An ultimatum was sent to the *Rada* accusing the Ukrainians of being counter-revolutionaries on 4 December 1917 and invasion followed a few days later. After a six weeks' struggle, Bolshevik troops conquered Kiev only to be thrown out by the Germans next month.

To the southeast, the Cossacks had established their provisional autonomous governments, by electing representative assemblies (*Krug* in the Don and *Rada* in the Kuban), and by electing military executive leaders, the *atamans*. Despite the formal recognition between the Cossack governments and the Provisional government, relations had been deteriorating during the summer of 1917. The Don Ataman, Kaledin, was denounced by Kerensky as a counter-revolutionary plotter and a secret ally of Kornilov. The Cossack leaders had not originally been planning official secession from Russia, but the growing anarchy throughout Russia and the power struggle with the Soviet elements within their own territories prompted them to take more drastic measures. On 16 October 1917, Cossack representatives of the Don, Kuban, Terek, Astrakhan, Ural and Daghestan formed the 'South-eastern Union'. In the treaty establishing the union the *voiskos*

guaranteed each others independence in internal affairs, set the establishment of a Russian federal democratic republic as their goal and pledged themselves to a mutual struggle against the Bolsheviks. It was no accident that General Alekseev chose the Don as a base for his Volunteer Army. The Don was a 'natural' choice for generals like Alekseev and Kornilov as a platform for the reintegration of Russia. They still seemed to believe to some extent in the myth of Cossacks as the defenders of the traditional values of the Holy Russia and were ignorant and unaware of the effects of the Revolution and local sentiments of the Cossacks. For the White generals, the Cossacks were still loyal and ethnically trustworthy Russians, unlike the nationalistic Finns or Georgians, and thus the most reliable of the new governments.⁵⁰

An attempt was also made to unite the numerous nationalities of the Northern Caucasus into a 'Union of Mountain Peoples', largely under Moslem clerical and secular leaders. After the Bolshevik coup an affiliation with the South-eastern Union was negotiated, but these efforts failed because of tribal feuds and traditional hostility towards the Cossacks. Bolshevik influence was also growing, especially in the areas of the oil industry. Strong revolutionary committees were installed in Vladikavkaz and Petrovsk and, as a result, the conservative Moslem movement was confined mainly to mountainous central Daghestan.⁵¹

Further south, in Transcaucasia, a Diet of Armenian, Georgian and Tatar peoples assembled in Tiflis at the end of August, 1917, and in September it declared the Transcaucasian Federal Republic, though technically the republic remained as an integral part of Russia. However, the three parties could agree upon no common policy: the Georgians stood for complete independence from Russia; the Armenians

⁵⁰ Holquist, 'A Russian Vendée', pp. 78-89 and 128-9, Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty II*, p. 182.

⁵¹ Allen & Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, pp. 501-4.

preferred an autonomous Transcaucasian federation, considering Russian protection against Turkey invaluable; and the Tatar population, with no strong national traditions, looked towards a union with Turkey. Although deeply divided, the Transcaucasian Federation proved highly resistant to the Bolsheviks. The Russian soldiers of the fast disintegrating Army of the Caucasus, although largely pro-Bolshevik, were mainly interested in returning to their distant homes, not in making revolution in Transcaucasia.

The disintegration of the Russian empire was further accelerated by the actions of the Central Powers. The famous Decree of Peace had been a vital element in the success of the Bolsheviks' struggle for power, but it proved to be much harder to secure and to keep the promised peace. The armistice was signed on 16 December 1917, and the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk started. The Bolshevik emissaries countered the harsh German demands with propaganda hoping to spread the revolution into the German Army. The results of this 'no war, no peace policy' were, however, disastrous for Russia as the Central Powers resumed the state of war in February 1918. German and Austrian troops advanced virtually unopposed deep into Russian territory. Only a few weeks later, on 3 March 1918, the Bolsheviks were pressed to sign a treaty with even harsher terms. Poland and the Baltic provinces were ceded to Germany. Russian forces were to be pulled out from Finland, Ukraine, and Transcaucasia, giving these areas the possibility of independence from Russia. This meant, in effect, that these states were to be annexed to the Central Powers or at least made their satellite states. Russia also had to demobilize her army and refrain from any agitation or propaganda.

Historian Evan Mawdsley has described the Central Power's invasion of February 1918, as 'the most important intervention' of the Civil War.⁵² Whether its effects are comparable to the Allied

⁵² Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil war*, p. 43.

intervention that followed it or not, the invasion certainly had most dramatic results in the developments in South Russia and Transcaucasia. Most of the Ukraine was soon in German hands and a puppet regime led by the pro-German Hetman Skoropadskii was established in Kiev. The German and Austrian armies occupied the Crimean peninsula and Donetz Basin, advancing as far as Rostov on the Don during the summer of 1918. In Transcaucasia, Turkey began a rapid advance first taking back areas lost to Russia during the war and thereafter entering Armenia.

The ethnic minorities and, in the case of the Cossacks, cultural minorities, were to be a significant factor in the Civil War. The Border States and smaller nationalities added one more participant to the war. At first these areas, free of the Bolsheviks, provided a potential location for the Whites to organize their forces. But finally the mutual incompetence and unwillingness to accommodate their policies, and to unify all anti-Bolshevik forces was an important factor in the final defeat of not just the Whites but in terminating most of the national independence in the Border States.

2.3. First Moves towards the Intervention

The Allies were deeply concerned with the Bolshevik policies and the German success prompted them to seek contact with the enemies of the Bolshevik regime. The attention of British military representatives in Russia turned towards South-east Russia. On the Don *Ataman* Kaledin had been organizing 'the Cossack Republic', independently of Russian central government, since the summer of 1917. Under the protection of the Cossacks, General Alekseev had also established his organization to revive the Russian army around a core of volunteer officers. British military agents were also sent to the Caucasus to investigate the possibilities of supporting local governments against the imminent

Turkish threat. As the front lines of the Civil War started to emerge, the conflict between the Allies and the Bolsheviks became evident.

The British government formulated its Russian policy in the Cabinet's discussions in early December 1917. It was decided to support 'any responsible body in Russia willing to oppose the Maximalist movement (i.e. the Bolsheviks)', and 'within reason to give money freely to such bodies as were prepared to help the Allied cause'. Later, the War Office was rather vaguely instructed to use any sum of money necessary to maintain resistance to the Central Powers in South-east Russia.⁵³ British military representatives in Russia began to pursue these instructions with some haste. Captain Noel was sent to the Don to negotiate with Kaledin. The British military attaché in Romania, General Ballard, was authorized to promise financial support of ten million pounds to Kaledin. In the Caucasus, General Shore was instructed to assist Armenians and Georgians to purchase arms. The General Staff also started to send British officers to the Caucasus to assist in organizing local forces.⁵⁴ These instructions were the first step in the policy leading to a full-scale intervention. Operations were, however, supposed to be extremely confidential, since the Cabinet was trying to avoid open conflict with the Bolsheviks.

The first reports from South Russia that reached London were not encouraging. Earlier information of a well-trained force of 250,000 men on the Don proved entirely false. These estimations were based on the stories of the Russian emissaries who regularly called at the British Embassy in Petrograd. British military agent, Colonel Jack, reported after his visit to Novocherkassk that Cossacks were tired of fighting and their regiments were disorganized. The younger Cossacks returning from the front, the *frontoviki*, were especially reluctant to take orders

⁵³ War Cabinet, 3 & 14 December 1917, CAB 23/9, NA.

⁵⁴ 'Organization of military forces in South Russia', Memorandum by General Staff, 21 Dec 1917, CAB 24/3068 GT, NA.

from their *atamans*. Kaledin had his hands full in keeping order and fighting the Bolsheviks in the Don Region, and no action outside the *Voisko* could be expected in the near future. Jack had also interviewed General Alekseev, who admitted openly the tremendous problems the Volunteer movement was facing. Recruiting was going slowly, and men who joined were mainly officers or cadets from military colleges, the total strength of the corps being only 2,500 men. The organization also lacked money and supplies. But the British did not see the situation equally as hopeless, as the Bolsheviks were estimated to be not much stronger. Complete chaos reigned in central and southern Russia and the Bolsheviks were unable to prevent the free movement of their opponents, still less to organize sufficient troops to attack the Don. At the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918 there were no battles - only skirmishes.⁵⁵ Thus, plans to help the anti-Bolshevik organizations were continued.

In the meantime, the French government had started its own operations in Russia mainly to support the Romanian Army that was being pushed towards the Ukraine by the German and Austrian armies. To coordinate the present Allied policy a secret Anglo-French conference was called in Paris. The Conference was concluded with the 'Anglo-French Convention' on 23 December 1917, in which southern Russia was divided into 'spheres of activity' between the British and the French.⁵⁶ The British zone was to include the Cossack territory, and the French zone Bessarabia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. It was stated that the convention was directed ultimately against the Central Powers; direct clashes with the Bolsheviks were to be avoided. It was also decided to support, but *not* to recognise the governments of Finland, the

⁵⁵ Colonel Jack (Moscow) to D.M.I., 30 Dec 1917. CAB 24/3184 GT, De Candolle to C.I.G.S., 6 Jan 1918, WO 32/5668, NA.

⁵⁶ See above, p. 17.

Baltic Countries, the Ukraine, the Cossacks or Transcaucasia, which were all seeking sovereignty from Russia.⁵⁷

Most Western historians have described the convention that was to define the sphere of operation of the Allies during the Civil War as an ‘ad hoc wartime arrangement’. The Soviet historians considered the treaty simply as an imperialistic plan to divide Russia.⁵⁸ Both explanations are simplifications. The convention was indeed reconfirmed a year later in London and the French really operated on their zone according to this ‘international’ agreement and denied forcibly Denikin’s claims to the Crimea or the Ukraine.

British intelligence officers, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Keyes, began to execute the War Cabinet’s instructions in Petrograd. They worked out, in co-operation with the Russian banker Mr Jaroszynski, an elaborate scheme to finance the anti-Bolshevik forces within the British ‘sphere of activity’. It was designed to counteract the influence of German finance within Russia by bringing Russian banks under British control. Under the scheme the British government was to give Mr. Jaroszynski a loan of six million pounds (200 million roubles) to purchase a majority of securities in five Russian banks. Mr. Jaroszynski was also supposed to set up ‘a Cossack Bank’ in South Russia, which could issue banknotes, and thus provide funding to the Don Cossacks and the Volunteer Army. The wild plan proceeded, after the approval of the Cabinet’s Russian Committee, and initially 185,000 pounds were credited to the bank account of British agent Hugh Leech, from where the sum was drafted by Jaroszynski’s agents.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Anglo-French Conference 23 Dec 1917, Minutes, CAB 28/3,NA, The Convention is printed in *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Series I, Vol III, pp. 369-70.

⁵⁸ The most cited Western history is Ullman’s *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, Vol I, pp. 53-6, and for Soviet view see *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny*, Vol III, pp.173-6.

⁵⁹ ‘Russian Bank Scheme’, memorandum by Col. Keyes, 29 March 1918, and Treasury to Foreign Office, 25 Feb 1918, FO 371/2784, NA.

But the British were too late. Only minor sums were delivered successfully to the South. As the couriers, with the main delivery of 15 million roubles, were on their way to the Don at the beginning of February 1918, Kaledin's government lived its last days. Several Cossack regiments had mutinied and opened the front to the Bolshevik army. Novocherkassk was surrounded and Kaledin shot himself. The small Volunteer army of Alekseev and Kornilov had to fight its way out to the Kuban. In this situation the bank scheme was postponed.⁶⁰ The British had ultimately failed to support the anti-Bolshevik forces in South Russia at this early stage of the Civil War. These secret financial operations did not, however, remain unnoticed by the Bolsheviks and the White movement was closely associated with 'Imperialists' money' right from the outset.

The 'Bank Scheme' was not the only operation directed against the Bolsheviks by the British. The Secret Service, led in Moscow by Commander Boyce, had built, in co-operation with the Allies and anti-Bolshevik parties, especially the Kadets, a large network of agents and couriers throughout the country. The British and Allied agents started to blow up ammunition dumps, railways and bridges before the advancing German and Austrian Armies as early as in the spring 1918. In Novorossiisk, the harbour in which most of the British aid was later to be shipped, Allied agents bribed the local soviet and paid the Bolshevik sailors to scuttle their ships before the Germans arrived. These vessels included two dreadnoughts, six destroyers, and some thirty transport and cargo steamers.⁶¹ The activities of Allied agents, however, started to turn more openly against the Bolsheviks during the summer 1918. In August, the Cheka exposed the infamous 'Lockhart Plot', and the British consul and other Allied diplomats were arrested

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Report by Vice-consul Mr. Jerram, 19.11. 1918, FO 371/2852, NA.

and accused of planning to overthrow Lenin's government. The Allied governments strictly denied this.

Gordon Brook-Shepherd's study *The Iron Maze* contains interesting new information about the affair.⁶² There was indeed an Allied plot against the Bolsheviks. A British agent Sidney Reilly had masterminded it. Lenin's Praetorians, the Lettish regiment, were to be paid to turn against the Bolsheviks, to murder Lenin and Trotsky and seize power in Moscow. All this, as Brook-Shepherd argues was, after all, a very clever Cheka deception. The Cheka was vaguely aware of Allied plans and lured the Reilly and his companions to believe that the Letts might be interested in changing sides. A high-ranking Lettish officer was sent to meet the Allied representatives, and Reilly indeed handed him a large sum to buy off the Lettish troops. The Cheka was, as a result, able to gather information on the Allied intelligence networks and arrest many of the agents. Despite the fact that the 'Lockhart Plot' never materialized, it is another clear example of the shift in the Allied policy against the Bolsheviks already in the beginning of the year 1918.

Meanwhile, the situation in the South had become most critical. The Ukraine and the northern coast of the Black Sea were in German hands and Turkish forces were rapidly advancing in the Caucasus. As noted, the British had already started to work out their plan to counter the invasion by the Central Powers in January 1918. It was, however, extremely difficult to execute the operation. The small British Military Agency at Tiflis, under Colonel Pike, gave financial assistance to organize units of Armenian and Georgian volunteers to restore the Caucasian front. He was able to raise considerable sums of money with the help of the British business establishment in the Caucasus. Pike provided the Transcaucasian Commissariat with over

⁶² Brook-Shepherd, *Iron Maze, The Western Secret Services and the Bolsheviks*, London 1998. The study is based largely on intelligence material still not open to the public. Chapters about the 'Lockhart Plot' are based mainly on the papers of the defected Cheka general Orlov.

five million roubles, and even sent an officer with 150,000 roubles to support Kornilov in the Kuban. Newly formed, mainly Armenian units were not, however, able to halt the Turkish onslaught. In this difficult situation, the Georgian government opted for German help and soon German troops were landed at Poti and they occupied strategic points of the country. The British mission had to be moved to Vladikavkaz in Daghestan, where Col. Pike continued his activities by remaining in contact with Kornilov and rallying the Terek Cossacks against the Bolsheviks. Colonel Pike was eventually killed by a stray bullet in an unsuccessful attempt of the Terek Cossacks to take Vladikavkaz in July 1918. The rest of the 'Caucasus Agency' was arrested by the Bolsheviks and transported to Moscow.⁶³

A larger British mission, named 'Dunsterforce' after its commander General Dunsterville, was on its way from Baghdad to the Caucasus. The original intention had been to send a mission of 200 British officers and 200 NCOs to organize and lead the new Transcaucasian force.⁶⁴ Dunsterforce arrived, however, too late to proceed with this plan. In June 1918 the Turks were already approaching their main goal Baku and its oilfields. The British decided to attempt to halt the Turks before they reached Baku. The city was governed by 'the Baku Commune' and was at least in theory under the authority of the Bolshevik central government. However, the Socialist-Revolutionary and Dashnak elements of the 'Commune' were willing to co-operate with the British, despite the furious protest by the Bolsheviks, who were obeying orders from Moscow. Encouraged by Dunsterville's promises, and on the other hand, anti-Bolshevik statements, the SR's and the Dashnaks eventually forced the Bolsheviks commissars out of the

⁶³ Report from Maj. G. M. Goldsmith, British military agent Army of Caucasus, 1 July 1919, WO 95/4960, NA. Pike's contacts with the Volunteers is also described in 'Raport, Shtab Dobr'armii', 6.9.1918, Vrangeli papers 33/10, HIA.

⁶⁴ War Diary, Caucasus Military Mission, WO 95/5042, NA.

government. The new government 'the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship' issued an open appeal for British troops to defend the city.⁶⁵

The forward party of the Dunsterforce was landed in Baku on 4 August 1918. The situation was, however, desperate. The British, comprising altogether only about 1,300 men, were absurdly outnumbered by Nuri Pasha's army of 15,000 men and 32 guns. General Dunsterville had initially hoped that the arrival of Allied support would have raised the morale of local Russo-Armenian troops, but the first Turkish attacks revealed their minimal fighting qualities. The two British battalions held on with some Armenian troops for six weeks. Under severe pressure from a second major Turkish attack, and after the British had suffered 20 per cent casualties Dunsterville decided to evacuate Baku on 14 September 1918.⁶⁶ Prolonged resistance would have only resulted in the total annihilation of the British units. Finally, the Central Powers were not halted in South Russia by the British operation, but by their defeat in Europe and in the Middle East. For the Bolsheviks the brief British occupation of Baku was yet another piece of evidence of Allied hostility and imperialistic plans.

During the spring and summer of 1918, relations between the Allies and the Bolsheviks gradually deteriorated. The Allied activities were at first directed more clearly against the Central Powers and then increasingly after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and its supplement in August 1918 against the Bolsheviks, who were in many cases considered allies of the Central Powers. In addition to British operations in South Russia and the Caucasus, British troops were landed in Murmansk, North Russia, to protect the enormous stores of matériel in

⁶⁵ Suny, *Baku Commune*, pp. 316-24. There are strong similarities in the beginning of the British operations both in Baku and in Archangel in North Russia. In both cases the actual intervention of British troops was preceded by coup d'états, encouraged and supported by the British, who then were invited to intervene by these new friendly regimes.

⁶⁶ Dunsterforce, Intelligence summaries, July-September 1918, WO 157/855, NA. See Gökay, *Clash of Empires*, pp. 27-31 for Turkish operations.

the harbour threatened by the German operations in the Baltic and Finland. It was also feared that the Germans would establish a submarine base on the Arctic coast (Pechenga Fiord) from which they could attack Atlantic shipping. Another landing operation was conducted in Vladivostok, Siberia. The Allied troops acted at first in co-operation with local soviets in both North Russia and in Siberia, but during the summer the situation worsened into an open conflict. The British landing and capture of Archangel on 6 August 1919, with an organized rising against local Bolshevik authorities, was already a direct attack against the Soviet regime. Just as the war was about to end in Europe, Allied forces found themselves engaged in active military operations in several parts of the former Russian Empire.

3. BRITAIN AND THE RUSSIAN QUESTION AFTER THE ARMISTICE

3.1. The Lines of Policy

The British War Cabinet met to discuss the situation in Russia soon after the armistice was concluded with Germany in November 1918. The sudden and unexpected collapse of Germany and the termination of the war had fundamentally changed the basis of British policy towards Russia. The presence of British troops in North Russia and Siberia and the support offered to various White groups in other parts of the country could no longer be explained as a part of the struggle against the Central Powers. Moreover, even the unofficial diplomatic relations with Lenin's Bolshevik government had broken down due to the 'Lockhart plot' and other incidents in August-September 1918. The British were in a *de facto* if not declared state of war with the Bolsheviks. The members of the Cabinet were also seriously concerned with the spread of Bolshevism and the Bolshevik revolution in particular to Central Europe and Asia. The Bolshevik pronouncements about reaching the end of 'the bloody history of bloody imperialism', and how the workers of the World would crush the class enemies and 'the Anglo-French and American imperialist sharks', did not go unnoticed in Britain.⁶⁷

The attitude of the leading British politicians and of most of their Allied colleagues towards Bolshevism was rather sentimental and utterly negative. The ideology that appeared to be aimed at destroying the fundamental values of Christian civilization was considered repulsive. Some of the ministers also drew frightening scenarios of the alliance between a defeated Germany and the Bolsheviks. It was a generally held opinion that Germany would take advantage of the

⁶⁷ Lenin's speeches cited in Lincoln, *the Red Victory*, pp. 163-5.

chaotic situation in Russia and thus reverse her defeat in the war. It was not uncommon in Britain to consider the whole idea of Bolshevism as simply a hideous German plot to use a few Russian anarchistic maniacs to undermine the Allied war effort. This 'German connection' of the Bolsheviks was used as an argument in the British policy towards Russia time and time again during the intervention period.

In a memorandum presented to the Cabinet, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Henry Wilson, pointed out three different lines of policy which the Allies could apply in the current situation in Russia. First, all troops could be withdrawn from Russia, leaving the country surrounded by a belt of buffer nations or a '*cordon sanitaire*'. As far as the General Staff was concerned this was not, however, feasible as the military initiative in this plainly defensive scheme would be left almost completely with the Bolsheviks. Consequently, the buffer states would have to live in a constant state of alert and would certainly not be able to counter the Bolshevik menace without considerable assistance from the Allied troops. The British Army had no such troops available, and General Wilson did not believe that the other Allies had them either. The second option was to conquer the Bolsheviks by means of a massive military intervention. This strategy would also counter any possible German plans effectively. The Russians would also thank the Allies for their freedom, and turn their backs on the Germans. A lack of resources meant that this option, however, was even more unrealistic. General Wilson could thus suggest the Cabinet follow only a third line of policy. According to this, the Allies would continue to support the loyal forces (i.e. the Whites) with military supplies, but the Allied troops would be withdrawn from Russia as soon as the local anti-Bolshevik forces were in a position to take over.

Wilson finished his memorandum by stressing that it was, after all, a Russian task – not one of the Allies – to overthrow the Bolsheviks.⁶⁸

The members of the Cabinet were in broad agreement with Wilson's memorandum. It was indeed impossible to launch an anti-Bolshevik crusade. The nation would certainly not approve of another large-scale war and a highly-indebted British economy could clearly not afford it either. The interests of the British Empire demanded, however, immediate action, even though there was no immediate agreement within the Cabinet as to what this action would be. The Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour pointed out that Britain should support all Border States in their attempts to gain independence from Russia. The Prime Minister Lloyd George concurred with Balfour. Both the Secretary of State for War, Alfred Milner, and Lord Cecil, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, on the other hand, drew attention to the southern borderlands of Russia. A Bolshevik invasion of Transcaucasia and further to Persia would spell a serious threat to India.⁶⁹

The War Cabinet's decision eventually took the form of a compromise between Wilson's memorandum and the different views of the ministers. It was decided to maintain the British troops in both North Russia and in Siberia. The planned withdrawal of the 'Czech Legion' would also be postponed. The Baltic States would be supported against possible Bolshevik aggression by supplies of arms. The Cabinet instructed the General Staff to send immediately a mission to South Russia to establish contact with General Denikin and organize military aid for his army. In addition, it was decided to take over the strategic Transcaucasian railway line connecting the Black and Caspian seas.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Wilson's 'Memorandum on Our Present and Future Military Policy in Russia', 13.11.1918, Cabinet paper G.T.6311, CAB 24/70, NA.

⁶⁹ War Cabinet no. 502, 14.11.1918, CAB 23/8, NA.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

As such this decision was a continuation of the Allied Russian policy conducted after the Bolshevik coup and the Peace of Brest Litovsk, with the British supporting any 'loyal' government or military force in the area of the former Russian Empire. This time the definition of 'loyal to the Allied cause' had already evolved rather clearly from anti-German to anti-Bolshevik.

The Admiralty and the War Office were quick to implement the Cabinet's decisions. At the end of November 1918 a fleet of cruisers was sailing to the Baltic and arms were shipped to the local governments. Two full divisions were ordered to Transcaucasia by the end of the year. Major-General Thompson's force arrived from North Persia and occupied the Baku oilfields in Azerbaizhan by 17 November. Six weeks later, 27 December, General Forestier-Walker's troops, detached from the Salonika Army, landed at the Black Sea port of Batum. Forestier-Walker set up his headquarters in Georgian capital Tiflis and his division occupied several strategic points along the Transcaucasian railway. These two divisions, altogether nearly 40,000 men, were the largest of all British Army contingents in Russia. Soon both Azerbaizhan and Georgia were rather firmly under British control. The British operation also effectively inhibited any Bolshevik schemes in Transcaucasia and partially hastened the disintegration of the 11th and 12th Red Armies in the North Caucasus in January 1919 by seriously affecting the morale of the Bolshevik soldiers.

The military mission to General Denikin's Army arrived in the Kuban in late November and started to investigate the situation. The British intervention in the South began in accordance with the Anglo-French convention on the spheres of influence that had been drawn up the previous year. The French began their own operations by landing troops in the Ukraine and Crimea at the end of December.

And so it was that the British Army and the Royal Navy became gradually more deeply enmeshed in the Russian Civil War. The Cabinet's decisions that had brought about this were not based on a

policy with a clearly-defined goal. As Richard Ullman has pointed out, these initial post-Armistice decisions were completely lacking in any overriding principle, but the Cabinet simply authorized a series of piecemeal operations in several parts of the former Russian Empire.⁷¹ Britain could not commit her forces to an all-out campaign to conquer the Bolsheviks, but neither were the Cabinet to accept the Bolsheviks as the new rulers of Russia either. British post-Armistice Russian policy appears to be an attempt at steering a middle course between these two lines. Cabinet's decisions also contained a serious contradiction: Britain began to support the Border States seeking independence from Russia and on the other hand the Whites such as Kolchak and Denikin, who were fundamentally against 'dismembering' the Russian Empire.

The reasons for the clear lack of coherence in British policy during the whole period of the intervention seem to lay both in the complicated and very fluid political situation on the one hand and the wartime system of political decision-making on the other. During 1918, the War Cabinet had naturally been concentrating on winning the war on the Western Front. Similarly, after the Armistice, it was preoccupied with both a resolution of the peace with Germany and reconstructing the strained economy of the country and the acute crisis that was developing in Ireland. During the World War there had been attempts to improve the effectiveness of the political decision-making. The peace-time system had not met the demands of the rapid shifts in wartime circumstances. The Cabinet of fifteen to twenty members had normally fashioned a policy after lengthy consultations and compromises, and this had often to be approved at the House of Commons. When Lloyd George became the Prime Minister in 1916, he concentrated the decision-making process upon a small group of senior officials from the most important departments of the states and representatives of the Army and the Navy. In this War Cabinet the prime minister held the

⁷¹ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet relations*, vol II, pp. 15-18.

decisive role. The War Cabinet and in its extended form the Imperial War Cabinet, including representatives from the Dominions, held rather sovereign political powers during the last year of the war and made decisions in even the most important questions with minimal parliamentary control.⁷² The War Cabinet continued to operate until the autumn of 1919. The wartime process of decision-making thus had a crucial role in the politics of intervention.

Wartime conditions had, on the other hand, relegated much of the decision-making normally requiring Cabinet's or Parliament's approval to the heads of the departments of state. For example, the Secretary of State for War, together with the Chief of General Staff, was responsible for the planning and the actual conduct of the military operations within the general policy laid out by the War Cabinet. The World War had strengthened immensely the position of the War Office because of the obvious importance of the Army in the Continental War, whereas the role of the Foreign Office as the designer of British foreign policy had greatly diminished during the war. In the case of the British intervention in Russia, the War Cabinet's vague and partially contradictory decisions indeed resulted in the relegation of the decision-making to the War Office and the War Cabinet did not directly authorize many of the actual military operations conducted in Russia.⁷³

3.2. Lloyd George and the Prinkipo Proposal

The Prime Minister David Lloyd George became increasingly concerned with a situation where Britain was gradually committing her forces more and more deeply to the struggle against the Bolshevik government. He compared the Russian question to the French

⁷² Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, pp. 171-5.

⁷³ A case in point is the story of the RAF's 47th Squadron in South Russia. See chapter 6.4.

Revolution and the then British policy. The involvement in the French revolutionary wars had not led to the desired results but only to a lengthy, bloody and expensive war. Lloyd George also pointed out how the foreign intervention on the side of one participant of the conflict had only served to encourage French patriotism. There was a real prospect that that would happen in Russia as well, with British intervention merely increasing the popular support of the Bolsheviks. Lloyd George appears to have believed that the question of popular support was to be crucial in the whole outcome of the Civil War.⁷⁴

Lloyd George was also rather anxious because of the growing anti-interventionist sentiments in Britain. The Labour and even some of the Liberal papers criticized the Cabinet for its Russian policy mentioning in particular the difficult conditions of the British soldiers in Northern Russia.⁷⁵ The Labour party, which had resigned from Lloyd George's wartime Coalition government, together with the trade unions, began its the 'Hands off Russia' campaign demanding an end to the intervention and rights for the Russian people to decide their own future. The Cabinet was accused of unnecessary hostility towards Lenin's government suggesting that its policy could only lead to a new continental war. The general election was to be held in December 1918 and the Labour movement was now using the Russian question against Lloyd George's Coalition. The Labour Party had benefited immensely from the Representation of the People Act of June 1918, which increased the electorate considerably in the lower social classes improving the party's chance of electoral success. Yet despite all the fears of the Coalition politicians, Labour did not win a crushing victory in the general election of 1918. It became, however, with its 59 seats together with the minority wing of the Liberals, a source of loud opposition in the House of Commons, which Lloyd George certainly had

⁷⁴ Rowland, *Lloyd George*, p.497, and Somin, *Stillborn Crusade*, p. 211.

⁷⁵ Critical articles can be found in the Labour *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Herald* and also in Beaverbrook's Liberal *Daily Express* throughout the intervention period.

to take account of in his cabinet's policy. In addition to a pure contest of political power, the Conservative politicians seem to have been seriously concerned about the 'Bolshevisation' of the British Labour Party and the trade unions.⁷⁶

At a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet Sir Robert Borden, Canadian Prime Minister, made a suggestion relating to the Russian question that immediately caught Lloyd George's attention. As an alternative to the intervention, which Borden firmly opposed, all the participants in the Civil War, including the Bolsheviks, would be invited to Paris for a conference with the Allies. On the last day of the year 1918 the Cabinet approved Lloyd George's proposal for the Russian peace negotiations. The decision was opposed only by Winston Churchill (Churchill was still the Minister of Munitions and became the Secretary of State for War only in January 1919). Churchill argued strongly for collective Allied intervention to remove the Bolshevik regime. He did not receive, however, any support for his argument from his colleagues at the War Office, Admiralty or Foreign Office who all sided with the Prime Minister.⁷⁷ This Cabinet meeting was the first instance of the struggle between Lloyd George and Churchill that was to characterize British policy towards Russia throughout the following year. And, as in this case, it was usually the Prime Minister's – not Churchill's – point of view that was formulated as a final decision of the Cabinet.

Lloyd George always argued firmly against sending British troops to Russia. Intervention could only be accepted in the form of the material aid to the Border States and to some extent to the Whites. Lloyd George remained lukewarm towards the White cause during the whole period of the Russian Civil War. The Whites aimed at restoring a strong and united Russia, and Lloyd George regarded a weak Russia, even ruled by the Bolsheviks, as better for British interests. He also

⁷⁶ Ibid. and Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, pp. 157-8 & 163-4.

⁷⁷ War Cabinet no. 511, 31.12.1918, CAB 23/8, NA.

questioned strongly the blockade of the Soviet territory. That would only bring misery to the Russian people, as the Bolsheviks would requisition the already meagre foodstuffs. The blockade would also be harmful to British trade as the huge Russian markets would be lost to British companies. Overall the Prime Minister thought that finding a positive solution to the Russian question would only be possible through Allied co-operation: British policy should be based on the decisions of the Paris Peace conference.⁷⁸

The Allied leaders met in the Paris Peace conference in January 1919 and Lloyd George made his proposal to invite delegates from the various Russian factions to the conference. The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, an ardent opponent of the military intervention, supported him. The French and the Italians, however, resisted furiously. Representatives of various anti-Bolshevik groups and the Border States were already in Paris, but the Bolsheviks, the enemies of the Allied nations, would not be allowed there as they would only spread propaganda and chaos. The result of these conflicting views was a compromise, as the French and Italian prime ministers admitted the necessity of including the Bolsheviks whom Lloyd George had declared as *de facto* rulers of Russia, in the negotiations. The meeting would not take place, however, in Paris but in the resort islands of Prinkipo near Constantinople. President Wilson drafted the final invitation, which was broadcast to Russia by radio. All organized groups exercising political or military power within the boundaries of the former Russian empire were invited to Prinkipo for negotiations on 15th February 1919, provided they cease all military operations.⁷⁹

The Prinkipo conference never took place. Only the Baltic States and the Bolsheviks accepted the invitation, although the

⁷⁸ War Cabinet no. 515, 10.1.1919 and no. 531, 12.2.1919, CAB 23/9, NA.

⁷⁹ The original proposal is printed in *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki*, vol II, pp. 45-46. For the origins of the Prinkipo proposal see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol II, pp. 99-110.

intentions of the Bolsheviks with respect to peace with the Whites seem to have been rather dubious. The Whites, who were now coming together into one, albeit rather heterogeneous, movement under Admiral Kolchak firmly rejected any negotiations and considered armistice with the Bolsheviks impossible. The invitation caused outrage among the British representatives in Russia who generally condemned the proposal as a tacit recognition of the Bolshevik government and regarded it as undermining the White struggle they were supposed to be supporting. And Churchill, who had now assumed his post as the War Secretary was furious when he received news about the invitation. In a contretemps with the Prime Minister Churchill exclaimed that ‘one might as well legalize sodomy as recognize the Bolsheviks’.⁸⁰ Lloyd George’s attempt to solve the Russian question by negotiation rather than intervention had proved a complete failure this time. It would take more than a year – and the factual defeat of the anti-Bolsheviks before the British would enter into negotiations with the Soviet government.

3.3. Churchill’s Crusade

From January 1919 onwards Churchill’s work at the War Office was dominated by the Civil War in Russia, and by organizing the British assistance to the Whites. He had been an ardent critic of communism since the turn of the century. The Bolshevik coup in Russia and especially the introduction of the ‘Red terror’ during summer 1918 convinced him of the true nature of this ideology. Consequently, Churchill described the Bolshevism as ‘not a political thought but a disease’, but fortunately it seemed to represent only a fraction of the Russian people.⁸¹ Perhaps most strongly and persistently of the British politicians he maintained the argument that the Bolshevik regime was

⁸⁰ Gilbert, *World in Torment*, p. 235.

⁸¹ House of Commons, 29.5.1919, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 114, cols. 1526-7.

German in origin and clearly considered the Brest-Litovsk Peace as an instance of treachery. Such was Churchill's enthusiasm for the anti-Bolshevik cause that the whole British intervention came to be personified in him. The operations in Russia were described in the Press as 'Mr Churchill's private war' and militant anti-Bolshevism was even christened as 'Churchillianism' in the House of Commons.⁸² It should be pointed out, however, that British policy towards the Bolsheviks and the origins of the intervention on the side of the Whites had evolved without Churchill's participation during the year 1918.

By the time Churchill had assumed his post as the Secretary of State for War and become member of the War Cabinet, British troops were already committed in the various parts of the former Russian Empire as well as engaged in battles against the Bolsheviks. In this situation, assuming responsibility for the operations of the Army, he demanded a clear Russian policy from the Cabinet. Britain should either pull out or take determined actions to support the anti-Bolshevik forces. He pointed out that the procrastination of the British government rapidly worsened the situation both in respect of the Allied forces in Russia and of the whole Russian population suffering under the Bolshevik terror. The conditions of the British forces were especially alarming in the North Russia. The troops were badly equipped for the harsh winter and the Bolsheviks had recently started an offensive to oust the Allies from Archangel and Murmansk. The situation in Siberia and in South Russia was not much better; the White armies of Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin would not be able to continue their struggle for long without prominent support from the Allies.

Churchill presented to the Cabinet his own proposal for British policy towards Russia. As secretary of the state responsible for the demobilization he was well aware of the unrest of the troops. There

⁸² Gilbert, *World in Torment*, p.349, and Lord Robert Cecil's speech in the House of Commons, 12.2.1920, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 125, cols. 282-6.

had already been several mutinies and the prospect of prolonged service in Russia was reported to be especially unpopular. Accordingly, he was not suggesting sending a large British conscript army to quench Bolshevism in Russia – quite the opposite. He wanted to evacuate from both North Russia and Siberia, the troops which had been sent there during the war against Germany, as soon as weather conditions allowed. Churchill had not, however, given up the idea of crushing Bolshevism, although this was not to be done directly by the divisions of the British Army. His main point was that the war would be fought by newly-formed Russian armies, which would be trained by the British in modern warfare and equipped with modern weapons. The British government would supply these armies with ample matériel and small units of British volunteers and advisers would support them. The aid would be concentrated in Siberia as well as in South Russia, which Churchill considered the decisive fronts of the war.⁸³

This proposal and Churchill's other frequent demands for the decisive policy were countered again and again by Lloyd George's arguments in February-March 1919. The War Cabinet failed to reach any decision on the Russian policy as the Prime Minister stated every time that the Russian question could not be resolved by the Cabinet but needed an inter-Allied policy formulated by the Paris Peace Conference. He also seems to have still vainly hoped that his Prinkipo policy would bear some fruit. Churchill accused Lloyd George of not being seriously concerned with the Russian situation and the consequences of a possible Bolshevik victory. Lloyd George in turn dismissed Churchill's demands as jingoism and perhaps as the beginning of an adventure similar to the Dardanelles disaster, for which Churchill was held responsible.⁸⁴ On the other hand, there might be some truth in Churchill's accusations that the Prime Minister was not really committed in solving the Russian

⁸³ War Cabinet no 531, 12.2.1919, CAB 23/9, NA.

⁸⁴ The argument between Churchill and Lloyd George on the Russian question is well described in Gilbert's *World in Torment*, pp. 257-63.

question. His counter-arguments were not always based on solid facts. Lloyd George admitted that ‘the reports from Russia were very confusing’, and once, during a speech in the Commons he described the aid given to Generals Kolchak, Denikin and Kharkoff.⁸⁵ At the War Office his ‘expertise’ was naturally ridiculed, as Kolchak was an admiral and Lloyd George seemed to have confused the Ukrainian city of Kharkoff (Kharkov) with the pro-German *ex-Ataman* of the Don, General Krasnov, who had certainly not received any aid from the British.

Churchill also tried hard to find allies for his intervention policy in the Paris Peace conference. It proved, however, to be no easier to find a common policy within the Allied camp in the event of intervention in the Russian civil war than over the question of the peace in Europe. The victorious Allies had enormous problems with the questions relating to Central Europe and the pacification of the Central powers. Churchill suggested a special military council be formed to deal with Russia, but the representatives of France and the United States did not consider this necessary. France was already taking steps, despite Prime Minister Clemenceau’s ardent anti-Bolshevik speeches, to withdraw her troops from active intervention in the Ukraine and reformulate her strategy as *a cordon sanitaire*. The French plan was to build a buffer zone of independent pro-Allied – or preferably pro-French – states to contain the spread of Bolshevism. Poland would be the most important of these states, and a strong Poland was also hoped to counter effectively the threat of Germany to France.⁸⁶ The United States was gradually returning to its pre-war isolationist policy, and also began to withdraw its troops from Russia. Idealistically, President Wilson was firmly against any kind of involvement in the Russian situation. Japan had her own schemes in Russia, but these could be described more as

⁸⁵ House of Commons, 16.4.1919, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 114.

⁸⁶ Hovi, *Cordon sanitaire*, pp. 216-17.

outright imperialism than attempts to find a positive solution to the civil war. The other Allies were highly suspicious of the Japanese actions in Siberia.⁸⁷

Churchill became utterly frustrated with the lack of a clear Cabinet policy on the Russian question. There seemed to be no support for his views in the Cabinet either, the main obstacle being the all-powerful Prime Minister. As a result, he began to pursue his own line of Russian policy independently of the War office. The Bolsheviks were to be defeated by supplying the White Armies with matériel and supporting them directly with units of volunteers and military advisers. The Cabinet's vague decisions from the year 1918 to support any anti-Bolshevik force in Russia could already be interpreted as authorizing his plans for massive material aid to Kolchak and Denikin, and in the case of sending volunteers to Russia he could extract authorization from the Cabinet on the grounds of the 'utmost military urgency'. When the Prime Minister enquired of Churchill the costs of possible aid to the Whites in February, the operation was already well under way. In the Prinkipo case he hurried to confirm for the White representatives in London that the War Office would continue to provide the White armies with all necessary supplies, if this was not explicitly ruled out by the Cabinet.⁸⁸ As the following chapters will show, it was the War Office that orchestrated the British Russian policy that was actually executed in the field during 1919 and early 1920. Such a state of affairs reveals the glaring discrepancy between official foreign policy and the contingencies of military strategy.

⁸⁷ War Office memorandum 'Russian Military Policy', 12 February 1919, CHAR 16/23, CCAC.

⁸⁸ Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism, and the Versailles Peace*, pp. 122-3.

4. THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERVENTION

4.1. The Arrival of the British and the Establishment of the Armed Forces of South Russia

The British government made the first official contact with General Denikin as a small mission commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Blackwood arrived at the Volunteer headquarters in Ekaterinodar (renamed Krasnodar in the 1920s) on 25 November 1918. Blackwood's task was to gather intelligence in preparation for future British operations in support of the Whites. Colonel Blackwood and his small entourage received a jubilant reception from the Russians. Between lavish official lunches and dinners Blackwood also interviewed Denikin and his Chief of Staff General I.P. Romanovskii. Their message was clear: despite any temporary difficulties the Whites were determined to crush the Bolsheviks, and with military aid from the Allies victory was assured.

The Volunteer generals also considered it vital to concentrate the command of the several White forces of South Russia in the hands of one general – Denikin. Denikin had assumed command of the Volunteer Army after the death of Kornilov. He was also held to be the most favourable choice for HM Government as he had always been faithful to the Allied cause and had never liaised with the Germans, unlike, for example, General Krasnov, the Ataman of the Don Cossacks. The generals informed Blackwood that the White troops would not be able to continue active operations against the Bolsheviks without immediate help from the Allies. Moreover, a much larger army was needed for the offensive against Moscow and the total annihilation of the Bolshevik regime. Naturally, arming and equipping this mass army depended solely on the Allied aid. Denikin stated that the Russians would definitely conduct the actual fighting, but the Allies should send *only* 18 infantry divisions and four cavalry divisions to protect their rear areas

and lines of communication.⁸⁹ Denikin's request for an Allied force larger than any of the participant armies during the Civil War sounds absurd. It appears that it was a strategy of the White generals to request an enormous number of allied troops in the hope of receiving at least a few divisions. According to similar logic, Denikin and Romanovskii hugely overestimated the future nominal strength of the White Army. This was definitely not so much a mistake or unrealistic thinking, but a means to secure plentiful supplies for the White troops.

Colonel Blackwood composed a detailed report of his visit to the General Staff, and General Wilson also circulated it in the Cabinet. In the conclusion of this report Blackwood, made his suggestion for British policy in South Russia. First, he identified the Volunteer Army as clearly the most important of the White forces and recommended that for Denikin be granted support in unifying the command of the separate Cossack armies in his control. Secondly, considerable aid in arms and other military supplies should be sent to stabilize the critical situation. However, Blackwood was against sending British fighting units to South Russia, a point he had also made clear to the Russians. Instead, a permanent military mission should be sent to organize and supervise the effective distribution of aid. Thirdly, the Allies should send a political mission to South Russia to mediate between the various anti-Bolshevik groups – the Volunteers, the Cossacks and the Caucasian nations. Blackwood strongly advised moreover that economic aid be organized to support the White struggle. The Colonel ended his report by boldly advising HM Government to draw up a clear and determined line of policy, and whatever this line was to be, the policy should be logically executed on the field and the Russians should be informed of the policy.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Report on the Visit of British Military Mission to the Volunteer Army under General Denikin in South Russia, November-December 1918 by Lt-Col Blackwood, FO 317/3677, NA.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Colonel Blackwood boarded the same Royal Navy destroyer that brought Major-General F.C. Poole, the actual commander of the British Military Mission to Novorossiisk on 3 December 1918. The War Office had chosen Poole for this post because of his supposed knowledge of Russian affairs. He had already been, however, removed from the command of the Allied forces in North Russia because of his ‘abrasive colonial-style behaviour’ towards the local Russian Government.⁹¹ In South Russia, Poole’s task was restricted to reporting on the nature and quantities of supplies the Whites should be provided with. General Poole was, in fact, instructed not to make any definite and detailed promises of aid to the Russians.⁹²

The Russians were openly flattered as the British Mission – led by a general – arrived. Parades were organized to celebrate Poole’s arrival and crowds lined the streets of Novorossiisk and Ekaterinodar waving little paper Union Jacks and shouting ‘Welcome, our dear Allies!’. The gloomy atmosphere in South Russia had suddenly been transformed into one of optimism. Soldiers and civilians alike expected Poole’s Mission soon to be followed by British Army regiments marching along the streets of their cities. Everyone believed that the Civil War could not last long now as the army that had recently defeated the mighty Germans would have no trouble at all defeating the Bolshevik riff-raff.⁹³ On the other side of the frontline the Bolshevik units were shocked of the arrival of the British and started to send alarming reports to their headquarters and to Moscow. The Bolshevik soldiers expected Poole’s mission to be followed by British tanks and infantry and desperately demanded for reinforcements.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Brook-Shepherd, *Iron Maze*, p. 155.

⁹² Maj.-Gen. Radcliffe’s Memorandum, Cabinet paper G.T. 6274, CAB 24/69, NA.

⁹³ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol IV, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁴ 12th Rifle Div. to Revolutionary Military Council of the 8th Army, 21 Feb. 1918. Printed in Murphy, *Russian Civil War*, pp. 60-61.

General Poole, for his part, was greatly impressed by his visits to Denikin's headquarters and some of the Volunteer units. Like Colonel Blackwood a few weeks before, he was convinced about the leading role of the Volunteer Army in the White movement. Poole was also enlightened by the heroic history of the Volunteer Army. The British general was clearly touched by gallant stories from the struggle against the Bolsheviks such as the 'Ice March', when the few thousand Volunteers had marched across the frozen Kuban steppe in spring 1918 suffering immensely but winning incredible victories. He was not to be the last British officer to be enchanted by the romantic elements of the White cause. This heroic struggle seemed to offer a return from the industrialised butchery of the Western Front to the old world of cavalry charges and personal courage of manly men.

General Poole hurried to report to London: the British Government should start a large-scale support operation immediately. A large consignment of arms and ammunitions, together with aeroplanes and tanks should be sent to South Russia. Poole also asked for one infantry and one cavalry brigade to be sent to support the Volunteer Army and a smaller unit to the Don Army. He explained that these troops would only protect Denikin's bases and lines of communication and they would not take part in active operations against the Bolsheviks.⁹⁵ Poole's request for two British brigades, despite all of his original instructions, is understandable, as considerably larger units had already been sent to Transcaucasia.

The arrival of General Poole and his Mission to Ekaterinodar increased considerably the Volunteer Army's prestige amongst the anti-Bolshevik forces and played an important role in unifying the separate White armies under Denikin's command. General Poole openly expressed the Allied support for Denikin in the power struggle between

⁹⁵ War Diary, General Staff, 15.1. WO 95/4958, NA & Maj.-Gen. F.C. Poole: Report of a Visit to the Headquarters of the Volunteer Army in South Russia, January 1919, Poole's Papers, LHC.

the Volunteers and the Don Cossacks. He suggested directly that the Allies could remove Ataman Krasnov from the Don by force if Denikin so wished.⁹⁶ And when Poole visited the Don Army headquarters he acted forcefully. He warned Krasnov that ‘Great Britain would not give one stitch of clothing or one round of ammunition unless he acknowledged the unity of command’.⁹⁷ On the other hand, according to Krasnov, Poole offered immediate help to the Cossacks if he submitted the command of his forces to Denikin. Poole even promised not only material aid but that Britain would immediately send one battalion to the Don Front and later one brigade.⁹⁸

The Cossacks were in no position to resist. Following the German withdrawal, the Bolsheviks had won several important victories on the Don Front and in the beginning of January 1919 they were threatening to overrun the whole *voisko*. The Don could not survive without Volunteer and Allied help. An agreement, in which the operational command of the Don Army was submitted to the Armed Forces of South Russia, was signed on 8 January 1919. In addition to Allied pressure, opposition against Krasnov was increasing on the Don and he was soon forced to resign and later expelled from South Russia. Openly pro-Allied General Bokaievski was elected as a new Ataman in February 1919.⁹⁹ The Bolsheviks were also well informed of these

⁹⁶ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol IV, p. 71.

⁹⁷ Poole’s Report on Meeting with General Krasnov in GHQ Constantinople to DMI, 11.1.1919, WO 157/765, NA, and General Holman’s *Aide Memoire* to General Denikin, 3.9. 1919, CHAR 16/22, CCAC.

⁹⁸ Krasnov, P.N., Discours du Generale Krasnov, Ataman du Don le 13. Dec. 1918 lors de sa rencontre avec le Generale Poole, HIA, and Krasnov, P., ‘Vsevelikoe voisko Donskoe’, *Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii Vol V*, p. 295.

⁹⁹ The struggle between Denikin and Krasnov is studied most extensively in Karmann’s *Der Freiheitskampf der Kosaken*, pp. 186-92 and 327-52. However, Poole’s role in the founding of the AFSR under the command of Denikin appears as more influential in British sources cited above.

events and were convinced of the increasing British influence in the White forces in South Russia.¹⁰⁰

The War Office was not satisfied with Poole's conduct in South Russia even though he had successfully supported Denikin in unifying the command of the White armies. He was, again, removed from his post after only eight weeks of service. The official reason given for this was acting against instructions; Poole had indeed promised both Denikin and Krasnov that British troops would eventually be sent to South Russia. Poole was called home on 31 January 1919.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the War Office was not convinced by Poole's over-optimistic reporting either. His reports appear to be based solely on information given by Denikin's staff, not on objective observation, and thus, obviously biased in favour of the Whites. When the reports were compared with other intelligence from Russia they were found to overestimate grossly the strength of Denikin's forces. According to Poole, Denikin had 130,000 men in arms in January 1919 and 'he would raise this number to 200,000 - 250,000 soon'.¹⁰² On the other hand, a French report forwarded to the War Office estimated the real strength of Denikin to only '50,000 casually dressed men armed with 83 guns of which only half were usable'.¹⁰³ Poole was possibly considered too close to the White Cause; as he was, after all, expected to act as a representative of the British government in Russia.

¹⁰⁰ 12th Rifle Div. to Revolutionary Military Council of the 8th Army, 21 Feb. 1918. Printed in Murphy, *Russian Civil War*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰¹ War Diary, General Staff, 31.1.1919, NA.

¹⁰² Maj.-Gen. F.C. Poole: Report of a Visit to the Headquarters of the Volunteer Army in South Russia, January 1919, Poole's Papers, LHC.

¹⁰³ Capt. Berthelot's report, 6 February 1919, CHAR 16/23, CCAC.

4.2. The Start of Military Aid to Denikin

Despite the Cabinet's inability to reach agreement and define Russian policy, Churchill's War Office did not remain inactive. Churchill instructed the General Staff to plan and launch the operation on the basis of the Cabinet's general decision of November 1918 to support Denikin. It was decided in the beginning of January, on the basis of the information provided by Colonel Blackwood, to organize shipping of matériel for an army of 100,000 men at once. Only ten days later the General Staff diverted shipments of 50 aeroplanes and twelve tanks originally destined for Admiral Kolchak's Army in Siberia to Denikin. Furthermore, a group of officers from the Royal Tank Corps was sent to South Russia to gather information and plan the future use of tanks. The Air Ministry – also led by Churchill – drafted its own plan of sending a mission of 90 men and 100 planes, fully supplied with arms, spares, and fuel to South Russia.¹⁰⁴

Only a few weeks later, and without consulting the Cabinet, Churchill instructed the General Staff to increase the amount of supplies to Denikin's Army to be sufficient for an army of 250,000 men. Ammunitions destined for South Russia also included 25,000 poison gas shells. Churchill had described mustard gas as 'ideal weapon against our beastly enemy', and yet those were instructed to be used only if the Bolsheviks started gas warfare. All the matériel was to be collected from the enormous stores accumulated in Salonika, Alexandria and other harbours in the Mediterranean. The supplies would then be shipped through the Dardanelles to Novorossiisk on the north-east shore of the Black Sea. Only the tanks and a certain number of the aeroplanes were to be sent directly from Britain.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ War Diary, General Staff, 3.1. & 13.1. 1919, WO 95/4958, and Air Ministry Memorandum, 13.1. 1919, AIR I/204/260/8, NA.

¹⁰⁵ War Diary, General Staff, 22.1. & 8.2. 1919, WO 95/4958, NA, and Schmid, *Churchills privater Krieg*, p.92.

The General Staff – again without any authorization from the Cabinet – instructed General Milne, the commander of the British forces on the Black Sea, to establish a permanent military mission to operate with Denikin’s newly formed Armed Forces of South Russia – ‘The British Military Mission, South Russia’. Lieutenant-General Briggs was appointed as the new commander of the mission and he arrived in Ekaterinodar at the beginning of February. Briggs had vague personal instructions to liaise between Denikin and the War Office via General Milne in Constantinople. (Direct wireless communication from Novorossiisk to London was not established until August 1919 and before that all messages had to be sent first to Constantinople and forwarded to London.) According to original General Staff instructions, the task of the Mission was to report on the military situation in South Russia, to investigate the needs of Denikin’s Army, to supervise the distribution of the matériel and to start training Russians in the use of British weapons. The Military Mission did not have any formal power over political questions, but was instructed to act only on orders from the War Office.¹⁰⁶ This was to cause serious confusion right from the beginning, as instructions from London were often too vague or too late in the fluid political situation in Russia.

Cavalry general Sir Charles Briggs was a curious choice as the commander of the Mission. He had never visited Russia before and did not know the language. Briggs had been commanding the 16th Army Corps at Salonika (later renamed as the British Salonika Army), and he was astonished to receive the order to sail to Russia. The reason for his appointment was probably the fact that a senior general was needed and Briggs was simply available at Salonika when the hostilities against Central Powers had ended. Briggs later admitted that he had known next to nothing about the situation in Russia. The destroyer carrying Briggs anchored briefly at Constantinople and the general was handed a bunch

¹⁰⁶ War Diary, General Staff, 5.2. 1919, WO 95/4958, NA.

of reports, which he studied during the 36-hour trip over the Black Sea to Novorossiisk.¹⁰⁷

The task that was waiting for Briggs was overwhelming and Military Mission's resources were very limited. The Mission did not arrive to start its work in South Russia as a complete and organized unit. Its members, the 500 officers and NCOs, were ordered to Russia from different units mainly from Constantinople and Salonika on a very haphazard basis, and they started to arrive in Novorossiisk in little groups in February. Needless to say, these men were in most cases even less prepared for their future tasks than their commander. General Briggs soon found the mission far too small and, in addition many of the men were unsuitable for the task. To be able to work properly the Mission needed larger and better qualified staff.¹⁰⁸

In London, Churchill and his staff worked hard to resolve the situation. On 4 March he was finally able to extract a relatively favourable decision from the Cabinet in relation to the situation in Russia. According to Churchill's suggestions, it was decided to evacuate the troops from North Russia before the next winter – although first strengthening the expeditionary force with two 4,000-strong brigades in order to 'enable a safe evacuation'. The two divisions from Caucasus, again in accord with Churchill's policy, would also be withdrawn. The main point was, however, that the support given in arms and munitions to Denikin and Kolchak would continue. And, moreover, the strength of the Military Mission in South Russia would be increased to 2,000. All these officers and other ranks should be volunteers, and the Prime Minister also wanted to point out that they were not allowed to take part in any fighting. How this would be possible in frontline conditions was

¹⁰⁷ 'Statement made by Lt.-Gen. Sir C.L. Briggs to the Army Committee of the House of Commons, 24.7.1919', CHAR 16/24, CCAC.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. and Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA.

not discussed in the Cabinet meeting.¹⁰⁹ Churchill now had Cabinet's authorization to continue his war against Bolshevism.

The promise of the arrival of more officers and men helped considerably Briggs's task in organizing the Mission when the supplies began to flow into Novorossiisk harbour in March 1919. The Mission established its headquarters in the vicinity of Denikin's HQ in Ekaterinodar (moved closer to the front to Taganrog in August 1919). A supply base was founded in Novorossiisk as a central unit to organize the distribution of supplies. When a sufficient number of British officers and NCOs had arrived they were dispersed in the various units of the AFSR. For each of the three White armies, the Volunteer Army, the Don Army and the Army of the Caucasus, a British Liaison Group was established. Later, when the Whites had conquered the southern Ukraine, a fourth liaison group was founded in Odessa. These groups were miniature military missions in themselves consisting of an HQ and a number of officers from various services responsible for instructing the Russians in the use of British arms and equipment.¹¹⁰

4.3. Political Difficulties

The British Military Mission began its work in most trying of political circumstances. No sooner had the Whites cleared the Northern Caucasus of the Bolsheviks than they ended up in confrontation with Azerbaizhan, Georgia and the various small nationalities of the Caucasus. The governments of the Caucasus states were openly hostile towards the Whites and saw them even as a more immediate threat to their independence than the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, Denikin's regime, pursuing the policy of 'the Holy and Undivided Russia', did not

¹⁰⁹ War Cabinet no. 541, 4.3.1919, CAB 23/9, NA.

¹¹⁰ Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA.

recognize the sovereignty of these states and considered the Georgian Menshevik dominated government in particular as not very different from the Bolsheviks. The conflict developed into clashes between the White and Georgian troops. In the west, Denikin's forces faced another problem, the French, who were pursuing their own intervention policy. The French government had landed troops in the Ukraine and the Crimea in order to supervise the withdrawal of German and Austrian forces and to fill the power vacuum left by the Central Powers. This was not, however, the help Denikin had expected from the Allies, as the French started to negotiate with Petliura's Directorate about the independence of the Ukraine and even prevented the Volunteers from operating in their area of occupation. The British Mission had to adopt the role of the mediator in both of these conflicts — a thankless task hardly suited to a group of officers who were assigned to assist the White troops in their fight against the Bolsheviks.

The first meeting with General Briggs and Denikin was not a good one. Briggs conveyed to the White commander the ultimatum of HM Government to cease the hostilities with the Georgians and rather turn his attention to the Bolsheviks. Otherwise the military aid to him would have to be reconsidered. Denikin was incensed with rage: 'I am a Russian and I will help Russians and Armenians against these savage Georgians, who are acting like Bolsheviks, killing and looting. I will not listen to the orders of an alien government, but I have issued orders, and they will be carried out to kick these Barbarians over the frontier. If HM Government will withdraw her assistance we will carry out on our own resources.' Furious Denikin continued by asking what were the British and French 'zones of influence' he had learned about? What were the English actually doing in the Caucasus as no one had invited them there? Were they perhaps after the oil like the Germans? Denikin also accused the Allies of seizing the stores of the Imperial Russian Army in the Caucasus and Romania and handing these supplies (sufficient for three armies) to the Georgians and the Romanians. General Briggs was

not briefed or authorized to respond to these arguments and reported feeling more 'like prisoner at the Bar than head of a mission'.¹¹¹

Briggs has, after all, described Denikin as a strong, determined patriot who would 'stand no nonsense from anyone', and as, a clear-headed man.¹¹² Denikin must have understood the cold facts and thus ordered to halt the operations against the Georgians — at least temporarily to secure invaluable British support. On the other hand, the British used considerable pressure on the Georgian and Azerbaizhani governments. The line of demarcation that was finally agreed with the Caucasus states and Denikin was rather favourable to the Whites, giving them full access to the oilfields of Grozny and Maikop and the Petrovsk harbour (now Machak Kala) on the Caspian Sea. Relations between the Transcaucasian states and the Whites remained tense, however, until the very defeat of the Whites. Georgia and Azerbaizhan supported rather openly the Green partisan groups and the revolts of the mountain tribes of the Chechen and the Ingushi in the White rear, which weakened the Whites considerably at critical moments.¹¹³ The somewhat contradictory situation, where Britain was supporting both the Whites and the Transcaucasian states put a considerable strain on the Mission.

Equally complicated was the situation in the Ukraine. Hetman Skoropadskii's puppet regime had been toppled almost as soon as the Germans started to withdraw their troops from the Ukraine. Simon Petliura's Directorate that was fighting the Bolsheviks in the North but was equally hostile towards the Whites now at least nominally ruled the country. When the French landed their first troops in Odessa in

¹¹¹ War Diary, General Staff, 16.2. & 20.2.1919, WO 95/4958, NA, and Statement made by Lt.-Gen. Sir C.L. Briggs to the Army Committee of the House of Commons, 24.7.1919', CHAR 16/24, CCAC.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ The relations between the Whites and the Caucasus states are studied in Brinkley *The Volunteer Army and the Allied Intervention*, pp.146-82. For a Russian view see Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol III, pp. 239-52.

December 1918 this happened in fact in co-operation with a small Volunteer Army unit, which had remained in the city. The Volunteers were able, with the help of French naval gunfire, to clear Odessa from the Petliurists. However, the troubles started as the French government considered Denikin to be an obvious threat to its plans for an independent Ukraine and began to restrict the activities of the Whites, and on the other hand, started to negotiate with Petliura. The Volunteer Army had in the area only 5,000 troops, but the French banned mobilisation in the area as well as bringing more troops from the Kuban. The Volunteers were not allowed to move the large stores of military supplies in Nikolaev either.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the French did not bring to the Ukraine more than 12,000 troops. All this happened while the Bolsheviks advanced southwards chasing the crumbling armies of the Directorate.

The British Military Mission in Ekaterinodar and also the Foreign Office representatives in Odessa supported Denikin in the Ukrainian question. General Briggs fully understood Denikin's irritation about the French activities and also saw how dangerous the situation in the Ukraine was. Alarming reports from South Russia led the Foreign Office to instruct Lord Derby, the ambassador in Paris to ask the French Government not to jeopardise the anti-Bolshevik struggle by abusing the Volunteer Army and negotiating with the Petliurists.¹¹⁵

The situation in the Ukraine deteriorated fast. The French troops fought extremely badly in the first confrontation in the middle of March with Ataman Grigoriev's partisans, who were at the time allies of the Bolsheviks. The important towns of Kherson and Nikolaev fell into Bolshevik hands after a brief resistance – and with them the supplies denied from the Volunteers. The French troops were completely demoralized as they withdrew to Odessa. The commander of the French

¹¹⁴ Bagge's report to FO, 17.2.1919, WO 157/766, NA.

¹¹⁵ FO to Lord Derby, 27.2.1919, WO 157/766, NA.

forces made public announcements that the city would not be surrendered to the Bolsheviks. However, the decision to evacuate had already been made. The French troops were hastily evacuated from Odessa on 4 April leaving most of the Russian population to its own devices. A British general described the whole French intervention as ‘a colossal blunder’, which climaxed in the Odessa debacle.¹¹⁶ The catastrophe was repeated in the Crimea when the French Navy supposed to defend Sevastopol mutinied and the city had to be evacuated. The ships of the Russian Black Sea Navy, which the French had also denied to Denikin, were sunk in the harbour. Most of the Ukraine and the Crimea was now in Bolshevik hands, and the Allies’ prestige in Russia had suffered deplorably in Russia.

The task of being a British ad hoc ambassador in South Russia was far too demanding for General Briggs. He was a cavalry officer, not a diplomat. These difficult political duties – that should not have been his responsibility in the first place – seriously hampered his concentration on his primary task: organizing military support to Denikin. The War Office decided to replace him with Major-General H.C. Holman, who had more experience in quartermaster duties. Holman had served as the Quartermaster-general of the VI Army on the Western Front. Despite Denikin’s protests over British policies, General Briggs had, however, earned Denikin’s personal respect. The events of the last day of Briggs’ service in South Russia, 12 June 1919, illustrate well the contradictory situation. A great dinner party was organized in his honour and the Russian generals praised the work Briggs had done for the White Army in their speeches. However, when Briggs left the party he was handed Denikin’s government’s official protest to HM Government for recognizing the independence of Finland.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Report on the Evacuation of the Odessa 10.4.1919 by Gen. Cooke, WO 157/769, NA.

¹¹⁷ War Diary, BMM South Russia, 12.6.1919, WO 95/4959, NA.

5. DENIKIN'S WAR

5.1. The March to Moscow

In the spring of 1919 the Whites took the initiative in the southern front of the Civil War. The Bolsheviks had transported troops from the south to the Siberian Front to halt Kolchak's renewed offensive in March. Kolchak's advance had been repulsed but his forces had not been defeated and they were still tying down several Red Armies. The situation in the Ukraine was also extremely difficult for the Bolsheviks. Several groups of peasant partisans were harassing their rear areas and entire demoralized Red units were joining the bands of peasant *atamans* Grigoriev and Makhno.

The Volunteer Army had stabilized the front in the Donbass area in April. The Volunteers were now commanded by General Mai-Maevskii as Denikin had taken overall command of the AFSR in January 1919. Mai-Maevskii, despite his reputation of being a drunkard and womanizer, has been described as one of Denikin's ablest commanders.¹¹⁸ The White histories point to Mai-Maevskii's clever use of the railway network to move units of the Volunteer army from one crisis point to another. Thus, he was able first to repel the Red attacks and then to break through their lines in May, despite the fact that his army of only 12,000 men was fighting an enemy twice as strong. In June Mai-Maevskii continued his advance into the Ukraine.¹¹⁹ The British sources partly dispel the legend of White victory in the Donbass. British observers, attached to Mai-Maevskii's units reported that the region was actually freed with very little fighting as the Bolsheviks retired without offering much resistance.¹²⁰ The speedy advance of the Volunteers

¹¹⁸ Wrangel,, *Muistelmat*, p. 113.

¹¹⁹ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, p. 76-7.

¹²⁰ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, May 1919, WO 95/4959.

seems to be as much a result of demoralization of the Red troops harassed by the Ukrainian peasants as of Mai-Maevskii's brilliant tactics.

Mai-Maevskii's success, however, also eased pressure on the Don Front. The new *ataman*, General Bogaevskii, with his commander in chief, General Sidorin, had reorganized the Don Army and started to clear up the *voisko*. This was greatly helped by the risings in the northern *stanitsas* (Cossack settlements). The poorer Cossacks of the North had earlier rebelled against the Novocherkassk government and opened the front to the Bolsheviks. But now, after a brief but extremely harsh period of Red rule, they were ready to rejoin the Don Army. Bogaevskii's Army rapidly doubled its strength and had liberated the whole *voisko* by June.

In the east the Caucasian Army, commanded by General Wrangel and mainly consisting of Kuban Cossacks, started to advance towards Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad and again Volgograd). Wrangel's cavalry dispersed the 10th Red Army in the battle of Manych River in May. Three weeks later his army had marched 300 kilometres and was at the gates of Tsaritsyn. The exhausted Caucasian Army was, however, stopped by the strong Red defence. Wrangel had to wait until the Ekaterinodar-Tsaritsyn railway was repaired and more troops and heavy weapons could be sent to support the attack. With the aid of a Volunteer infantry division and British tanks and aeroplanes, Wrangel was finally able to conquer the city.¹²¹ The battle of Tsaritsyn was perhaps the biggest White victory in the Civil War. Tsaritsyn was one of the most important Russian industrial cities and it was also a gate along the Volga to central Russia. Also the amount of booty was enormous, although the numbers given by Wrangel appear somewhat exaggerated; two armoured trains, over a hundred locomotives, 10,000 railway cars, of which over 2,000 were laden with munitions, 70 field guns and 300

¹²¹ The British role in the battle is discussed in the next chapter.

machine guns. In addition, Wrangel claims that his army captured 40,000 Red soldiers.¹²² The battle of Tsaritsyn was no doubt a great personal victory for General Wrangel, whose credibility strengthened considerably within the White Army.

Denikin arrived in Tsaritsyn to celebrate the victory. Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and Tsaritsyn were now in White hands and the Don *voisko* was also freed from the Bolsheviks. The next target would be Moscow, whose capture was for the Whites a symbol of the ultimate Bolshevik defeat. Denikin declared in the famous 'Moscow Directive' his plan for the White strategy on 3 May.¹²³ The three main armies of the AFSR would advance along the main approaches to Moscow. The Volunteer Army in the west would attack along the main Kursk-Orel-Tula-Moscow railway and would also advance simultaneously to Kiev thus conquering the Ukraine. Secondly, the Don Army would advance along the Voronez-Riazan railway-line and its western parallel line. Thirdly, Wrangel would attack with his Caucasian Army along the main line through the Volga area to Nizhnyi-Novgorod and then turn west towards Moscow.

The plan appeared very simple and Denikin had become very optimistic during the victorious months of May and June. However, not all of the White generals shared Denikin's enthusiasm. In addition to the Red Army, simply the vast distances were against the Whites. Mai-Maevskii's and Sidorin's armies were supposed to advance from 400 to 500 kilometres and Wrangel over 700 km. The battle strength of Denikin's army hardly exceeded 100,000 men at the time and the long front was already thinly manned. In addition, the troops were tired after the two months of continuous fighting. The Whites had conquered enormous areas, but the governance of these lands had not been

¹²² Wrangel, *Muistelmat*, p. 113, and Lincoln, *The Red Victory*, p. 217.

¹²³ The directive is printed in Denikin's *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, p.108-9, and a translation and analysis can be found in Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, vol II, p.39.

organized. Peasant partisans who had speeded up the White advance by harassing the Bolsheviks now turned their attention towards the ‘counter-revolutionaries’, especially in the Ukraine, which was considered the main route to Moscow and victory.¹²⁴

Denikin’s loudest critic was Wrangel. He described Denikin’s plan later as ‘the death sentence of the Armed Forces of the South Russia’. He argued that the advance should not be started before the rear had been organized and, moreover, the whole Army should be concentrated on a single spearhead instead of three separate forces.¹²⁵ Wrangel was not satisfied with Denikin’s leadership. He started to criticize his Commander-in-Chief publicly, which seriously undermined the cohesion of the White movement.

The Moscow Directive and Denikin’s strategy were also discussed and commented on in the British Mission. Many of the British officers agreed with Wrangel’s criticism. For them too, Denikin’s plan appeared to ignore a very fundamental principle of warfare taught in every military academy – the concentration of force at a critical time and place. Especially the more junior of the officers greatly admired the dashing cavalry commander, and some even argued that Wrangel should be appointed Commander-in Chief instead of Denikin. Moreover, the British clearly saw – because of the main task of their mission – the disorganization of the rear and, hence, the problems of supply as a fatal weakness in Denikin’s plan. As the troops would advance towards Moscow the distance to the base area at the Black Sea coast would become too long. The supply system of the White army was not in a position to handle the situation. General Holman warned Denikin about the dangers of his plan and advised him to reconsider. On the other hand, Holman understood Denikin’s decision – there simply was no time

¹²⁴ Paliy, in *The Anarchism of Makhno*, and Brovkin, in *Behind the Front Lines*, describe the activities of the Ukrainian peasant partisans as the decisive factor in Denikin’s success and later in his defeat.

¹²⁵ Wrangel, *Muistelmat*, pp.114-15.

for reorganization. The Red Army was growing stronger and stronger every day. In addition, Denikin did not dare to concentrate all the troops on the western sector and thus leave Don and Volga fronts open to Bolshevik attacks.¹²⁶

Despite all the criticism Denikin's march to Moscow started successfully. The Volunteer Army, supported by the ships of the Royal Navy, advanced along the Black Sea coast conquering the Crimea and Odessa. In the central Ukraine, Poltava and finally Kiev were taken in the end of August. This, of course, was an important victory to the Whites, but on the other hand, the troops were now dispersed along an even longer front and more and more units were needed to suppress Makhno's and other partisan bands. On the Volga Front, Wrangel took Kamyshin and advanced towards Saratov. His cavalry patrols even contacted Kolchak's Ural Cossacks, but a proper liaison with the Siberian White army was never achieved as the Admiral was rapidly retreating to the east. It was only on the central part of the front that the Whites were not achieving any notable success. The Don Cossacks, as Denikin had expected, were not willing to move outside their *voisko*.

5.2. The Nature of Warfare

The officers of the British Mission observed meticulously the operations of both the White and the Red armies. It was soon found out that the operational reports of the Whites could not always be trusted. The Russian tradition of deceiving one's superiors with favourably false and exaggerated reporting flourished in Denikin's Army causing serious problems as the commanders did not have a realistic picture of the state of affairs at the front. This was admitted even by General Lukomskii,

¹²⁶ Williamson, Diary, 7.8.1919, Williamson papers, and de Wolff, Diary, 10.8.1919, de Wolff papers, IWM. Maj.-Gen Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA.

Denikin's chief of staff.¹²⁷ The British Mission started to gather intelligence independently for its own use and also for the reports that were sent to London. In addition to the senior officers' official visits to the front, British advisers who were attached to White units sent regular intelligence reports to the Mission HQ. The results were often rather controversial and the picture of the Russian Civil War appears somewhat different from the one described in either the White memoirs or the Soviet histories.

The battles fought between the Whites and Reds in South Russia were very different from the war at the Western Front, where many of the British officers had served. The British Army had painfully learned its lessons during the costly battles of 1914-17. During these long years the operational and tactical thinking of the Army had evolved immensely. With the sophisticated amalgamation of the fire-power of infantry, artillery and air arms the British had succeeded in breaking the stalemate of the trench warfare and changing to offensive 'war of movement' in late summer 1918. This 'Battle of One Hundred Days' had eventually led to the capitulation of the German Army.¹²⁸ The Russian Army had been, however, less successful in developing its doctrine during the World War. Throughout the war the Russian offensives had followed a notorious pattern: after a massive, but ineffective, artillery barrage the massed infantry formations had marched towards the enemy lines only to be annihilated by enemy artillery and machine gun fire. Even if the infantry managed to break into enemy positions, it was soon beaten back by counterattacks. The only exemption was perhaps General Brusilov's successful advance against the Austrians in summer 1916, which, however, did not lead to anything as the other Russian commanders failed in their operations. The conservative White generals appeared to have been unable to learn much

¹²⁷ Lukomskii, 'Memorandum', October 1921, Lukomskii collection, HIA.

¹²⁸ For the evolution of the British Army, see Bidwell & Graham, *Fire Power*, pp. 61-146.

from the defeats of the war. Being used to the 'slogging matches' of the Eastern Front they were baffled when forced to fight the altogether more fluid battles of the Civil War, and tried stubbornly to return to the old methods of the Imperial Army.

The White operations followed a fixed pattern during the rapid advance of Denikin's Army in the late spring and summer of 1919. The theatre of operations consisted mostly of vast open rolling plains with no built roads, but with freedom of movement, interrupted only by rivers and marshes. The problem of supply, however, usually confined big operations to the vicinity of the railways. A typical White attack of this period commenced rapidly. The cavalry operated on the flanks and the armoured trains reconnoitred and engaged the enemy. The infantry followed in light peasant carts, *droshkies*, which also carried machine guns. When the enemy was sighted the cavalry and the carts containing the infantry moved against them at a gallop. The artillery often had enormous difficulties to follow the advance and, thus, the attacks were supported by very light covering fire. The Red troops usually dispersed in an equally speedy retreat, avoiding contact, and the White advance continued. This procedure was later also adapted by the Reds.¹²⁹ Denikin's army covered great distances daily. But, as the troop movements were concentrated on the railways, the frontlines defining huge conquered areas existed only on the maps of the White headquarters. In fact, cavalry patrols of both sides and bands of peasant partisans moved rather freely between the railways.

Machine guns and modern artillery had ended the era of massed cavalry charges on the Western Front as early as 1914. However, in South Russia the war was waged, as one British officer described, in a 'Napoleonic atmosphere'¹³⁰ – the fire-power of opposing armies was

¹²⁹ Gen. Gundy's Report, Jan 1919, WO 158/751, & Maj.-Gen Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA.

¹³⁰ Wood, 'A Subaltern in South Russia', Wood papers, IWM.

essentially lower than in the battles of the First World War in the West. This explains the important role the cavalry played in Denikin's offensive and in the Russian Civil War in general. The bulk of the White cavalry and, indeed, large part of the whole AFSR effective manpower consisted of Cossack units from the Don and Kuban. These Cossacks were still in a sense pre-modern warriors. They still regarded sabre and lance as their main weapons and considered the traditional *lava* semi-envelopment charge as a decisive manoeuvre in a battle. In the classic *lava*, two *sotnias* (squadrons) of the Cossack regiment advanced ahead extended in line, with three *sotnias* in close formation in the rear. When some two hundred metres from the enemy, the first line divided into two sections, which sprang outwards to attack both flanks of the enemy, while the rear *sotnias* engaged the enemy front. On the other hand, the Cossacks despised openly fighting on foot with rifles as mounted infantry and this was generally not rehearsed in training.¹³¹ The traditional cavalry tactics were indeed effective, as often only the sight of a galloping mass of sabre wielding and yelling Cossacks was enough to make poorly trained and unmotivated Red infantrymen flee. Such an attack was, however, easily repulsed by perhaps only a company of determined and properly positioned infantry with a few machine guns.

Outdated tactics were not the only problem with the Cossacks. The White ideology of restoration of a 'Holy and Undivided Russia' was not very appealing to an average Cossack. They had generally two reasons for fighting: defending their traditional way of life in the home *stanitsas* and the prospect of booty. The Don Cossacks proved very unreliable outside their own *voisko*. General Mamontov did not obey instructions during his famous raid and his force turned soon into not much more than a band of marauders. According to General Holman's opinion, the most important cavalry leader of the Civil War was not Wrangel or any of the Whites but the developer of the Red

¹³¹ Gen. Gundy's Report on the Don Cossacks, Jan. 1919, WO 158/751, NA.

Cavalry, Semen Budenny. This ex-Imperial Army NCO appeared capable to Holman and to have understood the potential of cavalry in a wider context – also as a highly mobile mounted infantry – and above all, seemed to have followed the orders of his superiors more frequently than his White counterparts.¹³² Budenny himself criticized his enemy for sticking blindly to the book and for his inability to evolve his cavalry tactics to the conditions of the Civil War.¹³³

The quality of infantry in Denikin's army varied greatly from excellent but small Volunteer Army units, like the Kornilov, the Markov and the Drozdovskii Regiments, which were composed largely of officers and military cadets, to far more numerous low-quality formations of peasant conscripts. Since the summer of 1919, the bulk of manpower on both sides of the frontline was these peasants lacking both enthusiasm and training. Denikin's unit commanders regarded these peasants literally as gun-fodder and their training usually consisted of nothing more than a simple parade-ground drill. White officers were generally sure of the peasant's inability to perform any but the simplest manoeuvre on the field. As in the battles of the Imperial Army during the World War, the troops were herded into massed formations and simply made to walk forward, their platoon officers in front and sergeants behind ready to shoot any man who left his place.

Morale in peasant infantry formations was indeed very low. These men could hardly consider – obviously far less than the Cossacks – the White cause worth risking their lives. In addition, Denikin's staff had paid very little attention to winning the loyalty of the peasants. There was no Red Army-style propaganda machine in Denikin's Army. It was alien to the Russian officers' tradition and mentality to explain the purpose of the war and reason for fighting to the men.¹³⁴ The Russian

¹³² Maj.-Gen Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA., Holquist, 'Russian Vendée', p. 519.

¹³³ Budenny, *Path of Valour*, pp.195-7.

¹³⁴ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia II*, p.26-7.

peasant has also been described as a natural pacifist and accordingly the Civil War was widely condemned by them as fratricide.¹³⁵

The British observers noted that the peasant conscripts had no interest in keeping their weapons in order and were generally bad shots. The main weapon of the Civil War, used by both armies, was the Russian Moisin Nagant M91 service rifle. Although a powerful and accurate design, it is definitely not an ideal weapon for an untrained and unmotivated conscript. Also machine guns lost their effectiveness, despite their considerable number in the frontline units. A British machine gun instructor noted that the Russians were in most cases unaware of basic tactics. They considered machine gun merely as a static defensive weapon. Indirect support-fire over the heads of their own attacking troops, which was a routine task of machine gunners in the Western Front, was out of the question because of the high probability that the reckless gunners would just slaughter their own men. Lack of maintenance also caused technical problems and a considerable number of the machine guns of the units were often not serviceable.¹³⁶ A further problem was the enormous consumption of ammunition of this automatic weapon firing 500 rounds per minute. Trigger-happy machine gunners rattling away with their numerous guns were apparently the main reason for the chronic lack of small arms ammunition (the Russian version of Maxim machine gun and M91 rifle took the same 7.62 mm cartridge) in both the White and Red armies during the Civil War.

Artillery was rarely a decisive arm in the Russian Civil War. 'No roar of artillery, only two batteries firing here and there,' was one British officer's description of the battlefield on the Don Front.¹³⁷ The British noted that the Russians were generally very conservative in their

¹³⁵ Figes, *Peasant Russia*, pp. 175-6, and 309.

¹³⁶ Maj.-Gen Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA, and Boustead Mss, PLA.

¹³⁷ Boustead, interview by P. Liddle, PLA.

views on artillery tactics. As during the World War, there was no real co-operation between artillery and infantry, but both were fighting their own battles and artillery was not giving attacking or defending infantry continuous fire-support. The batteries were placed unconcealed in the open and in full view of the enemy and were thus vulnerable to its artillery and machine guns. The reason for this was the fact that the Russians still mainly observed their fire directly from the batteries, and indirect fire or shooting from the map was disregarded as ‘unsuitable for Russian conditions’ or considered inaccurate and dangerous for their own troops. The Russians did not usually have any fire plans, and they were completely ignorant of modern tactics such as creeping barrages and predicted and concentrated ‘hurricane’ bombardments, although these were the tactics that the Germans had used successfully also on the Eastern Front and led to enormous casualties for the Russian Army.¹³⁸ Despite having a sufficient number of guns in their use, the artillery commanders were afraid of concentrating too many batteries on the same area. This actually prevented them, together with primitive tactics, from achieving any decisive results. In addition, horse-drawn gun teams – not to mention ammunition supplies – had extreme difficulties to keep up with fast-moving cavalry and infantry formations, and similarly during the retreat they were unable to extricate their guns. The moral effect of artillery fire was often, however, important. A few even harmlessly distant explosions of shells were sometimes enough to disperse badly-trained troops.¹³⁹

The misuse of the artillery appears to be one of the fatal mistakes of the White Army. Later events revealed that fire-power provided by the artillery proved decisive also in the Civil War

¹³⁸ The development of artillery warfare during the First World War is well described in Terraine’s *White Heat*, pp. 203-21.

¹³⁹ Holman’s Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA, and Wood, ‘Subaltern in South Russia’; Wood’s papers, IWM. Holman mentions the running out of artillery ammunition as one of the main reasons for the White defeat in crucial battles near Kursk and Kharkov in October 1919.

conditions. It was the properly delivered ‘drum-fire’ of the Polish artillery that stopped the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw in July 1920. The same tactics used by the Reds broke the White defences in the Crimea in November of the same year.¹⁴⁰ Apparently, the artillery tactics used in these two battles were rather crude compared to those of British or German artillery of 1918, but in both cases enough batteries were concentrated in a critical area and there was a plan for allocating the fire of these batteries.

A comparison of two, White and British, reports of a typical battle at the Don Front illustrates well the nature of warfare in South Russia. The official 1st Don Corps’s report describes ‘the fierce but victorious battle’ as follows: ‘the enemy advanced in strength from the direction of Ushanovka village, north-west from Tsaritsyn. The attack was, however, repulsed and heavy casualties were inflicted by the accurate fire of our artillery and machine guns.’ The report from a British instructor, who witnessed the battle, appears quite different:

The White battery (equipped with British 18-pounders) opens up with maximum elevation after the fire control team has sighted a small enemy group on the steppe in the distance of 7,000 yards. A 4.5” howitzer battery joins in, firing rounds here and there without any recognisable targets in sight. A Bolshevik battery returns with a couple of rounds, which explode harmlessly over 1,000 yards before the White trenches. White artillery stops firing after about 30 minutes.

Afterwards the British observer, Major Williamson, enquired from the corps commander what was the reason for such wastage of ammunition. The uneasy Cossack general explained that the morale of the infantry was so low that it would have started to retreat after the first sight of the enemy if the artillery had not immediately opened fire. The general

¹⁴⁰ Wollenberg, *The Red Army*, pp.131-2.

added that for the same reason the machine guns opened up at a distance of 2,000 metres. When asked question, ‘how on earth was the fire control team cooking their breakfast on an open fire at their observation post?’, he declined to answer.¹⁴¹

British observers were generally not impressed by the operations of Denikin’s troops. Decisive victories where large enemy formations were destroyed were seldom achieved. A typical battle ended as one of the opposing armies retreated. Moreover, there was hardly ever a serious attempt to pursue the enemy. It was always more important to loot the conquered city and celebrate the ‘victory’. The actual battle casualties in this kind of warfare remained naturally low. There were usually more cases of ‘missing in action’ in the opposing armies, which usually meant desertion or defection. The Russian Civil War was a very bloody war, but not because of its battles. Many more people died because of the Red and White terror in mass executions of captured soldiers or civilians in the conquered areas.¹⁴²

This is not to say that large-scale and fierce battles *never* occurred during the civil war in South Russia. The largest battle in the South Russia and perhaps in the whole Civil War was the battle of Tsaritsyn in June-July 1919. This battle followed vaguely the script of the battles of the First World War with massed infantry and cavalry attacks on fixed defences. Wrangel proved to be a very traditional Russian general during this operation, as he ordered again and again his troops without effective supporting fire to charge the enemy field fortifications. The best units of his Caucasian Army were in Wrangel’s words ‘bled white’ in these attacks against the hail of Red machine gun

¹⁴¹ Maj. Williamson’s Report (includes a copy of the Russian report) whilst visiting 1st Don Corps, 19 September 1919, Williamson papers, IWM.

¹⁴² Bilney, interview by P. Liddle, PLA, de Wolff, ‘Memoirs’, de Wolff papers, IWM, Maj.-Gen Sir H.C. Holman’s Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, WO 33/971, NA. Chamberlin comes to the same conclusion in ‘*The Russian Revolution*, vol II’, p. 81.

and artillery fire. Wrangel naturally accused Denikin of not providing him with enough artillery for preliminary bombardment, but he never questioned his unimaginative and outdated infantry tactics. The Red defensive line was eventually penetrated with the help of British tanks and aircraft.

The fighting became fierce and bloody sometimes when elite units from both sides met in the battlefield. This was the case, for example, when Denikin's advance was finally blocked at Orel, and the spearhead of the Volunteer Army was broken by the flank attack of the striking force composed of the Lettish Rifle Regiment – Lenin's praetorian guard – and of the Red Army *kurshanty* (military cadets). The British observers well admitted the courage and even fanaticism on both sides. They also often mention, however, the 'cult of death' among the Volunteer Army. The idealization of the ultimate personal sacrifice for the White cause was sadly popular in the best units.¹⁴³ This, together with unhealthy images of courage, often led to numerous unnecessary casualties, which Denikin's Army could hardly have afforded. In addition to almost suicidal offensive tactics, it was common for the elite units not to dig proper defensive positions as this was considered cowardice and trenches would not be needed to repulse the loathsome Bolsheviks. A British captain who served with the Kornilov Infantry Regiment during the autumn of 1919 described how the *kornilovchy* did not lie down or even kneel to fire their rifles at attacking Bolsheviks although the air was thick with machine gun-bullets and shell-splinters.¹⁴⁴ The Volunteer Army had indeed lost – because of these heroic antics – many of its most competent officers already during the Kuban and North-Caucasus campaigns in 1918 and early 1919, including generals Markov and Drozdovskii. Also Wrangel lost many of his regimental and battalion commanders during the battle for Tsaritsyn.

¹⁴³ The 'cult of death' in the White Army is also discussed in Leonid Heretz's article 'The Psychology of the White Movement', pp. 117-18.

¹⁴⁴ Austin; 'Some Experiences in Russia, 1919', pp. 320-2.

Even Denikin himself was not entirely free from this Volunteer spirit. General Briggs met Denikin at the Manych front in May 1919 only 1,000 yards behind the firing line, shells passing continuously over and bursting nearby. Yet Denikin 'was merry as a sand boy' and told Briggs that he was enjoying himself away from the office and political worries.¹⁴⁵

The military defects in Denikin's army were numerous. These problems were sharply detected and often pointed out to Denikin's staff. It was, however, impossible to make fundamental improvements in the chaotic conditions of the civil war. The White officers were, in addition, generally suspicious of the modernization of warfare, especially when suggested by foreign advisers. The White Army was indeed led by the conservative wing of the Imperial officer corps. These men had been, as Norman Stone stated, more or less guilty of failing to develop the Imperial Russian Army during the World War. Tactical innovations were neglected despite huge losses. Russia's defeat in the war was explained by the corruption of the Home Front and by the treachery of the Bolsheviks. The new group of junior officers and general staff men that was emerging after the defeats of 1916 never got much authority in the Imperial Army – nor in Denikin's army. Their more radical thinking was however exploited in full by the Bolsheviks in the later stages of the Civil War.¹⁴⁶ The British observers evaluated that it was not just the superiority of numbers (generally two to one or more) but Red Army's ability to develop their use of firepower that brought them victory on the battlefield. It was the combined use of machine guns and artillery that broke the White attacks in the battles of autumn 1919. The development of the Red units' was so astonishing that the British suspected the

¹⁴⁵ Statement made by Lt.Gen. Sir C.L. Briggs, to the Army Committee of the House of Commons, 24 July 1919.

¹⁴⁶ Stone, *The Eastern Front*, pp. 224-5.

Bolsheviks of having hired German officers to train and lead their troops.¹⁴⁷

However, in summer 1919 Denikin's army was fighting against an even weaker opponent. The offensive of the Armed Forces of South Russia seemed unstoppable despite all its defects.

5.3. Concentrating on Denikin

Churchill received the news of Denikin's success enthusiastically in London. In June and July 1919, however, different kinds of reports arrived from other parts Russia. The Bolsheviks had routed Kolchak at the battle of Cheliabinsk in the Urals, and the remnants of his armies were now disorderly retreating eastwards. It gradually became clear that Kolchak's army no longer existed as a serious fighting force. Meanwhile, in North Russia, some of the Russian troops serving in General Ironside's 'British-Slavo-Legion' had mutinied and after murdering their British officers defected to the Bolsheviks. The plan to build a White army in the North and to advance south-east to join forces with Kolchak had to be abandoned. The War Cabinet made the final decision to evacuate the British troops from both Siberia and North Russia before the coming winter. It had already been decided in March to withdraw the troops from Transcaucasia and the evacuation was completed by 28 August 1919.

Following Kolchak's setbacks Churchill became even more convinced of Denikin's central role in the White movement. The first shipments of military supplies that had arrived Novorossiisk in March 1919 had enabled Denikin to launch his offensive and, thus, showed the positive results immediately. On the other hand, Kolchak's army had been defeated despite receiving an enormous amount of matériel. In fact,

¹⁴⁷ Admiral de Robeck's Report 21 January 1920, CAB/24 2344, NA.

the Reds had captured many of Kolchak's supply depots full of British supplies, and whole Bolshevik regiments were now fighting in full British kit. 'Thanks to Lloyd George!', shouted a Bolshevik commissar to an astonished captured British soldier in Baku.¹⁴⁸

The Chief of Imperial General Staff, General Wilson, supported Churchill's views: Denikin's victory was the only chance the Whites would have, and supporting him would be the most important point of the British government's Russian policy. Accordingly, the War Office concentrated aid on Denikin's army. Supplies, originally routed to Vladivostok, were diverted to South Russia. These shipments included arms and equipment for a further 225,000 men. In addition, it was decided that any possible financial aid would be diverted from Kolchak to Denikin.¹⁴⁹

In the Baltic, General Iudenich did not appear much more successful than Kolchak. The Bolsheviks repelled his North-Eastern Army's attack on Petrograd in May. Finland was not ready to join Iudenich's operation without full support from the Allies, and more importantly, without recognition of her sovereignty by the Whites. The small Baltic nations were even more suspicious of Iudenich's plans, and had actually started secretly to negotiate with the Bolsheviks. Hence, the British War Office planned to ship the whole 20,000-strong army of Iudenich to South Russia. It was thought to be more useful there under Denikin's command.¹⁵⁰ However, this plan was never executed, as Iudenich started his final attack on Petrograd in October 1919, which led eventually to defeat and destruction of the whole army little more than a month later. Evan Mawdsley has argued that if the Allies had intended 'a serious and general anti-Soviet campaign the Petrograd Province

¹⁴⁸ War Diary, General Staff, 8 July 1919, WO 95/4958, NA, Hutchkings, 'Account of Experiences as a P.O.W. in Russia, IWM

¹⁴⁹ Wilson, Diary, 8 July & 9 July 1919, Wilson papers, IWM.

¹⁵⁰ War Office Memorandum, 14 September 1919, no. 7027, FO 608/201, NA.

would have been an ideal theatre'. He points out rightly the short line of communications, the moral significance of the old capital, and relatively short distance to Moscow.¹⁵¹ However, perhaps the most important component for a serious campaign against the Bolsheviks was a sufficiently strong White force that was considered worth supporting by the Allies, and exactly this was missing in the Baltic. Not even Churchill considered that an offensive against Moscow would be solely executed by Allied (i.e. British) troops, as would evidently have been the case in the Petrograd theatre. There was no Volunteer Army or Cossacks in the Baltic and Iudenich was not Denikin.

The tanks sent to Denikin had proved to be especially effective and Churchill tried hard to fulfil Military Mission's urgent request for more of these vehicles. The Army on the Rhine had had the priority on the General Staff's supply list, but Churchill bluntly informed his subordinates that tanks would be much more useful in South Russia. He also decided that tanks would not be sent to Siberia anymore. The General Staff succeeded eventually in collecting 56 heavy Mark V and 18 light Whippet tanks from depots in Britain and France, and these were shipped to Novorossiisk.¹⁵²

Churchill worked hard in the Cabinet to gain support for Denikin. On 4 July he gave the Cabinet an eloquent and colourful account of the events in South Russia pointing out all the victories of the Whites and the names of the numerous liberated cities. According to his over-optimistic calculations, Denikin's Armed Forces of South Russia had increased in strength to 600,000 (in reality it numbered no more than 150,000 at the time). Churchill also tried to convince his colleagues that the reports of atrocities committed by the White troops were absolutely false. Unlike his Bolshevik enemies, Denikin was fighting an honourable and humane war. The position of the Whites was especially

¹⁵¹ Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, p. 198.

¹⁵² Kettle, *Russia and the Allies*, vol III, p. 447.

favourable and Churchill urged the Cabinet to define the British policy accordingly. The northern coast of the Black Sea would soon be in Denikin's hands, and Britain should immediately start commerce in the area. This would be a very effective way to support Denikin as the people in the areas liberated from the Bolshevism would be able to buy all kind of consumer goods. This would be good for the British economy too. Churchill suggested a press announcement on the issue and that the Board of Trade should begin to encourage companies to start business in South Russia. Yet, the Cabinet did not reach any decision on the question of South Russia.¹⁵³

At the end of July, the Cabinet discussed Denikin again and Churchill suggested that a clear policy of assistance, both military and economic should be designed. This support programme would be defined for example for six months, a point which the Russians should be made aware of. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were strongly against such a commitment. According to them, it was impossible for Britain to support Denikin economically to any great extent. Firstly, Britain had no resources and, secondly, the situation in Russia was too unstable. The Cabinet decided that the War Office could continue to support Denikin as before, but the matériel given should mainly consist of supplies that the British armed forces were not able to use themselves – Churchill had succeeded in convincing Lloyd George that it was actually cheaper to ship this ordnance material to Russia than to store it for indefinite periods. In addition, the War Office was authorised to use a sum of £100,000 to purchase supplies not found in depots.¹⁵⁴

While Denikin continued his advance towards Moscow, conquering city after city, Churchill continued his own battle at Whitehall. Opinions in the Cabinet started, however, to turn

¹⁵³ War Cabinet 588 A/ 4 July 1919, CAB 23/15, NA.

¹⁵⁴ War Cabinet 599/ 25 July 1919, and 601/ 29 July 1919, CAB 23/11, NA.

unfavourable towards his cause. Gradually he lost almost all support outside of his own ministry. The situation had become very complicated as Denikin's success actually had made other ministers cautious. The benefits of the White victory did not convince everybody in the Cabinet. The White generals were considered reactionary and the possibility of a military dictatorship of one of these generals was thought to be the most probable result of Denikin's victory – not a democratic Russia and free election of the Constitutional Assembly. Moreover, it was to be expected that the Whites would turn against the Border States in the Caucasus and the Baltic area immediately after their victory over the Bolsheviks.

Churchill's most ardent and also influential opponent after the Prime Minister Lloyd George was the Foreign Secretary Curzon. Curzon's hatred for the Bolsheviks was almost as great as Churchill's, but his affection for the White cause much smaller. He was not eager to spend millions to help Denikin, who after overthrowing the Bolsheviks, would simply return to the South and conquer the Caucasian republics. This would only mean, according to Curzon, who had made his career in India, the return of the perennial Russian threat against the British Empire in India and Persia. On the other hand, Lloyd George, who had been lukewarm towards Churchill's Russian policy right from the start, did not appear really to have believed in Denikin's chances and considered the Bolsheviks *de facto* rulers of Russia. He told his ministers that if 'Denikin really had the people behind him, the Bolsheviks could never overcome him; but he must help himself, not expect endless help from Britain.' He also still entertained the idea of a peaceful settlement in Russia. The Cabinet concluded that the War Office should prepare 'a final contribution' to send to Denikin, and to send a political commissioner to South Russia to observe the situation.¹⁵⁵ Military Mission's problems relating to the complex

¹⁵⁵ War Cabinet 606/ 12 August 1919, CAB 23/11, NA, Gilbert, *World in Torment*, pp. 314-17.

political situation in South Russia were thus taken into account by the Cabinet, but Lloyd George and Curzon obviously also wanted information from Russia which did not come via Churchill's War Office.

6. ARMING THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

6.1. Supplying the White Army with British Weapons and Equipment

The amount of matériel supplied by Britain to the Armed Forces of South Russia was enormous. It included full British army kit for half a million men, 1,200 field guns with almost two million rounds of ammunition, 6,100 machine guns, 200,000 rifles with 500 million rounds of ammunition, 629 lorries and motorcars, 279 motorcycles, 74 tanks, six armoured cars, 200 aircraft, twelve 500-bed hospitals, 25 field hospitals and a vast amount of signal and engineer equipment.¹⁵⁶ All this was sufficient for an army of 250,000 men and it was actually much more than Denikin was ever able to use, as the combat strength of his army never exceeded 150,000 men.¹⁵⁷

The first five ships arrived at Novorossiisk in March 1919 bringing 13,000 tons of these dearly needed supplies to Denikin's exhausted Army. This first 'packet' included several batteries of artillery, 12 tanks, thousands of small arms, 7,500 tons of ammunition, and 5,000 tons of general stores (e.g. uniforms).¹⁵⁸ Despite the victory at the North Caucasus the military situation was most alarming. The Don Army was on the verge of collapse and the Bolsheviks were rapidly advancing into the *Voisko*. The morale of the Volunteers was not much better following the tremendous casualties suffered during the recent

¹⁵⁶ Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the Military Mission, South Russia. WO 33/971, NA. There are only minor differences in numbers of British matériel given by Denikin, Anton I, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol IV, p. 86, and Soviet historiography, e.g. Aleksashenko, A.P, *Krakh denikinshchiny*, p121.

¹⁵⁷ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, p, 74, 118.

¹⁵⁸ 'Resume of work by the RAOC with the British Military Mission in South Russia', by Lt-Col. Symons, Symons' Papers, PLA. But the effect of British aid in the spring was not merely psychological as Evan Mawdsley states in *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 167-9.

fierce fighting. The pressure on the AFSR had decreased, however, as Kolchak had started his spring offensive in Western Siberia on 1 March and the Bolsheviks had to transport many of their divisions to halt the White forces already threatening Kazan. This gave Denikin time to reorganize his army and to begin to issue the troops with the new matériel supplied by the British. Denikin succeeded in regaining momentum. As described in the previous chapter, the Whites cleared the Bolsheviks out of the Donetz Basin and the Don and conquered Tsaritsyn. The offensive was entirely dependent on the arrival of British aid. Denikin's army had lacked everything from field guns to boots and in April the White troops were firing their last rounds. The effect on morale that came with the new weapons and equipment was almost as important as their pure material value.¹⁵⁹

Transportation and the issue of the matériel to the troops was not a simple task. Between Novorossiisk and the Front was the enormous chaos of Russia ravaged by the years of war and revolution. The original agreement between Denikin's HQ and the British Mission stipulated that the matériel became Russian property immediately up on arrival in Novorossiisk harbour, and, in effect, the British had no real control over its distribution to the forces. It soon became obvious that the supply service of Denikin's Army was not capable of executing the task. Consequently, arms, ammunition and equipment started to accumulate at the Novorossiisk docks during the spring and early summer, and shiploads of invaluable supplies either rotted or rusted beyond repair.¹⁶⁰

The original Russian plan had been to transport the supplies to depots behind the Front where they were to be issued to the troops. If

¹⁵⁹ Both Kenez, *Civil War*, vol II, pp. 22-4, and Brinkley, *Volunteer Army*, pp. 216-21, admit the vital importance of British aid during the spring and summer of 1919, but these studies do not contain detailed accounts of the British Military Mission's work in South Russia.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* and War Diary, General staff, 25 March 1919. WO 95/4958, NA.

supplies ever arrived through the abysmal railway network, they tended, again, to accumulate at these depots. In addition, Russian ordnance officers were very bad bookkeepers. Depot commanders usually had no detailed records of the matériel in their possession, and army HQs had no knowledge about what was stored and where. The protection of these depots was also seriously neglected, although the Red or Green partisans regularly attacked them. The worst incident was Makhno's attack at Berdiansk where his band looted and destroyed an ammunition depot of 62,000 artillery rounds and 65 million rounds of small arms ammunition.¹⁶¹ Also Budenny, the Red cavalry commander, claimed to have captured an important part of his supplies, including British uniforms, from the raids to Don Army depots.¹⁶²

The British soon noticed that the numerous rear echelon troops were often much better clothed than the men in the frontline. It was very fashionable to wear a military uniform even amongst the civil service of Denikin's government – this kit was usually a British khaki. Corrupted ordnance officers sold thousands of sets of uniforms to the civilians. A made-over British nurse's uniform was also reported to be a common outfit of the Novorossiisk prostitutes. Hospital beds and sheets often ended up not in hospitals but in the private homes of military and civilian officials.¹⁶³ But, not only Russians were to blame for profiteering; British officers and NCOs were sometimes caught selling military supplies to civilians and also holding currency exchange rackets in cities.¹⁶⁴

In addition to this general chaos with supply services, Denikin was accused of favouring his loyal Volunteer Army at the

¹⁶¹ War Diary, BMM, to South Russia, October 1919, WO 95/4959.

¹⁶² Budenny, *The Path of Valour*, p. 150.

¹⁶³ Report on the BMM, South Russia by Gen. Holman, 8 October 1919. CHAR 16/29, CCAC.

¹⁶⁴ Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the Military Mission, South Russia. WO 33/971, NA, and Bilney MSS, Bilney papers, PLA.

expense of the Don and the Caucasus Armies. The Volunteer units fighting in the Donetz Basin along the Taganrog-Kharkov railway line were, indeed, generally well supplied with the British arms and equipment towards the end of May. The effect on morale was enormous when the men of the 'Iron Brigade' went to battle wearing brand new British khaki and steel helmets.¹⁶⁵ However, the first British arms did not reach the Don Army units until the end of June 1919. Not a single British uniform had reached the front, but the Cossacks were wearing a ragged mixture of old Imperial Army uniforms and peasant clothes. A third of the men were without boots and to the astonishment of a British observer some Cossacks even wore captured German *pickelhäube* as headgear.¹⁶⁶ General Sidorin, the Commander-in-Chief of the Don Army, put the blame also on the British, complaining regularly that they were supplying only the Volunteers as his Cossacks received next to nothing and when something arrived it was rubbish. Records of the British supply base at Novorossiisk prove indeed that the amount of matériel distributed to the Don Army was much smaller than the amount received by the Volunteers – despite the fact that the nominal strength of the Don Army was almost twice as large.¹⁶⁷ Sidorin's bitterness is understandable. The British role in subordinating the operational command of the Don Army under Denikin and General Poole's behaviour was well remembered at the Don. At time, however, the distribution of aid was still decided by Denikin's HQ, not by the British Mission.

The War Office was not satisfied with the slow progress and the limited effectiveness of the aid. It was considered necessary to replace General Briggs with a more competent quartermaster officer and

¹⁶⁵ Report and Recommendations by Gen. Holman. 8 July 1919. CHAR 16/29, CCAC.

¹⁶⁶ Maj. Williamson's Report from the Don Front, 18 June 1919, Williamson Papers, IWM.

¹⁶⁷ Resume of work by the RAOC with British Military Mission in South Russia, by Lt-Col. Symons, Symons' Papers, PLA.

if possible with someone who had a better knowledge of Russian affairs. The third commander of the Military Mission was to be General-Major H.C. Holman, the former quartermaster-general of General Rawlinson's 4th Army. Holman had served as a military attaché in the Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese war and was thus more familiar with the Russian Army. He was also fluent in Russian. After meticulous study of the Russian situation, Holman wrote a memorandum to Churchill in which he explained his plan to improve the performance of the Military Mission. Holman recognised the support of Denikin's army in its battle to conquer Bolshevism as the ultimate task of the British Mission. Firstly, it was absolutely necessary to reorganize the Russian supply service. In effect, the British should take charge, because the Russians were evidently incapable of handling the situation. Naturally, it was not possible to nominate British officers to commanding posts in Denikin's army, but rather they should operate 'behind the curtains'. It was most important that only the most capable officers were chosen for this demanding task. Holman was actually not satisfied with the quality of the British officers serving in South Russia at the time, and clearly viewed their incompetence as a partial explanation for the unsatisfactory situation.¹⁶⁸ Churchill approved Holman's rather blunt memorandum. Holman's policy meant an improvement in the Mission's work but it also meant far deeper involvement in Denikin's cause.

Holman started to execute his plan immediately after receiving the command of the Mission from General Briggs on 12 June 1919. First, he established a base in Novorossiisk to supervise the unloading and sorting of the supplies, and in order to secure authority over the Russians he commissioned a brigadier as a base commandant. Secondly, he inaugurated a daily congress at the Mission headquarters, in order to improve co-operation between different branches of the Mission.¹⁶⁹ According to his plan, he also started to send home officers

¹⁶⁸ Memorandum by Maj.-Gen. H.C. Holman, 10 May 1919, WO 106/1228, NA.

¹⁶⁹ War Diary, BMM, 12 and 17 June 1919, WO 95/4959, NA.

who were considered incapable in their duties and to replace them with volunteers he had personally selected. Both the British and the Russians generally welcomed the new energetic commander enthusiastically.¹⁷⁰

In spite of these improvements the supply organization still did not operate satisfactorily. An inspection carried out by Holman's officers revealed that only a quarter of the matériel supplied by the British had reached the frontline troops by the end of July 1919. Holman wrote an unambiguous memorandum to Denikin. The Commander-in-Chief called a conference of the heads of his administrative services and gave orders according to Holman's suggestions. However, Denikin's generals did not receive Holman's open criticism as calmly as their Commander in Chief. All the senior generals first wanted to resign but they were, however, persuaded by Denikin to attend the conference. In the negotiations that lasted for several days Holman succeeded in convincing Denikin and his generals and they finally approved his policy on 6 September 1919. From this date on, when a ship arrived at Novorossiisk its cargo was received by the British base commandant. The supplies were then loaded, according to orders from the Mission headquarters, into a special train supervised by a British transport officer. In its destination the trainload was received, again by British officers who distributed the arms and equipment to the troops. The reorganization had an immediate effect on the supply system. In the best case full equipment was issued to 15,000 men only five days after the matériel had arrived in Novorossiisk.¹⁷¹ The British Mission had gained

¹⁷⁰ Williamson, Diary, 20 June 1919, Williamson papers, IWM, and Boustead, interview by P. Liddle, PLA. An opposite evaluation on Holman and his work is given in Kinvigs *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 233. Kinvig criticizes Holman very heavily and questions his competence on the basis of memoirs of one or two disillusioned junior officers. This surprisingly unfair evaluation of Holman's work is not based on wider research of sources.

¹⁷¹ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, 6 and 8 September 1919, WO 95/4959, NA, Report on the BMM, South Russia by Gen. Holman, 8 October 1919. CHAR 16/29, CCAC.

total control over supplies of the matériel. On the other hand the Mission had become an integral part of the organisation of Denikin's Army.

6.2. Training

Training the Armed Forces of South Russia in the use of the new weapons was an integral part of the British aid. The disappointing effects of the vast British aid conferred on the Russians during the World War had proved that training was essential for any results. Not only were most of the types of British weapons technically new to Russians but the British instructors also discovered, as explained in the previous chapter, that their tactical use of artillery and machine guns was primitive. Denikin's army had no functioning training organization with troops being rushed to the front after just a brief drill. Very few Russians had ever seen a tank and also Denikin's air corps was in a deplorable state when the British arrived. The task of training the White forces was no less complicated than supplying them.

A small group of British artillery officers and NCOs began their work in the two artillery schools of the AFSR in May 1919. One of them, the Volunteer Gunnery School, worked in Armavir on the site of the central artillery park of the Volunteer Army, and the other school, for the Don Army, was in Novocherkassk. The actual training was arranged by the Russians and only supervised by the few British. The British instructors also received strict orders from the Military Mission Command 'not to interfere with the work of the Russians and not to hurt their feelings'.¹⁷²

General Holman made an extensive tour of the military schools and batteries supplied with British guns after his arrival in South

¹⁷² Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the Military Mission, South Russia. WO 33/971, NA, Williamson, Diary 25 May 1919, Williamson papers, IWM.

Russia. He found the situation most unsatisfactory. In Holman's own words, 'much of the training was eye-wash'. The training given at the Russian schools had been far more theoretical than practical. For example, officers knew exactly how many yards of steel tape was used in the manufacture of an 18-pounder field gun, but they did not know how to remedy the most trivial defects and were generally ignorant of the maintenance this weapon required. The 18-pounder (being the main weapon of the Royal Artillery during the War, most of the guns supplied to Denikin were of this type) proved eventually to be technically too sophisticated a weapon in the hands of inexperienced Russian gunners. Holman soon discovered that training was generally chaotic. In some cases the personnel of complete batteries went through the training in the schools, but usually only a few officers and men actually arrived. Some batteries remained in the schools for several months, evidently avoiding combat service, but usually they were rushed to the front after a superficial instruction of only a few days.¹⁷³

The careless and, on the other hand, conservative attitude of the Russian officers was a serious problem in the front line units. The Russians seemed not to be familiar with modern methods of fire control, but merely estimated the range and the bearing to the target. They were generally not interested in studying or applying the effective methods the Royal Artillery had developed during the last years of the war on the Western Front. During the battles the batteries usually fired uninterruptedly and consumed enormous quantities of ammunition on worthless targets, but afterwards little attention was paid to the maintenance of weapons and consequently the guns were rapidly made useless. The weapons were also often issued without the necessary spare parts.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Report on the BMM, South Russia by Gen. Holman, 8 October 1919. CHAR 16/29, CCAC.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* and Williamson, Diary 25 May 1919, Williamson papers, IWM.

As regards the machine guns supplied by the British, the situation was equally unacceptable. There was hardly any training organized at all and the guns were often delivered directly to the front. In spite of its similar appearance, the heavy Vickers machine gun was technically a more complicated weapon than the Russian Maxim. The usage of a light machine gun as a close support weapon for the infantry was totally new for the Russians. Their attitude towards the Lewis gun was at first very suspicious, although this weapon proved later most suitable for the fast moving type of warfare waged in South Russia.¹⁷⁵ In conclusion, neither artillery nor machine guns at the front were effective and the maintenance of weapons generally deplorable. Training and supply were simply not properly coordinated.

Holman explained to Denikin and his staff in a series of negotiations the necessity for a radical change. White command finally approved his plan at the end of August 1919. A special training branch was founded at the General staff of the Mission to supervise and coordinate the training. The focus of the artillery training was moved from the schools to the front. In September more instructors arrived from Britain and commenced their work in the batteries effectively supervising the use of weapons in field conditions. The performance of Denikin's artillery improved significantly after this reorganization.¹⁷⁶

The machine gun training was reorganized by establishing special training companies in the divisions of the AFSR. After completing their course, these companies were sent to the front as complete units. The British also began to train Russian officers as instructors familiar with British weaponry. Altogether the British trained over 9,000 Russians in the use of Vickers and Lewis guns. The machine

¹⁷⁵ Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the Military Mission, South Russia. WO 33/971, NA. The Red Army also eagerly adapted the Lewis gun and thousands of guns, captured in the various fronts of the Civil War, were issued to Red troops.

¹⁷⁶ Report on the BMM, South Russia by Gen. Holman, 8 October 1919. CHAR 16/29, CCAC.

gun companies trained and equipped by the British fought exceptionally well and retained their discipline even during the White collapse and general retreat towards the South.¹⁷⁷

6.3. Churchill's Private Warriors

When the Imperial War Cabinet made the decision to send a military mission to South Russia, in defining the task of the mission, it clearly banned any involvement in combat operations. According to the official policy of March 1919, no fighting troops were to be sent to Russia; the British military personnel in Russia were only to train and supply the loyal Allies of the Great War.¹⁷⁸ The intention of the Cabinet was to keep a low profile in its interventionist policies because of the domestic unpopularity of the operations in Russia. However, the reality in South Russia was very different from the official policy in London. The instructions from Churchill's War Office contradicted the general policy. Individual officers and in some cases whole units of the Military Mission began to take part in combat operations to support the White army.

The White generals were very enthusiastic about the first twelve tanks that arrived at Novorossiisk in April 1919. A special 'Tank Detachment' was founded by the Mission to train the Russians to use these war machines. Both technically and tactically, however, the tank was a totally new weapon in Russia and the training of Russian tank crews was far from complete when Denikin started his spring offensive in May 1919. Notwithstanding this lack he was determined to use his tanks in combat. The problem was solved by sending the British instructors to the front. In effect, the officers of the Royal Tank Corps started to act as tactical commanders of Denikin's armoured corps and

¹⁷⁷ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, 20 February 1920, WO 95/4959, NA.

¹⁷⁸ War Cabinet 541, 4 March 1919, CAB 23/9, NA.

also to take part in fighting as vehicle commanders and crew-members.¹⁷⁹ This was to be a common practice until the final evacuation of the Mission in March 1920.

After several successful engagements at the Donetz front the tanks were sent to support the Army of Caucasus, commanded by General P.N. Wrangel, when it launched its second attack against Tsaritsyn. The new weapon was dearly needed as the exhausted Kuban Cossacks proved unable to penetrate the multiple rings of trenches and barbed wire surrounding the city. The carefully planned operation, supported by aerial reconnaissance, was successful beyond all expectations. The tanks overcame the defence system with ease and their attack was a total surprise to the Bolsheviks. Five armoured trains surrendered when the tanks cut off their retreat to Tsaritsyn, one more was knocked out and in many cases the Bolshevik infantry fled at the first sight of these steel monsters. A British tank crew constantly manned the leading vehicle. The captain who was commanding this tank was actually severely wounded by a shell and Major Bruce, the C.O. of Military Mission's tank detachment, took his place. These six tanks played an important role in the capture of Tsaritsyn and it was Major Bruce's tank that led the White troops into the city.¹⁸⁰ The famous tactician and military historian, Sir Basil Liddell Hart, later described the battle of Tsaritsyn as one of the finest feats of the Royal Tank Corps.¹⁸¹

As their colleagues in the tank arm, the artillery and machine gun instructors who served in the various units of the Armed Forces of South Russia took part in the fighting. The British officers often found the original non-combatant role frustrating and even humiliating. These men were very keen to show the effective use of weapons in practice to

¹⁷⁹ Tank Corps (B.M.M.) Diary, May-June 1919, WO 95/4959, NA.

¹⁸⁰ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, 30 June 1919, WO 95/4959, NA, and Wrangel, *Muistelmat*, pp.112-3.

¹⁸¹ Liddell Hart, *The Tank*, vol I, p. 211.

the Russians. Major Williamson, an artillery supervisor attached to the Don Army, regularly demonstrated his fire control skills when visiting Cossack batteries in the front line, on one occasion damaging a Red armoured train and forcing it to retreat with his accurate fire. The same major also took part 'out of pure interest' in several cavalry charges of the Don Cossacks. His application to join General Mamontov in his notorious raid behind the Bolshevik lines was, however, turned down by General Holman.¹⁸² Another young officer, Captain Boustead, who served as a machine gun instructor in a Don infantry brigade also saw action regularly. According to his own account, he once saved the day by taking command of two Cossack companies. All the White officers had been killed and disorderly Cossacks were about to be slaughtered by a superior force of Red cavalry. Boustead actually repulsed one charge by firing a Lewis gun over the saddle of his horse and then organized the remnant of the Don companies to retreat.¹⁸³

The command of the Mission was fully aware of the actions of its subordinates. In order to improve the training and effectiveness of the batteries, General Holman sent an assistant liaison officer to every major artillery unit 'to assist and advise Russian battery commanders on any points that arose in action.'¹⁸⁴ The General himself was no less active than his men and his example definitely did not encourage them to obey orders. According to some senior British officers, Holman apparently found office work and endless negotiations with Denikin's generals frustrating and boring and started to visit the front more and more frequently. He rather recklessly boarded a RAF DH9 bomber several times 'to throw some bombs on the Bolsheviks' and even took

¹⁸² Williamson, Diary entries 10 August and 7 September 1919, Williamson Papers, IWM. Major Williamson was later awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his action against the Bolshevik armoured train.

¹⁸³ Boustead's interview by P. Liddle, PLA.

¹⁸⁴ Maj-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, W.O. 33/971, NA.

part in fighting near Kharkov in a tank.¹⁸⁵ The possible death or capture of General Holman by the Bolsheviks would, no doubt, have been a severe embarrassment to the Cabinet.

On the other side of the front-line the members of the British Mission were clearly treated as combatants and participants in the Civil War when they arrived in Russia. Bolshevik propaganda tried to demoralize the British by promising certain torture and execution in the event of capture. British pilots, according to one leaflet, were instructed to be crucified. These promises came sadly true when Captain Frecheville and Lieutenant Couche, machine gun instructors in the Don Army, were captured by the Bolsheviks at Rostov in December 1919. They were stripped of their uniforms and beaten to death with sticks in a market square and their bodies were drawn after horses along the streets of Rostov.¹⁸⁶ The five officers who went missing north of Tsaritsyn, and were never heard of again, obviously suffered similar fates. In a ruthless atmosphere such as this it must have been hard to maintain the role of outside observer or instructor.

Regardless of the original assignment by the Cabinet, combat missions became a natural part of the work of the Military Mission. Commanding generals, especially Holman, tried to support Denikin as best they could. The active role in operations played by the RAF and the Tank Corps was reported to the War Office, which was consequently fully aware of these actions. The feats in South Russia did not, indeed, go unnoticed at Whitehall, as several officers of the Mission received high decorations for their service.

¹⁸⁵ War Diary of 'A-Detachment', Summary of Events, December 1919, AIR I/1960, NA, de Wolff, unpublished '*Memoirs*', de Wolff Papers, IMW, Lt-Col Lister, Diary entry 20 Dec 1919, Liddell Hart Centre, King's College London.

¹⁸⁶ Report by Capt. Anderson, AIR I, 1958/204/260/12, NA, and Report on Fate of Capt. Frecheville (undated), Lancaster Papers, IWM.

Churchill paid a great deal of attention to the work of the Mission and, no doubt, he was satisfied. However, publicly he had to keep to the official policy line and declare that the support given to Denikin was only material and that the British worked only as observers and instructors. He was helped in this by the fact that casualties of the Mission stayed mercifully low in summer 1919. When the opponents of intervention enquired of Churchill about the work of the Mission at the Parliament he flatly denied that any British officers were being attached to Denikin's combat units. At Cabinet meetings in July and August 1919, he explained only slightly more openly that the members of the Mission had not taken part in combat operations, but some of them might have been involved in a coincidental fighting during their visits to the front.¹⁸⁷ Later, in October at the peak of Denikin's advance towards Moscow, when Churchill was again questioned about the intervention at a Cabinet meeting, he informed his government colleagues that only one officer had been slightly wounded and this was a proof of the non-combatant role of the Mission. The wounded officer was apparently Captain Walsh of the Tank Corps, whose action and wounding during the battle of Tsaritsyn had been reported in British newspapers. However, at the time Churchill made this statement, two pilot officers had already been killed and several other members of the Mission wounded. The final casualty figure of the Mission, reported to the Cabinet by General Holman, was four killed, ten wounded and five missing who were later declared dead.¹⁸⁸

The overall number of British casualties is difficult to count but it was definitely considerably higher than General Holman stated in

¹⁸⁷ House of Commons 15 July, *Hansard Parliament Debates*, 5th Series Vol. 18, War Cabinet 605, 1 August 1919, CAB 23/11.

¹⁸⁸ Churchill, *World Crisis: The Aftermath*, p. 251, Maj-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the British Military Mission, South Russia, W.O. 33/971. According to the Tank Detachment's War Diary, Captain Walsh had his arm shattered by a shell fragment, and survived only because a Russian doctor arrived within a few moments to attend to him.

his final report. Military Mission's war diary mention soldiers killed and wounded by the Red and Green partisans behind the front line, but these are not mentioned in Holman's final report. The British war memorial at the Haidar Pasha cemetery in Istanbul tells its own story. The memorial stone contains the names of 41 servicemen of the Military Mission, 13 of the RAF and 18 of the Royal Navy who were killed in South Russia in 1918-1920.¹⁸⁹

6.4. 47th SQUADRON RAF

The role played by the Royal Air Force in South Russia was the most obvious contradiction of official British policy in Russia. The original instructions of the Cabinet for the Royal Air Force detachment were to train Denikin's aviation corps and supply it with British aircraft. Like the other members of the Military mission the airmen were not officially allowed to take part in combat operations. However, it soon became evident that it was impossible to develop Denikin's air arm into an effective fighting force and it did not take long before the British instructor pilots started the operative flights themselves. Interestingly, the 47th Squadron that arrived together with the RAF training unit in Novorossiisk from Salonika in May 1919, was organizationally a normal combat unit of the Royal Air Force. Moreover, during the following summer the Squadron was reinforced with several fighter 'aces' that had volunteered to fight in Russia. Evidently, the Air Ministry – also led by Churchill – sent this unit not so much to train Russians but to provide direct air support for Denikin's forces.

¹⁸⁹ These servicemen were actually buried in various cemeteries in Rostov, Novorossiisk, Ekaterinodar etc., but the Commonwealth War Graves Commission erected the Haidar Pasha Memorial as these graves could not be taken care of in the 1920s. The memorial also includes the names of 98 soldiers who died in Transcaucasia during the intervention.

The very first combat sorties were indeed executed as part of training. British pilot officers led the Russian manned planes on reconnaissance and bombing missions as a part of advanced training. The arrival of 47th Squadron coincided with Denikin's spring offensive, and the command of the Military Mission decided to take more drastic measures to support the White forces. The 'C' Flight of the Squadron, equipped with DH9 light bombers, was ordered to Gniloaksaiskaia, one hundred kilometres south of Tsaritsyn. The flight was placed under the direct command of General Wrangel. The order defined clearly the task of the flight – bombing and reconnaissance. However, the commanding officer was ordered to ascertain that all the men going to the front were volunteers.¹⁹⁰

Like the tanks, the 'C' Flight played an important part in the Battle of Tsaritsyn. The British planes bombed and strafed the Red positions and lines of communication on a daily basis. The Flight also made dozens of reconnaissance sorties, photographing the Bolshevik defences and movements thus greatly helping Wrangel and his generals to plan the attack. The few planes of the Red air force could not prevent these operations and many of them were actually shot down or destroyed on the ground by the British. On the 20th July the commander of the Flight received a secret order from Wrangel's headquarters. A spy had informed that an important meeting of Bolshevik commanders, including perhaps even Trotsky, was to take place in Tsaritsyn. A 'C' Flight DH9 completed the mission by completely destroying the house where the meeting was in progress with a single 112 lb bomb. Eighty Bolshevik commanders and commissars were later reported to have been killed, and there were rumours that Trotsky had left the building only half an hour before the attack. After the capture of Tsaritsyn several

¹⁹⁰ Brig. Maund's order, 2 June 1919, AIR I/204/206/8,NA.

British aviators were awarded with both the St. Vladimir's and the St. George's Crosses.¹⁹¹

The fighting did not end with the capture of Tsaritsyn. The Bolsheviks immediately launched a series of operations to retake this important city on the Volga. The original plan had been to move the British Squadron to the main front to support the Volunteer Army in its advance towards Moscow. However, Denikin decided to keep the planes for the defence of Tsaritsyn. The Squadron base was moved to Beketovka closer to the city, to give more effective range to the DH9's.

In September the 'C' flight was strengthened with the 'B' Flight equipped with Sopwith Camel fighters. Probably the best fighters of the time flown by experienced 'ace' pilots were a most welcome supplement to Denikin's air arm. At first, these fighters were needed to protect the bombers against dangerously increasing Bolshevik air activity. The Camels engaged in fierce air battles with Bolshevik Albatrosses and Fokkers possibly flown by German mercenaries. 'They were far too good to be Bolshies,' reported one pilot. Even though there were a few German pilots in the Red air force, the Royal Air Force won the battle and continued to dominate the skies of southeast Russia. The Camel fighters were also more suitable for ground strafing than DH9's because of their greater speed and agility. The fighter attacks against cavalry formations caught on the open steppe were devastating. Patrols of only two planes destroyed in several cases whole squadrons of Red cavalry. The aircraft was an especially effective weapon for locating and destroying the Red cavalry patrols which had broken in behind the White lines. The most important of these operations was the one in which Major Kinkead's Camels dispersed General Dumenko's Red

¹⁹¹ War Diary of 47th Sqdn. RAF, South Russia, June 1919, AIR I/1959, NA, Hodgson, John, *With Denikin's Armies*, p. 142, Wrangel, *Muistemat*, pp. 142-5.

Cavalry Corps which was enveloping the left wing of the Caucasus Army and thus helped to save Tsaritsyn.¹⁹²

The Bolsheviks were determined to retake Tsaritsyn. Their operations not only stopped any attempt by Wrangel to advance to the north along the Volga, but also threatened the White existence in the city itself. The Bolsheviks concentrated a strong river flotilla on the Volga. The riverboats armed with guns as heavy as 9.2 inches bombarded the Whites beyond the range of their own artillery. The morale of Wrangel's troops was about to break in September when a flotilla of over 40 of these vessels started its attack. 'B' and 'C' Flights were ordered to attack the Bolshevik flotilla. The British planes made over 20 sorties during three days, sinking 15 of the boats and damaging several of them. The Bolshevik operation was called off, Tsaritsyn was saved once more and British aviators were again lavishly decorated by General Wrangel.¹⁹³

Naturally it was impossible to keep the operations of the 47th Squadron a secret from the British public. Hundreds of combat sorties, continuous flow of decorations published in the London Gazette, British planes shot down, pilots killed and wounded could not be ascribed to training and equipping of the Whites. The opponents of intervention in Parliament demanded that the Cabinet withdraw the Squadron from the front immediately. So, under growing pressure, the War Office informed Parliament of the disbandment of the 47th Squadron in October.¹⁹⁴ This declaration was, however, a bluff. The Squadron was not withdrawn, but continued to operate as usual under the name of 'A Detachment'. All the members of the unit were given the opportunity to resign and travel home. Some of the ground crew NCOs and men – all of them conscripts from the Balkan front – readily took the opportunity. But, in effect, the

¹⁹² H.Q. RAF, South Russia, Operations, July-October 1919, AIR I/1958, NA.

¹⁹³ H.Q. RAF, South Russia, Operations, September-October, 1919, AIR I/1958, NA, War Diary of 47th Sqdn. RAF, South Russia, July, August & September, 1919, AIR I/1959, NA.

¹⁹⁴ War Diary, General Staff, 16 October 1919, WO 95/4958, NA.

size of the Squadron increased as more volunteers from Britain arrived in South Russia. And in October a third flight, the 'A' Flight, was ready to be sent to the front.¹⁹⁵

In order to exploit the full potential of the Squadron, an audacious plan was worked out at the headquarters of the Military Mission in Taganrog: the RAF was to bomb Moscow. A secret 'Z' Flight was set up to execute this operation. The men and RE8 reconnaissance bombers of the flight travelled to the front in a special train. The distance from the farthest point of Denikin's advance, Orel, was, however, too long for the RE8's. So, according to the daring plan, some of the planes were to carry petrol to a secret refuelling point behind the Red lines and the bombers were supposed to land and refuel on their way to Moscow and back. The Royal Air Force did never bomb Moscow. Churchill cancelled the operation at the last moment, as there was 'no military value in this operation'.¹⁹⁶ The real reason behind Churchill's decision must, however, have been more political than military. A bombing raid executed by an officially non-existent flight of the RAF against Moscow, would have been difficult to explain to the Prime Minister, and even more so to Parliament.

The operations of the 47th Squadron, continuing until the end of March 1920 and the end of Denikin's army, to a great extent supported the White war effort. Before the British arrived the role of the air arm in the civil war was almost non-existent. The effectiveness of this relatively small unit, about 50 planes, was an unpleasant surprise to the Bolsheviks. Their own air force, *aviadarm*, was still under construction and consisted of a few vintage planes and even fewer properly trained pilots. Petrol too was in short supply after the loss of

¹⁹⁵ War Diary of 47th Sqdn. RAF, South Russia, October 1919, AIR I/1959, NA

¹⁹⁶ War Office to Holman, 19 September 1919, Tel. 81290, WO 33/976, Dobson & Miller, *The Day We Almost Bombed Moscow*, pp. 86-102.

the Caucasian oil fields.¹⁹⁷ *Aviadarm* was no match, even if reinforced with German mercenaries, for the British veteran pilots. During the summer of 1919 the skies of South Russia were effectively cleared of Red planes. In addition to actual losses suffered by the Bolsheviks, the air raids had a devastating effect on morale. The low flying, strafing fighters horrified the Bolshevik infantry and cavalymen. ‘The aeroplanes make warfare impossible, one can hardly surrender to a plane to,’ one Red prisoner confessed.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, the 47th Squadron of the RAF was also a particularly visible sign of British support for the White troops.

¹⁹⁷ Boyd, *The Soviet Air Force since 1918*, pp. 2-6. The Germans captured over 500 aircraft of the Imperial Russian Air Force, when they invaded the Ukraine in February 1918. These planes had formed a majority of Russian combat strength and many of them were of the latest French and British types.

¹⁹⁸ Hodgson, *With Denikin's Armies*, p. 143.

7. AWKWARD BROTHERS IN ARMS

7.1. The Adventurers, the Businessmen and the Professionals

The Cabinet decision in March 1919 stated that all military personnel serving in Russia should be volunteers.¹⁹⁹ However, most of the troops sent to Russia during the final stages of the World War were conscripts. Many of the NCOs and men of the original British Military Mission to South Russia had not volunteered for service in Russia but were simply sent there from their units in the Middle East. This was especially the case with the personnel of the 47 Squadron of the RAF that had been shipped to Novorossiisk directly from Salonica without any reorganization. The War Office realised the contradiction and the conscripts were gradually replaced with volunteers. The War Office also started a recruiting campaign for volunteers to help the Whites in Russia. The immediate plan was to raise two 4,000 strong brigades for the North Russian Front and 2,000 officers and other ranks were needed for service in South Russia. There was indeed no difficulty to find volunteers from amongst the men of the vast army that was being demobilized.²⁰⁰ But who actually were these officers and NCOs who volunteered for service in Russia after the end of the World War, and what were their motives?

The British volunteers joining the Military Mission in South Russia were 'a mixed lot', as one officer described his colleagues.²⁰¹ It is, however, possible to divide the volunteers into three groups according to their backgrounds and motives for volunteering. First there

¹⁹⁹ War Cabinet no. 541, 4 March 1919, CAB 23/9, NA.

²⁰⁰ Sinclair to Churchill, 31 January 1920, CHAR 16/56, CAC. Churchill's private secretary reported that there had been a 'great many more applicants than vacancies in Russia'.

²⁰¹ Wade MS, Wade papers, IWM.

were regular officers and NCOs for whom service in Russia simply offered an opportunity to gain further experience in their profession and thus advance in their careers. Junior officers were often promoted temporarily to higher ranks in Russia and service abroad was generally considered to help, for example, when applying to the Staff College. Some of these officers needed this experience as they had ‘missed their war’, spending long times in POW camps or in hospitals. For others, volunteering just provided escape from the boredom of peacetime soldiering in garrisons. The majority of the British servicemen in South Russia were regulars, and many of them continued their service normally in the armed forces after the intervention.²⁰² Not a few of these officers in fact rose later into high positions in the Army and the Royal Air Force, most successful being perhaps colonels Maund and Collishaw, who both reached the rank of Air Marshall during the Second World War.

The second largest group consisted of men who held temporary commissions in the British army. Many of these young men had gone to the war straight from the school bench and thus had no other work experience than that of a soldier; they volunteered simply to avoid unemployment after demobilization. For many of these volunteers it had also been generally difficult to fit back into civilian society after their war experience. The idea of becoming a bank clerk again might have felt rather difficult after fighting as a platoon commander in Flanders. Richard Holmes and Niall Ferguson have studied men’s motives for fighting during the First World War and they argue that quite a few men actually enjoyed combat.²⁰³ This was clearly the case with some of the war veterans who wanted to continue their military service and volunteered to go to Russia. The young captain, Hugh Boustead (later

²⁰² See e.g. *ibid*, Durnford MSS, Durnford papers, Wood, ‘Subaltern in South Russia’, Wood papers, IWM and Captain Grierson’s letter to his parents, 29.10.1919, Grierson papers, PLA. Holman’s ‘Final Report’, WO 33/971, NA, contains a list of the members of BMM.

²⁰³ Holmes, *Firing Line*, pp. 270-90, & Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, pp. 357-66.

Colonel Sir), who became a machine gun instructor of the Don Army, had been a sniper for three years at the Western Front. He admitted openly that he went to Russia simply to fight. And fight Boustead certainly did, constantly taking part, against orders from his superiors, in combat alongside the Don Cossacks he was supposed to instruct in the use of machine guns.²⁰⁴ The case was often very similar with to that of the RAF pilots who wanted to continue flying combat sorties.

Thirdly, there were a small group of men who were recruited because of their language skills and their supposed knowledge of the general conditions and the political situation in Russia. These men had usually been employed in international companies in Russia before and during the war and they were in many cases partly Russian by origin. On the other hand, their knowledge of military matters was usually very limited and service with the British Military Mission provided them merely with an opportunity to continue their business in Russia.

Many of the British officers also mention ideological motives at least as a partial reason for volunteering. 'A crusade mentality' and ideas about defending western civilization and Christianity against Bolshevism were common. The Russian Civil War was also considered to be a continuation of the struggle against Germany and the British saw themselves indebted to help their loyal Russian allies. The Bolsheviks were seen as merely German hirelings and the victory over the Central Powers might be lost if the Bolsheviks were not beaten. The White struggle easily provided 'a just cause' for the British volunteers. The Civil War was understood as a fight of 'good against evil' perhaps more easily than the war against the Germans.²⁰⁵ From the summer 1918 British newspapers had included detailed accounts of Bolshevik atrocities. Perhaps the single most influential incident was the murder of

²⁰⁴ Boustead, interview by Peter Liddle 1976, PLA.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., Grierson's letters to his parents 3 October & 7 October 1919, PLA, and Wade MS, Wade papers, IWM.

the Tsar – King George V’s cousin and look-alike – and his family. Another widely publicised case was the sacking of the British Embassy and the murder of naval attaché Captain Cromie in Petrograd in August 1918. The newspaper articles, especially in the Times, became increasingly gory as the Cheka’s terror was launched during the autumn of 1918. An average British volunteer’s image of the Bolsheviks could fairly be summed up in Churchill’s words describing them as ‘the most grisly of all the Kaiser’s weapons’, and comparing Lenin to a plague bacillus transported in a sealed truck to Russia by the Germans.²⁰⁶

The War Office fostered these anti-Bolshevik images. Applicants for the service in South Russia were handed a pamphlet providing background information on Bolshevism.²⁰⁷ It stated that Lenin’s government was ‘aiming to end Christian civilisation, and to eradicate the ideas of nationality and family’. The Bolsheviks had founded ‘the Commissariat of Free Love’ to promote the socialization of women. Also, all children over five were to be nationalized, announced the General Staff’s booklet and finally reminded the reader that ‘another kind of Bolshevism was preached abroad, but this is what it is in practice’. On the other hand, the volunteers were enlightened about the history of the White movement. ‘Their cause is a great one’ the pamphlet stated, and that ‘it is undoubtedly in the interests of the whole world that the Bolshevik tyranny should be destroyed’. The General Staff advised the applicants that ‘men should not volunteer if not prepared to work whole-heartedly for the cause the Armed Forces of South Russia are fighting’.

The idealism – if not the anti-Bolshevik feelings – of the volunteers often faded away, however, soon after their arrival in South Russia. The realities of service were a grave disappointment for many of

²⁰⁶ Churchill, *Aftermath*, p. 73.

²⁰⁷ ‘Notes for personnel volunteering for service with the British Military Mission in South Russia’, issued by the General Staff, 1919, Grierson papers, PLA.

them. Instructions from London clearly banned combat duties – unlike for example in North Russia, where the two ‘Relief Brigades’ were engaged in fierce battles against the Red Army.²⁰⁸ Instead of the excitement of combat most of the British volunteers were involved in tedious and frustrating supply or training duties in the chaotic conditions of the war-ridden Russia. The Mission itself was at first rather disorganized and there was a chronic shortage of able personnel. In addition, the instructions both from London and from the Mission HQ in Ekaterinodar (and later Taganrog) were often confusing. Co-operation with the Russians was not easy either.

When General Holman arrived in South Russia in June 1919 he was very dissatisfied with the Mission’s work and the professional quality of his subordinates. He immediately started to send home officers whom he considered unsuitable to carry out the demanding duties with the Mission. Holman asked for new volunteers and pointed out that the selection process should be much more rigorous. According to Holman, there were too many completely incapable or even harmful persons serving in South Russia. He described the ex-POWs as generally useless as having been in the most cases totally alienated from the military profession because of the long periods of time spent in captivity. For the previously wounded and not completely fit men the South Russian climate was, according to Holman, too harsh with its extremely cold winters and almost tropical summers. Holman had also detected ‘businessmen’ amongst his subordinates who avoided their duties and took advantage of the chaotic economic situation in Russia and engaged in profiteering. It had been actually discovered that British officers were involved in selling military supplies to the civilians and also held currency exchange rackets in many towns.²⁰⁹ Interestingly,

²⁰⁸ Many of the officers and NCOs had originally volunteered for service in North Russia, but were sent to the South instead, see Wood, ‘Subaltern in South Russia’, Wood papers, IWM.

²⁰⁹ Holman’s ‘Final Report’, WO 33/971, NA.

Holman seemed to be more satisfied with the other ranks of the Mission. He reported that the NCOs and men usually adapted to the Russian conditions better than their officers. Other ranks often made more personal contacts with the Russians and thus also learned the language better (Holman himself was fluent in Russian). Regular NCOs also generally distinguished themselves in training duties. The only exception to the high standards was, according to Holman, 'the completely useless drivers of the Royal Army Service Corps'.

7.2. Relations with the Russians

Relations between allies in a war are often difficult and the situation in South Russia between the members of the British Military Mission and the Whites was no exception to the rule. The British government's inability to define and state its Russian policy clearly made the Mission's work difficult right from the beginning. The Russians were disappointed as the much-awaited British divisions never arrived. The Prinkipo affair also made the Whites very suspicious and the contradictory policy of supporting the Transcaucasian states hostile to Denikin did not help either. At the Don the British became entangled in another political problem - the strained relations between Denikin and the Cossacks. The Cossacks remembered well how General Poole had pressured Krasnov to submit the Don Army under Denikin's command, and even longed for the times when Germans had driven the Bolsheviks out from the *voisko* and helped Krasnov to reorganize and arm the Don Army. The British were also regularly accused of favouring the Volunteers and the Caucasian Army at the expense of the Don Cossacks in the share of supplies.

In addition to political difficulties, there was a wide cultural gap between the officers of the post-Great War British Army and Denikin's Volunteer Army and the Cossacks. The war in South Russia was very different from anything the British had experienced or could

expect. In their evaluations, the British officers did not generally give very high marks to Denikin's Army. The problem was not only the obsolete and unimaginative tactical thinking of the Russians examined above, but also the whole ethos of Russian military culture.

What usually struck the British officers first was the general apathy and lack of interest in work among the Russian officers. Even the gravest situation at the front did not seem to affect the way of life in the bases and cities in the rear. The British soon discovered that it was often possible to work only for a few hours in the mornings at the depots and training centres, because the Russians did not return to their jobs after lunch. '*Rabota ne medved* – work is not a bear. It will not run away to the woods, but will be there tomorrow,' answered one general to a frustrated British machine gun instructor who complained about the absence of his students and the Russian instructors.²¹⁰ These flexible working hours and casual attitudes were a most serious problem when training the pilots for the White air force. Not many Russians actually passed the tightly-scheduled training programme that was based on the RAF standards. The main reason for this failure was that the Russians assigned to pilot training simply did not attend classes. Lack of discipline and neglect of instructions also led to regular accidents. Perhaps the worst incident took place in August 1919 when within a few days four Russian manned RE8's crashed and their crews were killed.²¹¹ The Russians' casual attitudes towards service caused much animosity among the members of the British Mission. It appeared to many of the British officers and NCOs that they ended up doing all the work themselves instead of giving advice and supervising the Russians. The situation was certainly not made easier by the common habit of even

²¹⁰ Boustead MMS (cited), Boustead papers, PLA, Lever's Diary 16.12.1919, LHC, Holman's 'Final Report', WO 33/971, NA.

²¹¹ 'Reports on Accidents', AIR I, 1963/204/206/5, NA.

high-ranking Russian officers to make comments such as 'Isn't it wonderful to see the British doing all the work for us'.²¹²

Another serious problem, observed by the members of the British Mission, was the attitude of Russian officers towards their subordinates. This attitude, originating from and resembling the traditional relationship between gentry and serfs, was very hard for the British officers to understand. The obsolete ideas of leadership, demanding blind obedience and relying on brutal discipline were regarded by the British as one of the fundamental reasons for the collapse of the White Army. The Russian officers often seemed to treat their horses better than their men, and it was not uncommon for an officer or NCO to beat their men for a minor lapse in discipline as, for instance not saluting properly. Many of the worst traditions of the Imperial Army were, indeed, restored in Denikin's Army when it transformed from a small volunteer force of hand-picked officers and military cadets into a mass army of peasant conscripts. Even the old signs, 'No dogs, no (private) soldiers' that had been torn down in 1917, were returned in the parks of major cities. When an officer boarded a tram in Rostov, he might order the NCOs and privates to get out of the vehicle. At the front alike, the officers often seemed to disregard completely the welfare of their men. They tried to live as comfortably as possible in their railway cars, as the soldiers camped on the steppe without tents or even blankets. Most units of the AFSR did not have an organized food supply, but battalion headquarters were supposed to purchase food locally. However, the funds provided for buying food were often used for the private purposes of the commanding officers, or perhaps simply lost in a card game. Thus, in many cases the troops did

²¹² Williamson's diary, 5.6.1919, Williamson papers, IWM, Lever's Diary 12.12.1919, Lever papers, LHC.

not have any other option than to rob the local peasants.²¹³ All this hardly improved the morale of the White Army.

The Russian officers' habit of treating their subordinates as an inferior class of people influenced their behaviour towards their Allies. British NCOs and privates were often treated very badly by the Russians. They had to taste sometimes the *nagaika* (Cossack whip) after, for example, failing to salute a Russian officer. The commanding officers of the British units had to write formal complaints about the treatment of their men on several occasions. The Russians were generally very sensitive about rank, and it was, for example, very difficult for a British officer to advise a Russian colleague if he happened to be of senior rank. In addition, the Russians did not appreciate the rather informal and friendly relations which especially younger British officers had with their men. British officers often had to take part in manual tasks alongside their men out of pure necessity. But, 'giving hand' was also seen, according to the new leadership philosophy of the British Army, as a way to win the trust and respect of the men and build up group cohesion in the unit. These were totally alien ideas amongst the White officers. They considered the British as sometimes not much better than the Bolsheviki when they witnessed, for example, British captains and lieutenants cooking their own food and polishing their own boots or perhaps playing football with their men. The artillery commander of the Don Army and other Russian generals could not believe his eyes when General Holman demonstrated his proficiency as an artilleryman and quickly corrected a malfunctioning breechblock of a 4.5" howitzer during an inspection of a Cossack battery.²¹⁴

British attitudes towards the Russians appear somewhat ambivalent. Officers who openly despised the White officers for their

²¹³ Beresford-Ash MMS, Beresford-Ash papers, Williamson's diary, 18.10.1919, Williamson papers, & de Wolff, 'Memoirs', de Wolff papers, IWM.

²¹⁴ Holman's 'Final Report', WO 33/971, NA, Williamson's diary, 18 October 1919, Williamson papers, IWM.

laziness or cruelty seemed to be enchanted by the heroic elements of the White movement. This was especially the case with the instructors in the frontline units who also took part in combat. The men who were looking for adventure in Russia seemed to have found it. In their diaries and letters, many of these officers clearly identified themselves with the White cause. They admired commitment and personal courage of especially the younger Russian officers in contrast to the disillusioned staff officers of the headquarters and depots.²¹⁵ Taking part in actual battles – instead of seeing only the chaos and corruption of the rear – seemed to have offered a return to the old world of personal fighting from the mechanised carnage of modern warfare they had disappointedly experienced at the Western Front. Many of the senior officers, including all three commanders of the Mission, could not escape the enchantment either. They supported the White cause as wholeheartedly as the General Staff pamphlet cited above demanded. Generals Poole, Briggs and Holman were accused of being so deeply integrated in Denikin's army that they even forgot their duties to HM Government. General Milne, the commander of the British forces at the Black Sea and the Mediterranean at one point described the officers of the Mission as being 'more Russians than the Russians themselves'.²¹⁶

Conduct of the members of the Mission was, of course, not always perfect either. On arrival in Russia, British officers had been instructed to behave tactfully and 'not to hurt the feelings' of the Russians. This was not, however, always the case. Cultural prejudices were strong. Some of the officers were clearly overconfident of their superior knowledge in military science and behaved arrogantly towards the Russians. Others might have seen long service in the Colonial Forces, and did not quite understand that South Russia was not another British colony. Moreover, many of the officers who had served in India

²¹⁵ Boustead MMS, Boustead papers, Grierson's letter to his parents 23 December 1919, Grierson papers, PLA, Wood 'Subaltern in South Russia, Wood papers, IWM.

²¹⁶ Gen. Milne's letter to Gen. Wilson, 16 December 1919, Wilson papers, IWM.

seemed to regard the Russians as Britain's traditional enemy. This was especially the case with the units of the Indian Army that occupied Baku and the rest of Azerbaizhan in late 1918²¹⁷.

The records of the Mission also tell about serious disciplinary problems. Many of the British officers proved to be no less enthusiastic drinkers than their Russian colleagues. This often led to trouble. Especially the officers and men of the RAF were constantly having drunken brawls with the Russians. In October 1919 the airforcemen were finally banned from visiting any restaurants or cabarets after a fistfight between a British pilot officer and a Russian general in a Tsaritsyn restaurant. Another drunken pilot was tragically shot dead by a sentry when crawling under the accommodation train of the Squadron and failing to respond to the repeated challenges of the sentry.²¹⁸

The British also came into contact with the Russian civilian population. The members of the Mission were generally received very well in the cities under White rule. They were often treated as 'national heroes' and hugged on the streets and handed flowers. The British officers seemed to have been especially popular among the Russian women. One major described how 'the upper class ladies literally flung themselves at our officers', and continued rather cynically how every British officer appeared extremely rich – because of the ridiculous exchange rate of the pound to the rouble, and how the Russian women were ready for almost anything to leave their miserable country.²¹⁹ Some of these romances developed, however, into marriages; even Colonel Stokes, who became the British Commissioner of Transcaucasia after the withdrawal of British troops from the area, married a Russian

²¹⁷ 'Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921', E 837/58, FO 371, NA.

²¹⁸ Daily routine order book of RAF Kuban Group, South Russia 1919, IWM, & South Russia, Resume of Operations, AIR I/ 448/ 15/ 303/ 48, NA.

²¹⁹ Beresford-Ash MS, Beresford-Ash papers, IWM.

woman. This success enjoyed by the British, on the other hand, must have caused animosity among the Russian officers and was not an uncommon reason for the brawls mentioned above.

The reception in the countryside was often different. The peasants in the villages were usually more reserved with the foreigners and sometimes even hostile towards the British, no doubt associating them with the White troops. The peasants in more backward areas seemed to have been fairly ignorant of the whole intervention; a British captain was astounded when a village elder asked him what he, a Japanese soldier, was doing in his village and what he wanted from them. The worst was the situation in the Northern Caucasus, where the British were often treated with equal hostility as the White troops by the mountain tribes. In the Petrovsk area for example, it was very dangerous to go out from the base as ‘the locals were frequently taking pot shots at them’.²²⁰

Interestingly, the Bolsheviks seemed to be well aware of the somewhat strained relations between the British and the Whites. Bolshevik propaganda was quick to take advantage of the situation. Leaflets told the British how Denikin was using them in his unjust and brutal war against the Russian people. British NCOs and men were also urged ‘to form soldiers’ councils, to demand to be sent home and to refuse to shoot their fellow workers’.²²¹ This does not seem to have had much effect on the British, who were merely amused by ‘news from reliable sources’ stating how committees of soldiers and workers had seized power in London and George V was imprisoned in the Tower. However, Bolshevik propaganda aimed at the Whites seemed to have been more effective. Soldiers and civilians were informed of British imperialistic plans to plunder the natural resources of South Russia. The British were greatly embarrassed to find out that many Russians really

²²⁰ Bilney MS, Bilney papers, PLA.

²²¹ Propaganda leaflet ‘Why don’t you return home?’, Stokes papers, IWM.

believed, for example, claims that Germany had won the war in Europe and Britain was now seeking compensation from Russia.²²² The Bolsheviks also used *agents provocateurs* to build up tension between the Whites and the British. Agents dressed as Volunteer and Cossack officers were reported to have insulted the British and to have started fights in restaurants in Odessa and Rostov.²²³

The Whites praised their British ‘friends’ in their speeches and organized lavish banquets in honour of them. British officers and men received a vast amount of Russian decorations as a symbol of their gratitude.²²⁴ No doubt, many of the Russian officers, most importantly Denikin, understood the value and honestly appreciated the work of the British Mission. However, relations between the allies remained fairly strained during the whole period of the intervention. Mutual mistrust, cultural and communicational difficulties hindered considerably the work of the British Mission. Many of the British officers became frustrated, and it was not uncommon to speak about ‘backing the wrong horse’. On the other hand, many Russians must have found the growing importance of the British role in Denikin’s command, especially after Holman introduced his radical supply policy, deeply embarrassing.

7.3. The Country of Murder and Loot²²⁵

‘Both sides are equally barbarous. Torture commonly applied to the prisoners. Too inhuman to be described... I have no soul in their business, and dislike the Volunteers for their lives and their habits quite

²²² Capt. Bruce’s letter to his family, 17 February 1919, Bruce papers, PLA.

²²³ Intelligence report, Odessa, 2 January 1920, Lancaster papers, IWM.

²²⁴ A list of these awards is compiled in Brough, *White Russian Awards to British and Commonwealth Servicemen during the Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1920*.

²²⁵ South Russia was described as ‘the Country of Murder and Loot’ by Air Vice Marshal Bilney in his manuscript about his service as a flight commander of the 266 Sqdn in Petrovsk 1919, Bilney papers, PLA.

as much as I do the Bolsheviks for theirs.’ Thus one British officer described the situation in a letter to his father.²²⁶ The British had indeed expected the Bolsheviks to commit atrocities; the newspapers at home had written about the Red terror extensively since August 1918, and on their arrival in Russia they were told more stories, and as a part of the White propaganda, they were shown pictures of the Bolshevik atrocities. However, to discover that the Whites were not much different from their enemies shocked the British. Almost every diary and numerous letters, written by these officers and men, mention appalling atrocities committed rather equally by the Bolsheviks and the Whites. The brutality of the White troops also appears as an important factor alienating the British from the White cause and undermining their morale and motivation.

The Russian Civil war was an extremely brutal conflict. Generally inhuman treatment and executions of the prisoners was more a rule than an exception on both sides of the front. Both the Reds and the Whites started the atrocities right from the beginning of the conflict in the South in early 1918. This was partly purposeful terror policy and acts of vengeance but sometimes executions were carried out of pure necessity – because of a lack of means to feed, accommodate or transport the prisoners. Private soldiers usually saved their lives if they surrendered, or rather defected, *en masse* as a complete unit and joined their former enemies often first murdering their officers. However, officers’ and NCOs’ life expectancy was not very long in the case of capture. General Wrangel writes rather shamelessly in his memoirs about how he guaranteed the loyalty of two defected Bolshevik regiments by having all of their 370 officers and NCOs shot.²²⁷

²²⁶ Lt. Goldsmith’s letter to his father, 4 April 1919, Goldsmith papers, PLA. Goldsmith’s letters are particularly interesting, as they contain unusually detailed information. Perhaps this young naval officer, serving on the cruiser HMS Montrose, did not have to take censorship into account as the recipient of the letters, his father, was an admiral in the Royal Navy.

²²⁷ Wrangel, *Muistelmat*, pp.77-78.

Evaluations of British officers support William Chamberlin's estimation that more people were killed in the atrocities by the Cheka and the White executioners than in the Civil War battles.²²⁸ Moreover the War Office was well aware of these atrocities right from the beginning of the intervention. General Briggs was instructed as early as in February 1919 to urge Denikin to stop the wholesale shooting of prisoners as the executions 'only assist the Bolshevik propaganda in the West'. The White policy to execute rather summarily almost all captured ex-Imperial officers who had served in the Red Army – no matter how voluntarily – was considered especially unwise by the British, as it no doubt hindered many of these officers from defecting to the Whites. Perhaps the most famous victim of this policy was Captain A. Brusilov, the son of General Brusilov.²²⁹

Most of the histories of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War mention torture as an institutional part of the Red terror and describe in graphic details the gruesome methods applied by the Cheka and the Red Army soldiers. The Bolsheviks did not however have a monopoly on torture of captured or suspected enemies.²³⁰ British sources clearly dispel the myth of the Whites as more civilized soldiers in this respect. Captured Red officers and especially commissars were indeed often tortured to death. Many of the diaries and reports written by British officers serving with the White frontline units describe this as a widespread phenomenon. Prisoners were often mutilated before the

²²⁸ Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, vol II*, p.81.

²²⁹ DMI to Briggs, 25.2.1919, WO 157/766, NA, Lehovich, *Red against White*, p. 351.

²³⁰ This myth has been partly built by the White memoirs, which almost always describe the Bolshevik's elaborate torture methods and have sometimes even pictures of the victims. See, for example, Denikin's *Ocherki russkoi smuty*. These books do not mention, however, acts committed by their own soldiers. The myth is still entertained in some modern studies. Richard Pipes writes in *Russia under the Bolshevik regime*, p. 86: 'The Whites also executed many captured Red officers, but they do not seem to have engaged in torture'. Somin's *Stillborn Crusade's* main theme is to describe the Whites as morally superior to the Red's, and their 'more civilized' warfare is an important part of his argument.

execution; for example, red stars were carved on the bodies of captured commissars. Advisors in the Don Army witnessed several times how the Cossacks tied their victims behind their horses and galloped along the streets with revolting results. Impalement was not an outdated form of execution either.²³¹ Torture seems not to have taken as sophisticated and institutional forms in the White Army as amongst the Reds. The acts of cruelty were committed in more or less haphazard manner, but they were, however, clearly used on a large scale to take revenge and to terrorize the enemy.

Soldiers on both sides of the frontline expected to be tortured if caught alive by their enemies. It was, in fact, very common, also with the British serving at the Front, to carry poison capsules or an extra hand-grenade to commit suicide rather than to be captured. Once, a Volunteer general casually told a British officer after a successful attack at the Kerch Peninsula how his troops counted among the dead enemy over a hundred cases of suicide.²³²

Apart from the treatment of enemy soldiers by the Whites, the British were equally appalled when they witnessed how Denikin's troops behaved towards the civilian population in the areas captured from the Bolsheviks. It is striking that the White command actually spoke about conquered, not for example liberated, areas in its orders and proclamations. For the average Russian peasant who definitely had not enjoyed the Bolshevik rule of conscription and food requisition, the White regime hardly seemed more appealing. It did not mean the return of peace and order. Men were continued to be dragged into the ranks of another army alien to the peasants. Looting was also soon started by the new masters. In addition, the White frontline troops were often followed

²³¹ Boustead MS, Boustead papers, PLA, Williamson MS, Williamson papers, Beresford-Ash MS, Beresford-Ash papers, IWM.

²³² Boustead MS, Boustead papers, & Goldsmith's letter to his father, 6 April 1919, Goldsmith papers, PLA.

by the civil servants of the old regime and perhaps landlords reclaiming their land and avenging the peasant revolution of 1917.

Looting was endemic in the White Army. Denikin was never able to take serious measures to prevent looting. This would probably have been impossible, as not only the rank-and-file Cossacks, but also many of his high-ranking generals were involved in the systematic robbery of private property in the conquered areas. The prospect of good loot was in fact an important motivator for fighting in all armies during the Russian Civil War. A general of the Don Army confessed to a British officer that his Cossacks would not ride a *verst* (about 1.1 km) outside of their *voisko*, if they were prohibited from looting²³³. For the Volunteer Army, it did not take long to decline from *Dobr'armiia* (*Dobrovolcheskaia armiia*), a highly motivated and efficient fighting force to *Grab'armiia*, or the Robbing Army, as the peasants started to call it²³⁴.

A loss of the support of the civilian population and the general deterioration of the morale of the White troops were not the only problems caused by the looting. Perhaps the most famous incident is the raid of general Mamontov and his Don Cossacks, which lost all operational significance as the cavalry striking force turned to huge train of wagons full of loot struggling back to the Don. Denikin's headquarters had actually no exact information on the whereabouts of Mamontov's forces, but the Cossacks had to be searched by the RAF reconnaissance planes.²³⁵ The British transport officers also discovered that the chronic shortage of rolling stock was partially caused by the fact that a large number of railway cars were in the private use of the Russian officers for transporting the looted property from the front to the rear. This had most serious consequences during the retreat of the White

²³³ Boustead MS, Boustead papers, PLA.

²³⁴ *Iz istorii grazhdanskoi voiny*, vol II, pp. 518-519.

²³⁵ Golybintsev, *Ruskaia vandeia*, pp. 114-121.

Army in the winter of 1919-20. When Denikin's headquarters in Taganrog, was hastily evacuated, a huge amount of material, including several tanks and aircraft, were lost due to the lack of transport. The B-Flight of the 47th Squadron had to destroy all its planes and its men were nearly captured by the Bolsheviks as they had to march away to the South. At the same time hundreds of freight cars carried 'private property' of Russian officers to the Kuban.²³⁶

Clearly the most disturbing case of misconduct for which the White Army was responsible was the pogroms. Pogroms had a long history in Russia and during the Civil War all the armies involved were responsible for at least some anti-Jewish violence. Because of the generally chaotic conditions of the civil war it is impossible to establish the exact number of the victims, but cases of murder, rape and theft must have numbered in the hundreds of thousands. However, Denikin's AFSR was responsible for the most organized actions against the Jewish population and consequently also responsible for the largest number of victims. It has been estimated that about half of the murdered Jews fell victim to the soldiers of the AFSR. Anti-Semitism was indeed an integral phenomenon of the White regime.²³⁷ Attitudes towards the pogroms within the British Military Mission were somewhat controversial.

Anti-Semitism seems also to have been relatively common among the members of the British Mission. This is not surprising as the prejudices against the Jews were not a strange phenomenon in the British society of the time.²³⁸ Beliefs about immense Jewish political

²³⁶ Col. Maund's Report on the Evacuation of Taganrog, January 1920, AIR I/1960/204/260/32, & War Diary, BMM, South Russia, January 1920, WO 95/4959, NA.

²³⁷ Perhaps the most detailed study on the pogroms and the Whites in the south is Peter Kenez's article 'Pogroms and White Ideology' in *Pogroms*, by Klier and Lambroza.

²³⁸ For anti-Semitism in Britain see Holmes, *Anti-semitism in British Society 1876-1939*.

and economic influence were common, especially among the upper classes, which provided many of the officers serving in Russia. Also in Britain the Jews were widely believed to have instigated and led the Bolshevik revolution. The link between Bolshevism and Jews was described in numerous articles in certain newspapers, most influentially in *The Times*. The person largely responsible for this was the paper's openly anti-Semitic Petrograd correspondent George Dobson. Dobson wrote how the Jews had 'very considerably helped to deform and disfigure the Russian Revolution' and also pointed out that it was a 'Jew commissary and his Jewish assistants' who had raided and ransacked the British Embassy in Petrograd and murdered Captain Cromie in August 1918.²³⁹ Even the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'; the notorious document of Tsarist secret police origin which described the international Jewish conspiracy, was translated and published in Britain in early 1920. It received some publicity and the conspiracy theories were discussed in newspapers. The 'Protocols' was, however, exposed as a forgery a year after its publication.²⁴⁰ Although anti-Semitism in Britain never developed to the level it did in central Europe, the myth about international Jewish conspiracy persisted.

General Holman tended to follow very closely the official policy of Denikin's government which was to deny any involvement in pogroms and generally to blame these brutalities on Petliura and Ukrainian partisans²⁴¹. Holman reported repeatedly to London that the pogroms were vastly exaggerated and reports of mass murders were 'false Zionist propaganda'; his claim was supported by his visits to Poltava and Kharkov. He also explained to the War Office that some Jews had been actually massacred, but this was done by retreating Bolsheviks or Makhno's bandits, not by the Volunteers. According to

²³⁹ Dobson, 'Russia under the Red Terror', pp. 377-378.

²⁴⁰ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, pp.141-56.

²⁴¹ A good example is of this policy is Denikin's declaration published in the *Velikaia Rossia*-newspaper, 7 September 1919, Rostov.

Holman, Denikin had effectively prevented ‘natural and inevitable revenge against the Jews despite all the monstrosities of the Jewish commissars’. Furthermore, Denikin had paid a high price for his humanitarianism as rumours were spreading that the Jews had bought him off, and the commander of the Volunteer Army, General Mai-Maevskii, was now called ‘the little father of the Yids’.²⁴² In addition to his reports, Holman instructed his officers and men to avoid the company of Jews. There were actually a few British officers of Jewish origin serving in South Russia, but Holman rapidly corrected ‘this serious blunder of the General staff’ and sent these men home ‘in order to avoid embarrassing our Russian Allies’.²⁴³

General Holman and many of his subordinates, in addition to their general beliefs and possible prejudices, seemed to have been influenced by White propaganda and the general mood in South Russia and to have believed in the collective responsibility of the Jews for the Russian upheaval. In their diaries and letters, British officers wrote commonly about ‘the Jewish brains and money’ behind the whole Bolshevik revolution. A British military agent attached to Wrangel’s Russian Army in the Crimea even tried to advise a Russian general on how ‘to tackle the Jewish question’ along the lines of the ‘White Australian policy’, referring to the brutal treatment of the Aborigines.²⁴⁴ However, most of the notes written by the young British officers could be considered rather light-hearted and hardly approving of the hideous massacres of civilian population. Many of the officers, even those very same who had written before about the Jews as ‘the most loathsome type

²⁴² Holman’s memorandum ‘Jews in South Russia’, 8 October 1919, CHAR 16/24, & ‘Reports and Recommendations by General Holman’, 8 July 1919, CHAR 16/29, CAC.

²⁴³ Major Sayer is citing Holman in his report to Churchill 31 January 1920, CHAR 16/56, CAC, Lever, Diary 12 December 1919, & Lister, Diary 20 December 1919, LHC.

²⁴⁴ Treloar, Diary 23 October 1920, Treloar collection, HIA.

of humanity' and 'the curse of Russia', were appalled when they actually witnessed some of the worst pogroms in the autumn of 1919.²⁴⁵

News of large-scale atrocities towards the Jewish population in the Ukraine and South Russia soon reached London. Jews in England were outraged by the anti-Semitism of the Whites to whom Britain was giving large-scale military support. Churchill was attacked constantly at the Cabinet and the House of Commons by the anti-interventionists who were now using the pogroms as the final proof of reactionary and repressive nature of Denikin's regime. Churchill was, however, determined to stand with the White cause also on this question. In his defence, Churchill relied basically on Holman's reports and blamed Petliurists and other Ukranian partisans for the pogroms. After reading some frightful reports on massacres, Lloyd George asked Churchill to make enquiries about the treatment of the Jews by 'his friends'. Churchill explained, again citing the Military Mission reports, that the anti-Jewish violence and popular vengeance did have a cause as 'the Jews had certainly played a leading part in Bolshevik atrocities'.²⁴⁶

Whatever Churchill's personal view on the connection between the Jews and Bolshevism was, he clearly understood how the anti-Jewish violence was damaging the public image of the Whites in the West. He sent several personal telegrams to Denikin explaining that the Jews were very powerful in England and urged him to take determinate action to prevent the White troops taking part in the pogroms.²⁴⁷ Denikin promised to do his utmost to prevent pogroms, as he too was fully aware of the results. In the same telegram Denikin also asked, however, why the international Jewish community had not made

²⁴⁵ Williamson's letter to his mother, 12 August 1919, Williamson papers, IWM, & Goldsmith's letter to his father, 1 June 1919, Goldsmith papers, PLA.

²⁴⁶ Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews*, pp. 55-7, Gilbert, *World in Torment*, pp. 341-43, Churchill, *Aftermath*, p.255.

²⁴⁷ Churchill to Denikin, 22 September & 9 October 1919, CHAR 16/22, CAC.

any attempt to use its influence against the terrible atrocities committed by the Jewish commissars.²⁴⁸

This exchange of telegrams had very little results. Churchill did not in fact institute the measure that might have forced Denikin to take firmer action – threatening to withhold the British aid as was done during Denikin’s conflict with Georgia. It is doubtful whether even this kind of threat would have had any effect. After all, Denikin did not have such authority over his Army had he wished to prevent the anti-Jewish violence. The pogroms continued to the end of the White struggle. These atrocities were most often conducted by the Cossacks and the real motive seems to have been looting and not any kind of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the style of the following decades. The pogroms in the Ukraine and South Russia were made possible because of the sad tradition of anti-Semitism in Russian society. As a conclusion, more than an intentional ideological manifesto of Denikin’s regime, the pogroms were another sign of the decay of the White army as an effective fighting force. The general conduct of White troops and especially atrocities committed by the Armed Forces of South Russia also strongly question the regime’s capabilities as a possible regenerating force of Russia.

²⁴⁸ Holman to Churchill, 25 September 1919, CHAR 16/22, CAC.

8. END OF THE INTERVENTION

8.1. Turn of the Tide

In early October 1919 Denikin's Army's offensive reached its zenith. The Volunteer Army captured Orel and the Don Cossacks took Voronezh. The Whites stood only 180 kilometres from the most important Bolshevik armoury, Tula, and only 300 kilometres from Moscow. At the time Denikin ruled – at least in theory – an enormous part of Russia including the third and fourth largest cities of the country and over forty million people. The Whites were convinced of their victory. The troops prepared themselves for the final push, and Denikin boasted that he would celebrate Christmas in Moscow. The British Military Mission indeed reported to London that Moscow would most probably be captured within ten weeks. The British estimated that difficult weather might prolong the operation for another two weeks, but on the other hand, a sudden collapse in Bolshevik morale might hasten their defeat.²⁴⁹ Accordingly, Churchill was able to declare to the Cabinet that the Bolsheviks would soon be finished²⁵⁰.

The Bolsheviks did not, however, collapse, but their resistance stiffened the closer the Whites got to Moscow. The campaign on the Southern Front was clearly understood as a life and death struggle in Moscow in the summer when Lenin wrote his famous 'All out for the Fight against Denikin' – declaration.²⁵¹ The Central Committee of the Party gave orders that the Moscow-Tula sector should have priority over

²⁴⁹ War Diary, British Military Mission, South Russia,.8 October 1919, WO 95/4959, NA.

²⁵⁰ Churchill's Memorandum 'Situation in Russia', 15 October 1919, G.T. 8338, CAB 24/90, NA

²⁵¹ Lenin's declaration is printed in his *Collected Works*, Vol 29, pp. 436-55.

all other fronts, and troops and supplies were transferred for the defence of the capital.

This concentration of force was possible as the Red Army was not acutely threatened elsewhere at the time. Kolchak was still fighting a sporadic retreating battle in Siberia but his army's final collapse was only a question of time. The British had already evacuated their troops from North Russia, and General Miller's small army was virtually under siege in the harbours of Archangel and Murmansk. The only major incident outside of South Russia to take place was in October when the North-western Army of General Iudenich made a surprise attack against Petrograd and indeed advanced into the southern outskirts of the city. Iudenich's operation was, however, doomed from the beginning and the Bolsheviks were able to defeat his small and rather badly-equipped army of 16,000 men. Iudenich's attack caused some initial panic in Moscow as it coincided with Denikin's advance, but the Bolshevik leaders sighed with relief as the Finns and Estonians – mistrusting the Whites – chose not to join in the operation. Iudenich was eventually defeated without considerably weakening the main front. Perhaps most importantly, the Bolsheviks were able to negotiate a secret truce with the Poles. This was a serious blow to Denikin, who had hoped that the Polish Army would coordinate its operations with the Whites. Instead, the Bolsheviks were now free to transfer 43,000 more troops to fight against Denikin. Pilsudski, the Polish Chief of State, apparently considered the Whites as a bigger obstacle to his plans for a Greater Poland than the Bolsheviks.²⁵²

The Red Army commander-in-chief, Colonel S.S. Kamenev, had built up reserves for an operation against Denikin since September, and the Bolsheviks now had double the manpower of the Whites on the Southern Front. The Bolsheviks had also managed to organize their

²⁵² For Polish-Soviet relations and Denikin, see Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp. 88-92.

armaments industry, and had considerable superiority in numbers of machine guns and artillery over the Whites despite all the aid these received from the Allies.²⁵³ Kamenev concentrated his best troops to the northwest of Orel against the advancing Volunteer Army, which he considered the most dangerous of Denikin's armies. This shock-group was formed of the Lettish Riflemen, Red Army Cadets and other elite units usually not seen outside of Moscow. They were to attack the White flank and cut their line of communications while regular Red Army units would tie the Volunteer Army spearhead with a series of the usual frontal attacks of massed infantry.²⁵⁴

Kamenev's counter-offensive started on 20 October. As planned, the Red shock-group drove a deep wedge in the right flank of the Volunteers. Only four days later the Volunteer Army had to abandon Orel and retreat southwards to Kursk to avoid being encircled. The situation worsened as Budenny's newly formed I Cavalry Army simultaneously attacked the Don Cossacks at Voronezh and captured the city. Budenny's attack aimed to separate the Volunteer and the Don Armies. This was completed by the capture of Kastornoe, a railway junction between Orel and Voronezh linking the two White armies. The battle raged for several weeks around Kursk. Denikin mustered all the reserves he could and tried to restart the offensive, but also the Bolsheviks poured more and more men and material into the battle and gradually gained the upper hand from the Whites. Kursk was lost on 17 November, and the Red victory over the city formed a final turning point for the whole Civil War. Towards the end of November 1919 Denikin's Army lost its fighting spirit and started a disorderly retreat to the south.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, Vol II, p. 216.

²⁵⁴ Holman to Churchill, 11 November 1920, CHAR 16/22, CAC, and Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, pp. 202-4.

²⁵⁵ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, Vol II, p. 218.

Kamenev's successful strategy was not the only factor in Denikin's setback. The White advance, formulated in Denikin's 'Moscow Directive' had been, as feared, too fast. The rear had not been secured and proper administration had not been organized. General anarchy and lawless acts by the White troops had soon turned the population against Denikin after the initial relief experienced when freed from the Bolshevik rule. As stated above, the return of old Tsarist bureaucrats and vengeful landlords did not ease the situation. For the majority of the people, the peasants, the Whites seemed to be fighting not only against the Bolsheviks, but also against the revolution in general and for the restoration of the old order – or even something worse, as the Red propaganda cleverly stated. Denikin 'liberated' and ruled nominally a population of over forty million people, but he was never able to build a mass army described in the optimistic estimations conveyed to the Allies. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were much more successful in this respect. The peasant mistrust and hatred of the Bolsheviks appeared eventually not as strong as the fear of losing their lands in the case of a White victory. Indeed, thousands of peasants rallied to the Red Army when Denikin threatened Moscow. Deserters returned to their units and there was no shortage of recruits.²⁵⁶ It was eventually these peasant conscripts herded to attack the Whites in one human wave after another at Orel and Kursk that broke Denikin's advance on the Bolshevik capital.

There was also another form of peasant opposition, which confronted the Whites, especially in the Ukraine. The same loosely organized partisan groups that had harassed the Skoropadskii's *rada* and the German's, the French, the Bolsheviks (or any regime trying to conquer and rule the Ukrainian countryside) had turned their attention towards Denikin's troops. Most dangerous and harmful of these groups was Nestor Makhno's. Makhno had co-operated with the Bolsheviks for

²⁵⁶ Figes, 'The Red Army and Mass Mobilization', pp. 206-209.

a while during the summer of 1919 but he had been forced to disband his group temporarily when the Volunteer Army advanced into the Ukraine. During the early autumn, however, he regrouped his partisans in the White's rear. Makhno preached about confused anarchistic utopia, but in reality his movement concentrated on rather well-organized marauding in the area between Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk) and Mariupol. The Volunteer Army's lines of communication were seriously threatened by Makhno's constant attacks. Interestingly, the British officers attached to Denikin's frontline units reported that Makhno's partisan groups had organization and tactics very similar to the Germans' small but heavily armed *Sturm Abteilung* battle units. This clearly started when a number of German deserters and ex-POW's joined the Ukrainian partisans, and Makhno was even rumoured to have a few German colonels and majors in his staff.²⁵⁷ In October the fast-moving partisans surprised the Whites by attacking Taganrog, Denikin's HQ city. All available troops, including the British instructors and mechanics of the Volunteer armoured school with their tanks were mustered to repel Makhno.²⁵⁸ The Whites were eventually able to contain Makhno's operations, but these anti-partisan operations tied several dearly-needed regiments exactly at the time of the crucial battles of Orel and Kursk.

Denikin tried hard to regroup his army to block the Bolshevik offensive. In early December he changed his strategy and tried to transfer most of the troops between the Dnepr and Don rivers. He reorganized the army by concentrating most of the White cavalry into a single corps – according to Budenny's example – and attached it to the

²⁵⁷ Holman's report on Makhno's army, 1 February 1920, WO 157/772, NA. Despite persistent Allied suspicions, the German volunteers serving with Makhno or the Bolsheviks in 1919 appear to have acted on their own account and were not sent to Russia by the German General Staff. The secret co-operation with the German and the Red Armies did not start until a year later as the first German military envoys joined Tukhachevskii's HQ during the Polish campaign in August 1920. See Manfred Zeidler's *Reichswehr und Rote Armee*, pp. 47-53.

²⁵⁸ Tank Corps (B.M.M) Diary, 22 October 1919, WO 95/4959, NA.

Volunteer Army. Changes in the command were also necessary; General Mai-Maevskii had now succumbed completely to alcoholism, and he was replaced by Wrangel as the commander of the Volunteer Army. Denikin was hoping to regain the initiative as the Red Army in its turn was now bogged down in the morass of the Ukrainian partisan war. All these hopes were, however, in vain. There was not going to be a new 'March to Moscow', and the White troops continued their retreat to the south without fighting. Having assumed his new post Wrangel sent a wire to Denikin from the front: 'This is the bitter truth; the Volunteer Army has ceased to exist as a fighting force.'²⁵⁹ Despite his popularity, Wrangel was perhaps not the best choice as the new commander. In view of the battle lost, he seemed to have concentrated more on criticising Denikin and intriguing against this than continuing the struggle. His actions seem to have further undermined the already low morale of the White troops.²⁶⁰

The Armed Forces of South Russia had never been a cohesive army, and after the defeats of November and December of 1919 tension between the ex-Imperial officer dominated Volunteer Army and the Cossack armies increased close to breaking point. Budenny's Cavalry Army had separated by its strike the Don Army from the Volunteers, and the Bolsheviks were again threatening the Don *voisko* where the demoralized Cossacks were retreating. Denikin still hoped that the Don Cossacks would once more rally to defend their home stanitsas. The situation in the Caucasian Army was even worse. The Kuban units had been worn out in the bitter defensive battles at Tsaritsyn, and, in addition, they had been stripped of their best cavalry by Denikin's reorganization. The morale of Kuban units, afraid of being encircled and lost in their fate in Tsaritsyn, was further undermined by the separatist politics of the Kuban Government. The opposition had started to throw

²⁵⁹ Wrangel's 'Raport' no. 010464, 9 December 1919, Wrangel collection Box 162, f. 28, HIA.

²⁶⁰ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia II*, p.220.

doubt on the whole idea of fighting with Denikin. Denikin considered this as treason, and he sent the heavy-handed Wrangel to deal with the opposition at Ekaterinodar. After a quick court martial, a few of the Cossack leaders were hanged and the rest were exiled from Russia. Despite the new *rada's* pro-Denikin declarations, the Kuban Cossacks had lost their spirit and started a disorderly retreat to their home *stanitsas* in the Northern Caucasus. The once mighty Kuban Cossack Army and the main ally of the early Volunteer movement had in reality ceased to exist. The British considered this as the main factor in the rapid collapse of the whole White movement in South Russia.²⁶¹ Now the Bolshevik advance was no longer slowed to any great extent by the White resistance, but by the peasant partisans and the Red Army's very own supply and transport problems.

8.2. New British Policy Lines

During autumn 1919 the majority of the members of the War Cabinet had become convinced of the necessity to reformulate British policy towards Russia. Churchill, however, was still most enthusiastic in his support of the Whites. The reports of Denikin's constant advance on to Moscow had convinced him of a White victory. Churchill kept circulating lengthy memoranda on the situation in Russia in the Cabinet and tried hard to rally his colleagues in support of Denikin.²⁶² The War Office remained, however, the lone bastion of the White cause in Whitehall, with other ministers remaining lukewarm. Eventually, on 7 September, the majority of the Cabinet, agreeing with the Prime Minister, made the decision to terminate aid to Denikin. Churchill was instructed to organize a 'final packet' of British aid to Denikin. This shipment was to consist of military supplies, drawn mostly from the

²⁶¹ General Staff summary for February 1920, WO 106/1195, NA

²⁶² See eg, Churchill's Memorandum on Russia, 22 September 1919, Cabinet paper G.T. 8207, CAB 23/18, NA.

depots in the Mediterranean, to the value of 15 million pounds. Moreover Churchill was to inform Denikin of the final nature of this shipment, and also that the British Military Mission would be withdrawn from South Russia in the spring of 1920.²⁶³ This time the Cabinet's instructions were strict and clearly-defined and left Churchill with very little room for manoeuvre.

When the news of Denikin's defeat at Orel and Kursk reached London, support for Churchill's intervention policies lost its last faint glimmer of hope in the Cabinet. At last, the Prime minister had clear evidence in support of his views; the Bolsheviks would win the civil war, and Britain had to modify its policy accordingly. Open turncoating and overtures towards Lenin's government were clearly out of question. This would have meant a considerable breach in Britain's international credibility. As for the domestic policy, official secession from the White movement would apparently have been applauded by the anti-Interventionist opposition, but the MPs in the House of Commons behind Lloyd George's Coalition Government, the Conservative majority and many of the Liberals too, would hardly have approved.

The Prime Minister publicized his views on the Russian question in his speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet in the London Guildhall on 8 November. Lloyd George announced once more his opinion that 'Bolshevism could not be suppressed by the sword'. Continuation of the intervention was simply too expensive for Britain. On the other hand, the Whites, according to the Prime Minister, had already been supplied with matériel worth 100 million pounds, and thus the 'debt of honour' to the wartime Allies had been sufficiently settled. Furthermore, the British troops had been mostly evacuated from Russia, he stated, and added that he himself was 'glad of it'. Now Denikin's drive towards Moscow had been checked and the situation had stagnated into a 'prolonged and sanguinary struggle'. Therefore, Lloyd George

²⁶³ War Cabinet 7 October 1919, CAB 23/12, NA.

continued, 'other methods must finally be resorted to for restoring peace and good government in that distressed land'.²⁶⁴ The Prime minister had returned to the idea he had entertained earlier the same year of negotiating with the Bolsheviks. During the following weeks he continued on the same lines in the House of Commons, softening opposition to his policy.²⁶⁵

Churchill did not, however, give in so easily. He still tried to convince the Cabinet that Denikin's setbacks were only temporary in nature, and that the Whites would soon restart their offensive. Churchill claimed that Denikin would surely pay all his debt to Britain after his victory over the Bolsheviks, and that, on the other hand, the military aid to the Whites would be transformed to normal arms trade by March 1920. Churchill seemed to have been very upset, because some of his colleagues, obviously Lloyd George and Curzon, had described the whole intervention in support of the Whites as 'highly questionable' and Denikin as an adventurer.²⁶⁶ In the House of Commons he argued against the alleged enormous costs of the intervention. Churchill informed the House, that the total expenditure in Russia had been 94.8 million pounds, and this included the 'final packet' of 15 million to Denikin. However, half of the figure consisted of 'non-marketable military stores', the real value of which according to his advisers was only one-tenth.²⁶⁷ No doubt, it would have been very difficult to sell the hundreds of thousands of shells and millions of cartridges that were shipped to Denikin, especially at a time when most countries were disarming their armies after the World War.

²⁶⁴ Lloyd George's Guildhall speech was printed in *The Times*, 10 November 1919.

²⁶⁵ Schmid, *Churchills privater Krieg*, pp. 276-78.

²⁶⁶ War Cabinet 9 November 1919, CAB 23/18, NA.

²⁶⁷ House of Commons, Debates, 5 November 1919, Vol 120, cols. 1535-1642. Churchill's private secretary A. Sinclair evaluated in his memorandum 'Final Contribution to Denikin', CHAR 16/56, CAC, that the real market value of the stores were only 5% to 10% of of the original cost price.

In the beginning of December Churchill received a highly optimistic telegram from General Holman, which described Denikin's plans to renew the offensive. The Volunteer Army, now commanded by Wrangel, with its six fresh cavalry divisions would rout the Bolsheviks and secure victory.²⁶⁸ The telegram told more about the unrealistic hopes at Denikin's HQ than the real situation at the front, and did not even convince Churchill. No offensive was coming and the other reports from the Military Mission described only how the Bolsheviks captured a city after a city. Churchill wrote a long personal letter to Denikin, in which he tried to advise and encourage the Russian general. He wrote how a large shipment of matériel would soon arrive at Novorossiisk, and these arms and supplies would be sufficient for offensive operations of three to four months. After this, if necessary, Churchill promised to sell Denikin munitions from the British Army depots 'for a very decent price'. Hence, he urged him to inspect any raw materials or products which could be exchanged as payment for these supplies. Churchill also promised to try to pursue France to support Denikin. Finally he regretted Cabinet's decision to withdraw the Military Mission from South Russia, but wrote of having no doubts that many British officers would continue their service as volunteers in the ranks of the White Army.²⁶⁹ How this voluntary service in a foreign army would fit in with the British legal system and the Army regulations, not to mention the official foreign policy of the government, did not seem to have bothered Churchill.

Encouraging telegrams were soon to be the only help Churchill was able to provide. Lloyd George's policy of terminating aid to the Whites was confirmed in the inter-Allied conference held in London 11 -13 December. The French Prime Minister, Clemenceau, sided with Lloyd George on this question and preferred the idea of forming a *cordon sanitaire* or a barrier of independent states to contain

²⁶⁸ Holman to War Office, 8 December 1919, no. 4485, WO 33/975, NA.

²⁶⁹ Churchill to Denikin, 11 December 1919, CHAR 16/22, CAC.

the spread of Bolshevism towards Europe. The most important of these buffer states would be Poland, which would also eliminate somewhat the threat from Germany that Clemenceau seemed to have considered more acute than that of Bolshevism. The conference resolved that the Allies would not enter into any further commitments to assist, militarily or financially, the ‘anti-Bolshevik elements’ in Russia; individual nations would, however, be free to leave their political or military missions in Russia as long as they wished. The Whites would also still be allowed to purchase matériel from the Allied countries. The message was clear; Russia would be left to decide her own fate without active intervention of the Allies on the White side of the conflict.²⁷⁰ This came close to acknowledging the Bolsheviks as the *de facto* winners of the civil war.

Churchill gradually had to come to terms with the situation. Clemenceau, who – at least in his speeches – had been the greatest advocate of a crusade against Bolshevism, and as such had been Churchill’s last hope. Clemenceau’s support for a strong independent Poland had also crushed his hopes to coax the Poles into co-operation with Denikin. Churchill seemed not to have been fully aware of the depth of the gap between Pilsudski’s Poland and Denikin’s Whites. He had sent General Briggs, the ex-chief of the British Mission to Denikin, to negotiate with Pilsudski, but the Polish leader had given only some vague promises of an offensive against the Bolsheviks not earlier than late spring 1920.²⁷¹ Moreover, the reports from South Russia were most discouraging. The Bolsheviks continued their advance to the South and Denikin was becoming desperate. He even asked Churchill directly to send British troops – ‘only one or two army corpses’ – to save the Whites from defeat. Churchill continued publicly to advocate the White cause, and his opponents interpreted this as another ‘obsession’ of Churchill’s leading to another blunder similar to the Dardanelles

²⁷⁰ ‘Text of Resolutions’ Inter-Allied Meeting 13 December 1919, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, vol II, no. 62, p. 782.

²⁷¹ Gen. Brigg’s to Denikin, 13 December 1919, WO 158/753, NA.

operation. This picture and citations of Churchill's colourful phrases had partially been conveyed to the studies on the subject.²⁷² As a matter of fact, Churchill seemed to have understood the situation in South Russia rather soberly. He had already admitted in a personal letter dated 31 December 1919 to General Wilson that Denikin's story would end soon. Churchill also instructed General Holman to advise Denikin to start negotiations for a truce with the Bolsheviks as he no longer considered a victory possible.²⁷³

The British intervention policy was gradually drawing to its inevitable conclusion. Open negotiations and agreement with the Bolsheviks were naturally impossible as Britain had not even recognized the Soviet Government. However, Lloyd George had already started in November to make secret enquiries about the possibility of re-opening trade with the Bolsheviks whom he now considered to be the *de facto* rulers of the country. Trade with Russia had been most important for the British economy before the First World War, but now due to the war and revolution, Britain had lost Russia's huge export markets and her own industry suffered severe shortages of raw materials. In his policy to start the trade with Soviet Russia, Lloyd George seemed to have been aiming at combining British economic interests and his liberalist vision of foreign relations. The trade with Britain would gradually improve democracy in Russia as the country grew wealthier. Strong economic relations would also increase British political influence in Russia and thus combat overt German schemes in the country.²⁷⁴

The British member of the Allied Supreme Economic council, E.F. Wise, prepared a memorandum to formulate trade relations with

²⁷² See, eg Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol III, p. 68-9, and Schmid, *Churchills privater Krieg*, pp.293-96.

²⁷³ Churchill to Wilson, 31 December 1919. Wilson papers, IWM, and Churchill to Holman 11.1.20, CHAR 16/55, CAC.

²⁷⁴ Schmid, *Churchills privater Krieg*, pp. 300-2, and Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations II*, p 318.

Russia, which fitted perfectly the Prime Minister's plans. First, the blockade of Soviet ports should be lifted. Then, Wise suggested, trade would be started with Russian agricultural co-operatives. The central organization of these co-operatives, Tsentrosoyuz, had managed, according to Wise, to retain a considerable degree of freedom and independence from the Soviet government, not to mention the organization still having its office in London.²⁷⁵ Wise had already arranged discussions with co-operative representatives to establish trade in the areas not under Bolshevik control, and hoped to extend these arrangements to also include the Soviet territory. What Wise was not aware of, as Richard Ullman has pointed out, was the fact that the co-operative organization was tightly controlled by the Bolsheviks, who evidently recognized the usefulness of the Tsentrosoyuz opening up foreign trade, thus allowing the organization to maintain a formal level of autonomy. Lloyd George approved the main points of Wise's memorandum and it thus became government policy, even though some of his ministers, such as Curzon and Churchill, strongly disapproved of the plan. The prime Minister also successfully introduced the plan to other Allied governments in Paris, and a committee, chaired by Wise was appointed to develop the idea further.²⁷⁶ Lloyd George's policy based on liberal economic ideas had now conclusively superseded Churchill's interventionist views, which stressed the ideological and moral responsibility of Britain and, on the other hand, the need to contain the Bolshevik threat to the Europe by assisting the Whites.

²⁷⁵ Wise's memorandum: 'Economic Aspects of Policy concerning Russia', 6 January 1920, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, vol II, no.71, pp. 867-70.

²⁷⁶ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations II*, pp. 320-21 and 326-27.

8.3. Denikin's Defeat

News of the new line of British Russian policy led to severe confusion in South Russia. The reaction of the population in the White-held areas had been a combination of outrage and panic when Lloyd George's Guildhall speech was published in the local newspapers. Many of the White officers had hoped that Allied armies would eventually come and save the grave situation after the Volunteer Army's defeats in October. Now the British government seemed to desert the common struggle and leave the unlucky Russians to their own devices. At this desperate moment of defeat, attitudes towards the British turned sour and even openly hostile. In particular, the Monarchist faction of the White officers boasted openly that the British Government's fundamental intention was to dismember and weaken Russia – not to overcome her Bolshevik enemies.²⁷⁷

Many of the British officers serving in Russia were outraged at their government's policy. In early January 1920 there were rumours that the Allied representatives had started secret negotiations with the Bolsheviks in Copenhagen. The much anticipated economic assistance that was thought to be decisive for the White cause in South Russia failed to materialize. Now it was said that the British government was about to send a delegation to Moscow to organize trade between Britain and Soviet Russia. The commanding officer of the No.1 Liaison Group (Daghestan), Colonel Lister, wrote in his diary that he was ashamed to

²⁷⁷ Major Williamson describes the effect of Lloyd George's speech in his Diary 30 November 1919, Williamson papers, IWM, and General Lukomskii, a Monarchist and somewhat anti-British himself states in his memorandum 'The Position kept by France and Great Britain toward the Fight against the Bolsheviks in Russia', 1921, Lukomskii collection, HIA, how the Prime Minister's public declarations unveiled the real intentions of the British.

face his Russian colleagues: ‘What a cowardly treachery. Winston is the only person who is playing honestly with Denikin.’²⁷⁸

Despite the change in the British government’s Russian policy the Military Mission continued its work as effectively as circumstances would allow. After consulting Churchill, General Holman had ordered that the Mission would do its utmost to support Denikin’s Army until the final date of 31 March 1920 set by the Cabinet. The War Office’s efforts are illustrated by the fact that new officers were sent to South Russia all the time and the Mission’s strength was at its largest at well over 2,000 men as late as February 1920.²⁷⁹ As Denikin’s troops continued their disorderly retreat to the south, British freighters carrying matériel continued to arrive in Novorossiisk. Holman’s reorganization of the whole supply system of the AFSR was working very well, and the retreat had, as a matter of fact, shortened considerably supply routes and thus made the task of British Liaison Groups distributing the supplies much simpler. Ironically, now at the moment of defeat, Denikin’s Army was better armed and clothed than ever. ‘It looks to me as if Denikin will come to an end before his supply of stores’, wrote Churchill bitterly to his private secretary.²⁸⁰

The sapping of morale and spread of defeatism accelerated naturally the decline of Russian command and supply organization. Meanwhile, the role of the British became increasingly dominant. General Holman and his staff had started to take an active part in the operational planning of the AFSR as soon as the great retreat began in November 1919. Holman had also made extensive tours of the front inspecting the troops and making speeches in Russian and trying to encourage the soldiers to keep fighting. His obvious intention was to

²⁷⁸ Lister, Diary 13 February 1920, Lister papers, LHC. Lister’s comment is very typical for the diaries and letters of British officers, see e.g. Grierson’s letter to home, 23 Dec 1919, Grierson papers, PLA.

²⁷⁹ War Diary, General Staff, 18 January 1920, WO 95/4958.

²⁸⁰ Churchill to Sinclair 1 January 1920, CHAR 16/56, CAC.

counterbalance the news and rumours of the British 'betrayal'. The RAF's 'A' Detachment (the former 47th Squadron) kept up their bombing and strafing of Bolshevik troops until the end of March 1920. It concentrated in November on providing support for the Volunteer Corps on the main front in the Kharkov region. However, the rapid retreat of the White Army and continuous transfers to new airfields together with difficult weather conditions seriously hampered the efforts of the British airmen. The squadron was finally transferred to the Crimea in January and considerably bolstered the White's defence of the peninsula.²⁸¹ Meanwhile the instructors of the Taganrog tank school volunteered for combat service. The plan was to man the tanks supplied to the Russians with British crews and show the full potential of this weapon. Yet, the decisive counterattack of the Royal Tank Corps at Kharkov never materialized, because the demoralized Russian tank crews had already abandoned most of their vehicles to the Bolsheviks. The operational command of the remaining dozen (out of the original 74) tanks was taken over by the Military Mission's senior tank officer Colonel Radclyffe, and two of the vehicles were constantly manned by British crews.²⁸²

With the White forces retreating, the tactical command of those troops still in the fighting line sometimes ended up in the hands of British officers. The Russian officers had in many cases deserted their units to secure their personal safety or perhaps to transport the looted property to the rear. Sometimes they had lost all their authority over their units, and at the moment of defeat had more to fear from their own soldiers than the enemy. Repeatedly, in the face of the Bolshevik advance, local White headquarters hurriedly boarded their trains and left their troops, the civilian population connected to the White regime, and

²⁸¹ War Diary of 'A' Detachment (former 47th Sqdn. RAF), South Russia, January, February & March 1920, AIR I/1959, NA.

²⁸² Tank Corps (B.M.M.) Diary, 24 November 1919, WO 95/4959, and G.S. Summary for February 1920, BMM South Russia, WO 106/1195, NA.

also their British advisers in the lurch. Near Kiev the Russian personnel of a White air force squadron simply vanished during the night without informing their British instructors, and left all its planes and equipment at the station.²⁸³ This was not desertion of single units. The commander of the White forces in the Ukraine, General Shilling, had abandoned Kiev and the whole western Ukraine and retired to Odessa. After receiving 10,000 rifles, ammunition and a promise of fire support from the Royal Navy, Shilling gave his word of honour to Denikin and the British Mission that he would stay and defend the city – only to take a boat to the Crimea the next day and leave the chief of the British Liaison Group to organize the evacuation of the city.²⁸⁴ Similarly, in the Don capital Novocherkask Cossack generals left the British officers attached to the Don Army with a few junior Cossack officers and NCOs to organize a rearguard action to enable the mainly pro-White civilian population to escape from the city. A few weeks later in Rostov the British were again left behind and Captain Frecheville and Lieutenant Couche were consequently captured and murdered.²⁸⁵

The AFSR's headquarters in Taganrog was evacuated in an equally haphazard and chaotic manner. It was very typical for the conditions in South Russia during the Civil War that a lavish Christmas dinner which Denikin and his generals attended was organized in the British Mission headquarters only a few days before the evacuation.²⁸⁶ The Mission was informed – not by the Russians, but by the British artillery instructors – only at the last minute that the White troops were

²⁸³ Capt. Smith's report on evacuation of Kiev 14-15 December 1919, AIR I/1960/204/260/37, NA.

²⁸⁴ Capt Lancaster's report 'Defence and Evacuation of Odessa', 7 February 1920, Lancaster papers, IWM. The report includes a copy of Shilling's letter where he promises to defend Odessa. Denikin accused later the British for not providing enough ships for the evacuation in his *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, pp, 328-31, but do not mention Shilling's conduct during the evacuation.

²⁸⁵ Williamson, Diary 12 January 1920, Williamson papers, IWM.

²⁸⁶ Grierson's letter to home, 31 December 1919, Grierson papers, PLA.

leaving their positions and the Bolshevik would soon be in the city. Consequently, the Tank School, RAF's 'A' Detachment and the Mission headquarters were not able to organize their evacuation properly. Co-operation with the Russians was most difficult, and the British did not receive enough rolling stock for the transport. The Russian general responsible for railway transport informed the British that only their officers would be taken in the trains, and General Holman's personal intervention was necessary to secure the transport for British NCOs and men. In these chaotic conditions, the RAF had to destroy over twenty aircraft and a huge amount of spare parts and ammunition, because no transport was available. Also railway cars containing artillery and several tanks were left standing in the Taganrog station as the engine vanished before departure.²⁸⁷

General Denikin and his headquarters were now back in Ekaterinodar, the Kuban capital and the starting point of his offensive. The White generals who had been relatively reluctant to listen to the advice of their British colleagues were now urged to change their attitude. General Holman and his subordinates, who so far had been most tactful and diplomatic in their suggestions, began to change their tone considerably. In 22 January, Holman handed a very straightforward memorandum to Denikin, in which he criticized the White command. He described the conduct of the Russian officers during the evacuation of Taganrog as 'disgraceful'. Consequently, the AFSR had lost a considerable part of its striking power. The memorandum also included an official protest about the treatment of British military and political representatives in South Russia. The worst case had been the hostile reception received by the Foreign Office's High Commissioner Halford Mackinder, who had arrived in early January to South Russia to smooth relations between the Border States and Denikin. 'How does your

²⁸⁷ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, 3 January 1920, WO 95/4959, Brig. Maund's report on the evacuation of Taganrog 7 January 1920, AIR I/1963, NA, and Lever, Diary 2 January 1920, Lever papers, LHC.

Excellency think this will be interpreted in London?', Holman inquired, and strongly advised Denikin to remind his officers of their behaviour towards the British in the daily routine orders of the AFSR.²⁸⁸

Only ten days later, as the situation at the front deteriorated further, Holman wrote another even more plain-speaking memorandum to Denikin. Citing rather sarcastically one of Denikin's declarations, he pointed out that the White Army would not be celebrating Easter in Moscow. The only feasible choice was to retire to the Crimea, but to complete this successfully, the Russians must awake from their apathy. Holman also threatened Denikin directly, that if his officers did not start to co-operate with the British – i.e. follow instructions given by the British – the British Mission would terminate its aid, which would mean certain and quick defeat for the AFSR. Holman confirmed his loyalty to the White cause, but by the same token, he reminded Denikin of his foremost responsibilities to the British Government. The blunt memorandum ended with a strong recommendation to 'purge the Army of traitors, thieves and the incapable', and a list of persons belonging in these categories including, for example, General Shilling who had handed Odessa to the Bolsheviks without a fight and General Kravtshovich, the chief of the White Air Force, who, according to Holman, was mostly interested in 'wine, women and song'.²⁸⁹ Thus Holman intervened directly in the command of the AFSR, and also became involved in the intrigue between the rival factions of White officers. During a conference he advised Denikin to sack General Romanovskii, 'who was generally considered responsible for the current setbacks and rumoured even to be a German spy'. Holman's goal seems to have been to promote General Wrangel's rapidly fading prestige as he urged Denikin to settle the dispute with 'his most competent

²⁸⁸ Holman's memorandum to Denikin, 22 January 1920, Appendix to War Diary, BMM, South Russia, January 1920, WO 95/4959, NA.

²⁸⁹ Holman's memorandum to Denikin, 2 February 1920, Appendix to War Diary, BMM, South Russia, February 1920, WO 95/4959, NA.

commander'. Holman also asked Wrangel to come to Novorossiisk to negotiate with Denikin and promised to guarantee his safety.²⁹⁰

Despite the embarrassing nature of Holman's advice, Denikin had no option but to listen. He understood the vital importance of British support and, on the other hand, seems to have respected Holman's honest efforts on behalf of the Whites. There was, however, very little Denikin could do, as he had lost his authority over most of the AFSR towards the end of January 1920. Now on the eve of defeat Denikin was even ready to compromise his fundamental principle of a 'Holy and undivided Russia'. As the British High Commissioner MacKinder had advised him, Denikin promised autonomy to the Cossack *voiskos* and recognized the *de facto* sovereignty of the Transcaucasian nations. He also secured the peasants' right to their lands by a land degree. The Special Council and military dictatorship was replaced by a new 'South Russian Government', which included representatives even from socialist parties. It has been described as the most leftist and liberal government within the whole anti-Bolshevik movement.²⁹¹ But all this was too late. The vast agricultural lands of the Ukraine and Southern Russia had been lost already before Christmas, most of the Don had already been overrun and the Red Army was now invading the Kuban and threatening Ekaterinodar. Finally, at the end of February 1920 Denikin made the decision to withdraw the remnants of his Army to the more defensible Crimea as first Wrangel, and then, Holman had advised. The plan was to march the main part of the Army along the Taman peninsula and then cross the Kerch straits as it was impossible to ship all troops from Novorossiisk.

The British Mission had actually started, according to the War Office's instructions, to transfer its functions to Novorossiisk and

²⁹⁰ Lister's diary 14 February 1920, Lister papers, LHC, and Holman to Wrangel 22 February 1920, Wrangel Collection 162/28, HIA.

²⁹¹ For Denikin's reforms see Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, vol II, pp. 227-36.

to prepare for evacuation well before Denikin's decision to evacuate. General Holman instructed the unloading of supplies to be stopped at Novorossiisk and to transfer as much as possible of the already arrived matériel to the Crimea. At the same time the members of the Mission were armed and organized to defend their base and the harbour. Trenches were dug, machine gun posts and barbed wire were installed in the key points of the city. This time the British took over the command of the evacuation right from the beginning. The events in Odessa, Taganrog and other cities had convinced the British that the White troops could not be trusted to obey orders in such circumstances.²⁹²

One of the most trying duties of the British Mission during the last months of Denikin's regime was the evacuation of the White civilian population. The British political High Commissioner MacKinder, after consulting Holman, had promised Denikin that the British would evacuate all the families of the AFSR's officers. MacKinder had clearly no authorization for such promises from the British Cabinet or the Foreign Office, but Churchill authorized the shipping to be organized for the evacuation. In South Russia it was the British Military Mission, not Denikin's officials, which organized the registration of these civilian refugees and their transportation to Novorossiisk. All 50,000 registered refugees were indeed shipped to the Crimea or Constantinople by 22 March 1920. The same ships which carried the refugees transported thousands of wounded White soldiers to Allied military hospitals in the Near East.²⁹³ Despite all the efforts of the Mission more and more refugees poured into Novorossiisk. In addition to the original registered civilians it was estimated that in March 1920 there were over half a million refugees, and it was impossible to organize transport for all of them in such a short space of time. This evacuation has rather cynically been interpreted simply as an attempt to

²⁹² War Diary, BMM, South Russia, 20 February 1920, WO 95/4959, NA.

²⁹³ Ibid. 22 March 1920, War diary, General Staff, 27 February 1920 WO 95/4958, and 'Evacuation of refugees from Novorossiisk March 1920', WO 106/1210, NA

raise the morale of the White troops by guaranteeing the safety of their families.²⁹⁴ It was, however, also another sign of Holman's and Churchill's attachment to the White cause and, no doubt, a humanitarian act as well. That at least was how Denikin considered the evacuation in his memoirs.²⁹⁵

The British Military Mission started to prepare for the final evacuation of the Kuban in the middle of March. The whole personnel of the Mission were gradually transported to Novorossiisk and General Holman was the last to leave Ekaterinodar on 15 March – two days before the city fell to the Bolsheviks. Churchill had actually placed Holman under the direct orders of General Milne, the commander of the British forces on the Black Sea, in order to relieve him responsibility for the withdrawal because of Holman's 'strong feelings for the Whites'. General Milne at Constantinople considered it necessary to increase British prestige in South Russia, and perhaps being somewhat suspicious of Holman's loyalty, sent General Bridges to supervise the evacuation. A strong Royal Navy's fleet of battleships and cruisers sailed to support the evacuation and the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers was landed at Novorossiisk and it took positions guarding the approaches to the harbour. The British tried to boost the morale of both the White troops and the civilians by parading all the available soldiers, marines and sailors along the streets headed by a band and pipes along the streets of Novorossiisk.²⁹⁶

Together with thousands of civilian refugees, the White troops retreated towards Novorossiisk without organized resistance. The plan to cross the Kerch Straits to the Crimea was nullified as the Bolshevik cavalry occupied Anapa on the coast, thereby cutting the

²⁹⁴ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations III*, p. 61.

²⁹⁵ Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, p. 338.

²⁹⁶ War Diary, BMM, South Russia, March 1920, WO 95/4959, Gen. Bridges to Gen. Milne 19 March 1920, WO 158/746, NA. Bridges indeed reports Holman as being more concerned with supporting Denikin's cause than with the safety of his own men.

route along the Taman Peninsula. The retreating Whites were harassed not only by the Bolsheviks, but also by the local partisans calling themselves the 'Greens'.²⁹⁷ These partisans were originally not different from peasant insurrectionist movements in other parts of Russia, but here in the Black Sea province they were supplied by the Georgian government with arms and money. As Denikin's army gradually dissolved as an organized fighting force, more and more White soldiers joined the Greens. In 1920 the partisan groups totalling 5 - 6,000 men were virtually controlling the area around Novorossiisk and constantly disrupting the connections to the city. The British had also been attacked by the Greens several times. Colonel Keyes, the Acting High Commissioner, even tried to negotiate a truce with the partisan leaders – no doubt without consulting Denikin – but the attacks continued as the ex-Volunteer officer proclaiming himself the commander of the partisans could hardly control his loosely-organized soldiers.²⁹⁸ Sniping at the British near Novorossiisk ceased only after drastic retaliation by the British. As Keyes had threatened the Greens, the dreadnought HMS Benbow with her 13,5 inch guns completely pulverized a village where a British sergeant had been severely wounded by a sniper.²⁹⁹

The evacuation of Novorossiisk was a nightmare. As feared by the British, the White troops did not attempt to defend the city, instead pouring towards the harbour together with the mass of civilian refugees. The commander of the British battalion (2 Royal Scots Fusiliers) landed at Novorossiisk, Lieutenant-Colonel Hakewill-Smith, estimated that it would have been feasible to defend the city even with a small but determined force, because it was surrounded by high wooded hills and accessible from land only through a single road and railway in

²⁹⁷ For the Green movement of the Black Sea area, see Swain, *Russia's Civil War*, pp. 128-32.

²⁹⁸ Gen. Bridges' report, 18 March 1920, WO 106/1200, and G.S. Intelligence summary for February 1920, WO 106/1195, NA

²⁹⁹ Lever's Diary 31 January 1920, Lever papers, LHC. HMS Benbow, Ship's log, 27 Jan 1920, ADM 53.

a narrow ravine.³⁰⁰ But no troops were to be found for this task. Denikin seems to have been unwilling to sacrifice the last remaining veteran units of the Volunteer Army, he wanted to use them as a nucleus for the new army in the Crimea. The Volunteer Army battalions were rushed first to the ships and many of the far more numerous Don Cossacks were left behind as there was not enough room in the ships for everyone. On the docks the British destroyed tons of supplies which could not have been shipped to the Crimea; brand new DH 9 bombers were crushed to splinters by a tank which was then left to waddle into the sea. The evacuation would have been a complete disaster, had the British not been able to maintain order at the harbour and if the continuous gunfire of the Allied warships had not kept the Bolsheviks at bay. On 26 March the British Mission itself embarked on a steamer in good order – under the protection of the bayonets of the Royal Scots. On the same evening Denikin and his staff boarded a British destroyer, the last one to leave Novorossiisk, as the Bolsheviks entered the city.³⁰¹ The Armed Forces of South Russia were no more.

8.4. Wrangel and the British

The evacuation of Novorossiisk and the subsequent retirement of Denikin from the command of the White Army have been traditionally considered as the terminal point of the British intervention in South Russia. Western studies describe how Britain withdrew its aid officially from General Wrangel's regime in the Crimea and started

³⁰⁰ Hakewill-Smith, interviewed by P. Liddle in 1976, PLA. It was a curious coincidence that Churchill had commanded the Sixth Battalion of the regiment of the Royal Scots Fusiliers on the Western Front in 1916 and Hakewill-Smith had actually been one of his platoon commanders at the time.

³⁰¹ 'Evacuation of Novorossiisk' (undated) by Gen Percy, WO 32/5718, NA. Denikin gives his own account of the evacuation in his *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, vol V, pp. 347-55, which does not differ considerably from the British report and clearly states the importance of the British role in the operation.

negotiations with Lenin's Soviet Government.³⁰² The final break with the White movement did not happen, however, before arming and helping to organize Wrangel's new White army. It was to cause a serious discomfort to the Soviet Government while the Red Army was entangled in the Polish campaign.

News of the Novorossiisk evacuation reached London and on March 31 the Cabinet decided to urge Denikin to give up the struggle and to make peace with the Bolsheviki. It was also decided that the representatives of the British government would act as intermediaries between the Whites and the Soviet Government. At this critical moment Churchill was on vacation in France and absent from furious disagreement about the decision, which must have been a relief for his colleagues. Thus, it was left for Curzon to formulate the Cabinet's decision in to form of an ultimatum, which Admiral de Robeck, the High Commissioner in Constantinople, was instructed to hand to Denikin.³⁰³ Denikin had already, however, made his decision to retire from the command of the White Army, and after consulting his generals appointed his old rival, General Wrangel, as his successor. Denikin boarded a British destroyer together with General Holman, who had been recalled to London 'to report', and left Russia forever.

The new commander of the White forces received the ultimatum from the British Government calmly. In his reply, Wrangel admitted the necessity of an immediate armistice and accepted the British offer to mediate in the negotiations with the Soviets. He required the British Government, however, to take responsibility for all persons

³⁰² The most influential study is, again Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol III, pp. 60-89. Ullman concentrates on British politics towards the Soviet Government and do not take into account the work of the British Mission in the Crimea. Ullman's classic study has apparently influenced in e.g. Mawdsley's interpretation of Wrangel in his *Russian Civil War*, pp. 262-71. Mawdsley hardly mentions the British, and Pipes describes (*Russian under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp. 132-5) how the British virtually left Wrangel in the lurch.

³⁰³ Cabinet 31 March 1920, CAB 23/20, NA, and Gilbert, *World in Torment*, p. 388.

who wanted to leave Russia despite the supposed amnesty by the Soviet Government, and Wrangel considered necessary an interim period of at least two months before the Crimea would be handed over to the Soviet authorities. The Allies should also supply the military and civilian population in the Crimea.³⁰⁴ Wrangel was apparently playing for time. He did not have any illusions about Bolshevik goodwill. The Whites needed breathing space to reorganize their army and Wrangel did not want to disrupt relations with the Allies. Wrangel seems to have hoped, as Denikin had done, that the Bolsheviks would eventually succumb to a popular uprising. At that moment the Crimea would serve as a base for the recovery of White Russia.

The British Government did not reply directly to Wrangel's message. The requirement to accommodate all the refugees and to supply the population of the Crimea for a lengthy period was considered inconvenient. The Cabinet, however, instructed Curzon to contact the Soviet Government directly. The negotiations between Curzon and the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, were executed through wireless messages, which no doubt complicated the situation, and they eventually proved fruitless. Chicherin made demands for the unconditional surrender of Wrangel's forces, while the British threatened the Soviet Government with the use of a naval force in support of Wrangel. This exchange of messages coincided with the start of the Polish offensive, which weakened the Soviet position also on the Crimean front. The British Government had wanted to secure trade negotiations and thus end the Civil War in Russia, and the Soviet Government, in addition, naturally wanted to pacify the southern front to be able to concentrate its forces against the Poles. The British even appointed a political agent to organize negotiations in the Crimea, but these were never to occur as the renewal of Soviet-Polish conflict had

³⁰⁴ de Robeck's communiqué to Wrangel, 2 April 1920, and Wrangel's answer 4 April 1920, Wrangel papers 137/5, HIA.

strengthened Wrangel's position considerably. It is doubtful whether he ever seriously planned any negotiations with the Bolsheviks.³⁰⁵

Meanwhile Wrangel had not wasted time. He had started to reorganize the army, which he renamed the Russian Army, and administration in the Crimea. In this he was greatly helped, right from the beginning, by the British Military Mission, which had transferred its functions to Feodosia and Sevastopol. The Mission, commanded by Brigadier General Percy, had a strength of no less than 171 officers and 458 other ranks. All these men had volunteered to continue their service in Russia.³⁰⁶ Despite the policy of the British Government the Mission continued its efforts to support the Whites, and the British serving in the Crimea remained sympathetic to the White cause and seemed to have disapproved the decisions of the Cabinet to withdraw the aid from the Whites.³⁰⁷ The Military Mission's continued presence and work in the Crimea was naturally authorised by Churchill who was greatly angered by the Cabinet's *detente* policy towards the Bolsheviks. He was determined to give Wrangel the full support of the British Mission, although General Wilson had asked permission to withdraw the Mission. Apparently respecting the Cabinet policy Churchill did not, however, enter into direct communication with Wrangel, as he had done with Denikin.³⁰⁸

The support Wrangel received from the Royal Navy's Black Sea Fleet, commanded by Admiral de Robeck, was no less important. British warships had conducted the evacuation of Novorossiisk and they also made possible the very defence of the Crimean peninsula at the initial stages of Wrangel's regime. The Red high command has been

³⁰⁵ For negotiations between Curzon and Chicherin see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol III, pp 75-83.

³⁰⁶ GHQ Constantinople to War Office, 20 April 1920, WO 157/774, NA.

³⁰⁷ GS Report from BMM, South Russia, 16-30 May 1920, WO 106/1196, NA, and Wrangel, *Muistemat*, pp 243-44.

³⁰⁸ Churchill to Wilson, 1 May 1920, Wilson papers, IWM.

criticised for failing to pursue the Whites across the Kerch Strait and over the Perekop Isthmus to the Crimea and delivering the *coup de grâce*.³⁰⁹ This kind of operation would have been, however, quite disastrous, as the gunfire of the British battleships and cruisers there would have easily destroyed any landing force the Bolsheviks would have been able to muster.³¹⁰ The Bolshevik strategists must have remembered how the British naval gunfire had proved so costly to all their attempts to oust the Volunteers from their Crimean bridgehead at Kerch and made crossing the Kerch Strait to Kuban unthinkable in the spring and summer of 1919. The Cabinet instructed Admiral de Robeck to give protection to Wrangel's Army on 18 April, because of the unsuccessful negotiations with the Bolsheviks. The only restriction was that no troops should be landed.³¹¹ In addition to naval fire support, de Robeck sent a seaplane carrier HMS Pegasus to the Sea of Azov where British aircraft reconnoitred and bombed the Bolsheviks. The moral effect of the very presence of the British warships at the Crimean coast was also most important for the revival of the White army. Admiral de Robeck proved to be no less sympathetic to the White struggle than his colleagues in the British Army.

Wrangel did not to raise his 'Russian Army' from almost *nothing*, as it has indeed been described in some studies on the topic.³¹² Nor had the catastrophe at Novorossiisk been as total as first appeared. The Allied and few Russian ships evacuated approximately 34,000 White troops during the last days of March and some 15,000 more, mostly Kuban Cossacks, were shipped to the Crimea from Tuapse and Sochi during April. Although over 400 tons of stores were lost in

³⁰⁹ Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, vol II, p.260. Kenez cites Soviet sources, which accused eg. Trotsky for this 'blunder'.

³¹⁰ de Robeck to Admiralty, 27 April 1920, WO 157/774, NA.

³¹¹ Admiralty Order no. 181, 18 April 1920, WO 157/774, PRO.

³¹² See Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp 133-4. The source of this interpretation is perhaps Wrangel's memoirs.

Novorossiisk, the British Military Mission had managed to ship, for example, most of the artillery and machine guns, to the Crimea and, as mentioned above, other shipments from Constantinople had been diverted to the Crimea since February.³¹³

The British bases started their work immediately. Wrangel's troops were issued over 202 artillery pieces, 25 tanks, 97 mortars, 863 machine guns, 38.400 rifles and 71 million rounds of small arms ammunition.³¹⁴ Also the remaining 40 aircraft (mostly DH 9's) of the RAF mission which were evacuated to the Crimea in April were handed over to Wrangel's army. Altogether Wrangel received 29 shiploads of matériel, fuel and food from the British during the period from 27 March to 25 June 1920. The Mission continued to train the Russians in the use of British weapons, and machine gun schools were established both in Sevastopol and in Theodosia. In addition, General Percy's policy was to help Wrangel organize his supply system to operate independently and not to rely solely on the British advisors, as had happened in Denikin's army.³¹⁵

Wrangel launched his attack out from the Crimean Peninsula on 7 June. This led to his final break with the British government. The majority of the Cabinet, excluding Churchill, did not want the Crimean episode to disrupt the trade negotiations with the Soviet Government. Paradoxically, at the same time as Lloyd George started the trade negotiations with the Soviet envoy Krasin in London, the British Mission had armed and trained Wrangel's army and thus facilitated its offensive against the Bolsheviks. Most of the White soldiers not only carried British weapons, but also wore British uniforms. In his memoirs

³¹³ Evacuation of Novorossiisk (undated), WO 106/1194, NA, and War Diary, General Staff, 3 April 1920, WO 95/4958.

³¹⁴ Administrative report, BMM, Crimea, 1-25 June 1920, WO 106/1203, NA, 'Boevoi sostov, Vooruzhennykh sil na iuge Rossii, 20 apreliia 1920 g.', Kusonskii Collection, Box 2 file 6, HIA.

³¹⁵ GS report, BMM, South Russia, 1.-15 June 1920, WO 106/1202, NA.

Wrangel did not acknowledge the importance of British aid in the re-creation of the White army in the Crimea, perhaps due to his understandable bitterness regarding the policy of the British Government. He admits the sympathetic attitude of the British representatives, naming especially Admiral de Robeck and General Percy, but does not mention the material aid. The plain numbers are confirmed, however, in the supply records of Wrangel's Russian Army.³¹⁶

The British intervention in South Russia eventually came to an end in June 1920. A few days after the start of Wrangel's offensive, the Cabinet sent telegrams to both General Milne and Admiral de Robeck ordering the prompt withdrawal of the Military Mission and denial of all naval support to Wrangel. Nor would Wrangel receive any British diplomatic assistance: he would have to make his own terms with the Bolsheviks.³¹⁷ The Cabinet's orders were quickly put into effect. The Military Mission handed all the remaining matériel over to the Russians and General Percy started to organize the evacuation of his men. So strong, however, was the affection of the frontline instructors for the White cause that Percy feared they might disobey the order to leave their units. Percy had to lure these officers from the front by inviting them to a conference in Sevastopol. On their arrival at the Mission headquarters the officers were surrounded by the Royal Marines military police, stripped of their revolvers and marched straight to a waiting ship. The Mission left Sevastopol on 27 June leaving only four officers and eight other ranks as observers in the Crimea. At the same time the ships of the Royal Navy, which had supported Wrangel after the beginning of his offensive, were withdrawn to Turkish waters. The Royal Navy

³¹⁶ Wrangel, *Muistelmat*, pp. 218-44. The list of British matériel is in 'Nekatoraiia perepiskaia po vaproam' snabzheniia Armii v Krymu s maia po oktiabr'1920 g.', Kusonskii Collection, Box 2 file 2, HIA.

³¹⁷ Conference of Ministers, 11 June 1920, CAB 23/21, NA.

maintained, however, the blockade of Soviet Black Sea ports throughout the summer and autumn of 1920.³¹⁸

Wrangel was now alone. Despite the change of policy in April 1920, Britain had been the only substantial supporter of the Whites in the Crimea. The French government urged Wrangel to continue his struggle against the Bolsheviks in order to support its policy in Poland. The French even recognized Wrangel's government in August but did not furnish him with any substantial amount of supplies. Wrangel was able to defend the territories he had conquered in his June offensive for a while, but an invasion in the Kuban to raise a new Cossack army proved a failure. As soon as the Soviet-Polish war ended in October, the Red army diverted their main forces against Wrangel. The end came in a few weeks. This time the Whites were prepared for the evacuation, and ships carried 146,000 people from the Crimea into exile. There were no British ships to assist the evacuation. The Cabinet had decided, despite Churchill's sole disapproval, not to give Wrangel assistance of any kind.³¹⁹ The British government's break with the White movement, following Wrangel's June offensive, was absolute.

³¹⁸ Administrative report, BMM, South Russia, 1.-25 June 1920, WO 106/1203, NA, and Wood, interviewed by P. Liddle 1977, Wood papers, PLA. Captain G.N. Wood (later Maj.Gen.) arrived in South Russia in May 1919. He served first as a machine-gun instructor in the Don Army, and volunteered then to continue his service in the Crimea, where he formed a Russian MG battalion and also went to the front with this unit.

³¹⁹ Cabinet minutes, 11 November 1920, CAB 23/23, NA. Churchill's warnings that the decision might result in massacre in the Crimea proved later correct as the Cheka committed mass executions of persons connected with Wrangel's regime. Rapaport & Alekseev state in *High Treason* pp. 79-80 that as many as 80,000 soldiers and civilians were executed in the Crimea in 1920-21.

9. CONCLUSION

When the Great War ended in Europe the British Government found itself deeply enmeshed in the Russian Civil War. In this situation the British Cabinet, as well as the other Allied governments, proved eventually unable to formulate a clear policy on the Russian conflict. Support for the anti-Bolshevik forces, which had begun almost immediately after the Bolshevik coup in 1917, was continued. The Allies did not, however, take a clear stand against the Bolsheviks. In the case of Britain, Cabinet's decisions leading to this confusing situation were not based on a policy with a clearly defined goal. As Richard Ullman has pointed out, these initial post-Armistice decisions were completely lacking any overriding principle: the Cabinet simply authorized a series of piecemeal operations in several parts of the former Russian Empire.³²⁰ Britain was not to commit her forces in an all-out campaign to conquer the Bolsheviks. The Cabinet would not accept the Bolsheviks as the new rulers of Russia either. The British post-Armistice Russian policy appears to have been an attempt to steer a middle course between these two lines. The Cabinet's decisions contained a serious contradiction: Britain began to support the Border States seeking sovereignty from Russia and, on the other hand, the Whites, such as Kolchak and Denikin, who were fundamentally against 'dismembering' the Russian Empire.

The cause of this incoherence in the British policy towards Russia during the whole period of the intervention seems to lie in the complicated and very fluid political situation and in the wartime system of political decision-making, which was centralized almost completely in the hands of the War Cabinet. During 1918 the War Cabinet had

³²⁰ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet relations*, vol II, pp. 15-18.

naturally concentrated on winning the war on the Western Front. Similarly, after the Armistice, it was preoccupied with the peace with Germany and reconstructing the strained economy of the country. The War Cabinet continued to operate until the autumn of 1919 and the wartime process of decision-making thus had a crucial role in the intervention politics.

The wartime necessities for speedy political resolutions had, on the other hand, relegated much of the decision-making normally requiring Cabinet's or Parliament's approval to the heads of the departments of state. The World War had strengthened the position of the War Office in particular because of the obvious importance of the Army in the Continental War, whereas the role of the Foreign Office as a designer of British foreign policy had greatly diminished during the war. In the case of the British intervention in Russia, the War Cabinet's vague and partially contradictory decisions indeed resulted in the relegation of the decision-making to the War Office and the War Cabinet did not directly authorize many of the actual military operations conducted in Russia.

British intervention in the Russian Civil War was presented in the Press as 'Mr Churchill's Private War'. War Secretary Winston Churchill's role was certainly crucial in the moulding of the British policy that was actually implemented, for example, in South Russia. Churchill became utterly frustrated because of the lack of a clear Cabinet policy in the Russian question and the lack of support for his own views on the seriousness of the threat that Bolshevism presented to the British Empire – and for that matter to the rest of Western civilization. The main obstacle to Churchill in the Cabinet was the all-powerful Prime Minister Lloyd George, who was searching for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. As a result, Churchill began to pursue his own Russian policy: defeating the Bolsheviks by supplying the White Armies with matériel and supporting them directly with units of volunteers and military advisers. Cabinet's vague decisions from 1918

to support any anti-Bolshevik force in Russia could be interpreted as an authorization of his plans for massive material aid to Kolchak and Denikin, and in the case of sending volunteers to Russia Churchill could extract the authorization from the Cabinet on grounds of 'utmost military urgency'. The British policy actually implemented on the ground during 1919 and early 1920 was orchestrated essentially from the War Office and in many cases it contradicted official British foreign policy.

It is more or less this official British Russian policy of Lloyd George and perhaps that of the Foreign Office that previous Western studies on the topic have described as proof of the marginal influence of Britain in the Russian Civil War. The most influential of these studies has, no doubt, been Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations*. In his three volumes Ullman formulated a comprehensive explanation of the British intervention which has been widely accepted in the studies of the intervention and the Russian Civil War. According to Ullman, there was no consistent British policy to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. The basic aim of British policy was to weaken Russia, and thus to prevent the re-emergence of the old rivalry between the two empires. This was indeed the official line of policy. But the War Office and Churchill, its Secretary of State, certainly had a policy to counter Bolshevism and this plan was conducted in a most determined manner in South Russia. After all, what really made the difference in the course of the Civil War was not Lloyd George's attempts to bring the participants into negotiations, but the shiploads of arms and equipment the Whites received from Britain. When the British government finally entered into negotiations with the Soviets in the spring of 1920, the Whites had already effectively lost the war.

Without the British intervention on the White side, the superiority of numbers in manpower and weaponry of the Bolsheviks would have overwhelmed their opponents probably early in the year 1919. The whole picture of the Civil War would have been very

different in that the large-scale field operations between the Whites and the Reds would not have taken place. Neither of the two most important White commanders, Kolchak nor Denikin, would have been able to build up their armies and to launch their offensives without Allied war supplies in 1919. Denikin's small Volunteer Army would have most probably been defeated in the battles of North Caucasus and Kuban in the winter 1918-19. Indeed the war would have been more or less confined to the Bolsheviks fighting against bands of peasant guerrillas, as was the case in the vast Russian countryside nominally under Bolshevik control and as the civil war continued after the defeat of the Whites.

* * *

The British Government sent its first military envoys to South Russia in late 1918 and, having evaluated the situation, started to provide General Denikin's army with ample supplies. British support was also instrumental in Denikin's success in claiming the operational command of all the various anti-Bolshevik forces, most importantly the Cossacks of the Don and Kuban, and combining these as the Armed Forces of South Russia. The War Office became convinced that Denikin's army was the most capable of all the White armies in the whole of Russia and eventually the only force capable of conquering the Bolsheviks.

The amount of arms, ammunition and equipment sent to Denikin's army was enormous. In fact, the Whites received more matériel than they were ever able to use. The extent of the British aid could be illustrated by a comparison with the equipment of the Finnish Army during the Soviet-Finnish Winter War of 1939-40.³²¹ Denikin's army was much better supplied than the Finns who successfully fought to a standstill the invasion of the Soviet Army of a quite different quality

³²¹ The latest English-language study on the Winter War is Trotter's *A Frozen Hell, the Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-40*.

and size than its Civil War predecessor. The Finnish Army had roughly the same numerical strength of 200,000 as Denikin's AFSR. The Finnish infantry was mostly equipped with weaponry from the First World War era and in many cases with identical types, including the ex-Imperial Russian rifles and machine guns, as Denikin's army. The Finns suffered, however, above all from a serious shortage of artillery and shells. The artillery that the British supplied the Whites with was mostly even more modern and certainly far more numerous than what Finns had against the much stronger and heavier Soviet artillery twenty years later. The same applies with the millions of shells and small arms ammunition the Whites received from Britain.³²² The reason for Denikin's defeat was definitely not insufficient material aid from the Allies.

The British military mission, about 2,000 strong, also organized the training of Russian troops. Training the White troops in the use of the new British weapons was an integral part of the aid. The disappointing effects of the vast British aid conferred on the Russians during the World War had proved that proper training was essential for any results, as most of the types of the British weapons and their technical and tactical use were new to the Russians. The British Mission also organized and managed an effective supply system to distribute the materiel to the front-line units. Without this supply system, the effect of the aid would have been considerably smaller. Without British military support, Denikin would have been unable to build up his humble Volunteer Army into a fighting force of 200,000 men, let alone to launch his operation against Moscow.

When the Cabinet authorized the War Office to send a military mission to South Russia, it clearly banned any involvement in

³²² According to *Suomen talvisota* (the official history of the Winter War), vol I, pp. 232-43, the Finnish Army was armed with 506 artillery pieces (mostly Russian 76 mm 1902 model field cannons, other models were as old as from 1877) and had an average reserve of only 500 shells for each gun. The Soviet Army concentrated on the Finnish Front as many as 3,000 modern heavy guns with an endless supply of ammunition.

combat operations. According to the official policy of March 1919, no fighting troops were to be sent to Russia; the British military personnel in Russia were only to train and supply the loyal Allies of the Great War. The instructions from Churchill's War Office, however, contradicted the general policy. Individual officers and in some cases whole units of the Military Mission began to take part in combat operations to support the White army.

The involvement of British instructors in combat was partially a result of the problems in introducing the modern arms technology to the Russians. It proved especially difficult to train the Russian crews in the use of tanks and aeroplanes in the tight schedule dictated by the critical situation at the Front. As a result, the British instructors drove the tanks to the battle themselves, and although the Russian crews gradually mastered the use of this weapon, the tactical command of Denikin's armoured corps remained in British hands. The effect of the tanks was out of proportion to their relatively small number. The presence of a handful of these vehicles often proved decisive in the battles, as the Bolsheviks had no effective means to combat them and as their infantry usually fled in panic at the first sight of tanks. British artillery and machine-guns instructors were also assigned to the White front-line units, and thus took part in the battles, sometimes taking the command of the unit they were supposed to supervise.

The case of the 47th Squadron of the Royal Air Force is somewhat different as it was sent to South Russia clearly as a combat unit to provide air support to Denikin's Army. The operations of the squadron, continuing until the end of March 1920, extent supported to a great the White war effort. Before the British arrived, the role of the air arm in the Civil War was almost non-existent. The effectiveness of this relatively small unit, about 50 planes, was an unpleasant surprise to the Red Army, whose own air force had not yet been developed and consisted of a small number of vintage planes and even fewer pilots. During the summer of 1919 the skies of South Russia were effectively

cleared of Red planes. In addition to the actual losses suffered by the Bolsheviks, the air raids had a devastating effect on morale. The low flying, strafing fighters horrified the Bolshevik infantry and cavalrymen. The planes of the 47th Squadron of the RAF, together with the British tanks and the warships of the Royal Navy were also a particularly visible sign of British support for the White troops.

Co-operation between the British and the Russians often proved difficult. The British government's inability to define its Russian policy clearly made the Military Mission's work difficult right from the beginning. The Russians were disappointed as the much-awaited British divisions never arrived. The Prinkipo affair and the contradictory policy of supporting the Border States also made the Whites very suspicious of the ultimate aims of the British. Within the Armed Forces of South Russia the British were accused of favouring the Volunteer Army at the expense of the far more numerous Cossacks. In addition to the political difficulties, there was a wide cultural gap between the officers of the post-Great War British Army and Denikin's Volunteer Army and the Cossacks. The war in South Russia was very different from anything the British had experienced or could expect. The problem was not only the obsolete and unimaginative military thinking of the Russians, but the whole ethos of Russian military culture. It also appears that not a few of the members of the British Mission were poorly qualified for their demanding tasks. Mutual mistrust, cultural and communication difficulties hindered considerably the work of the British Mission. Many of the British officers became frustrated, and it was not uncommon to speak about 'backing the wrong horse'. On the other hand, many Russians must have found the growing importance of the British role in Denikin's command deeply embarrassing, especially after Holman introduced his radical policy and the British took control of Denikin's Armys's supply system.

The Russian Civil War was an extremely brutal conflict. Generally inhuman treatment and executions of the prisoners was more a

rule than an exception on the both sides of the front. However, to find out that the Whites were not much different from their enemies shocked the British. Almost every diary and the numerous letters written by these officers and men mention appalling atrocities committed in equal measure by the Bolsheviks and the Whites. The brutality of the White troops also appears as an important factor alienating the British from the White cause and undermining their morale and motivation. These atrocities that were committed not only against the enemy troops but also against the civilian population heightening in the pogroms were another sign of the dubious quality of the White Army in its assumed task of defeating the Bolsheviks and the regenerating Russia.

* * *

It is also possible to draw some general conclusions on the White movement and the reasons for their defeat from the study of the British intervention. The private opinions of the British Military Mission are different from the picture in studies based on White sources which traditionally describe the Whites as superior soldiers to their Bolshevik counterparts.³²³ The military defects in Denikin's army were numerous. The personal courage of many White front-line soldiers was not enough, since most of their commanders were unimaginative and their military thinking was obsolete. Furthermore, Denikin's army was incapable of organizing its logistics. Rear echelon troops were numerous, but they were more interested in looting and profiteering than in administering the liberated areas and supplying the front-line units. These problems were sharply detected and often pointed to Denikin's staff. It was, however, impossible to make fundamental improvements in the chaotic conditions of the Civil War.

When Denikin's Army is analyzed as a fighting force, fundamental defects can be detected in the morale of the White troops.

³²³ The most important and influential of these is Kenez's *Civil War in South Russia*.

According to studies written on the armies of the World War I, military units's morale on the battlefield (narrowly defined as the 'will to fight') was based on negative and positive factors – 'sticks and carrots'.³²⁴ The negative factors include discipline. As with the Imperial Russian Army before, the White army counted on discipline as a decisive factor, and required blind obedience from the troops – with variable results. Training was neglected. It consisted mainly of the parade ground drill, again, to improve discipline. On the positive side, there is a promise of reward, which in the form of loot was definitely an important factor in the White Army. The problem was that the prospect of loot did not increase the efficiency of the White troops, but became a goal itself. The most important factor affecting the morale of a unit, according to studies by Richard Holmes and Niall Ferguson, is group cohesion. In the early Volunteer Army this was certainly a decisive element behind the miraculous success of this minuscule force. Later, however, when Denikin's army became a mass army of unwilling peasant conscripts, such values rarely existed.

The White officers were generally suspicious of the modernization of warfare, especially when suggested by foreign advisers. The White Army was led by the conservative wing of the Imperial officer corps. These men had been, as Norman Stone has stated, more or less guilty of the failure to develop the Russian Army during the World War.³²⁵ Tactical innovations were neglected despite huge losses. The new group of junior officers and general staff men that was emerging after the defeats of 1916 never held much authority in the Imperial Army – nor in Denikin's. Their more radical military thinking was, however, exploited in full by the Bolsheviks in the later stages of the Civil War.

³²⁴ Holmes, *Firing Line*, pp. 204-315, *Tommy*, pp. 555-612, and Ferguson, *Pity of War*, pp. 339-66.

³²⁵ Stone, *Eastern Front*, pp. 223-5.

Stone's analysis of the Russian commanders of the Imperial Army partially explains the inadequate amount of British aid claimed in many of the White memoirs such as Wrangel's and Lukomskii's. This myth of the Allies leaving the Whites in the lurch, which has also been given as an explanation for the White defeat, has been indeed maintained in many studies on the topic.³²⁶ During the World War the traditional explanation of the Russian generals for the constantly unsuccessful offensives was the infamous 'shell shortage', i.e. the claimed inability of the Russian industry or the Allies to provide sufficient ammunition to support the operations. The Russian commanders refused to consider, however, the possibility that faulty strategies and dated tactics had been the reason for the defeats and enormous casualties. Similarly, no matter how many shiploads of guns and shells the British poured to Novorossiisk, there was never enough for Denikin's generals, who had gradually returned to the methods of the Imperial Army when the Armed Forces of South Russia were organized and enlarged into a conscript army.

There is also a Soviet myth about the Allied intervention in the Civil War. According to Soviet historiography, the Allies first planned to send their armies to crush the young Soviet state in order to fulfil their imperialistic plans in Russia. This proved unsuccessful as the Allied troops did not want to fight their fellow workers and peasants in Russia but mutinied. Thus the Allies founded the White armies of Kolchak, Iudenich and Denikin as an instrument for their policy, and supplied these 'hirelings' with plentiful supplies of arms, equipment and advisors and also planned their operations and commanded them.³²⁷ In the light of both British and White sources this is quite incorrect. There was never a real plan to send a whole army to Russia from any of the Allied countries. The Allies certainly supported, for example, the

³²⁶ See Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, pp. 133-4.

³²⁷ Lotochkii, *Armiia sovetskaia*, pp. 55-7.

Volunteer movement right from the beginning, but they did not found it. It is also unfair to define Denikin merely as a mercenary or a puppet of the Allies. Although in the spring of 1920 the British influence at his headquarters increased, it was definitely Denikin and his staff who planned and executed the Moscow offensive. At this stage the British could not really influence the White strategy, although they considered it very risky and also pointed this out to Denikin. The Soviet legend of the Civil War and the intervention comes close to the truth only in the matter of the importance of the British material aid to the Whites. The Whites indeed fought their war with British guns and even in British uniforms.

In addition to all the political mistakes of Denikin's regime and a general inability to adjust to the complex situation in revolutionary Russia, the Whites suffered a clear military defeat. In purely material terms, the British aid placed Denikin's Army in a far more favourable position than the Bolsheviks in 1919 and it would have enabled them to win the military struggle. The Whites were defeated in South Russia not because of the lack of British aid but rather in spite of it. If the British had sent the divisions the Whites requested to South Russia in the spring of 1919, they would most probably have soon marched to Moscow. Despite all later Soviet claims, the Red Army of the Civil War stood no chance against modern army units. This was proved, for example, in the fighting against the British in Northern Russia in the summer of 1919. But what would have happened after toppling Lenin's regime? Denikin had soon proved unable to govern even the Kuban and the Don let alone the Ukraine. Accordingly, a White 'victory' would probably have increased chaos as the Whites would have been enmeshed in yet another civil war against the various peasant movements of the vast Russian countryside. The Whites were after all unfit for the task of regenerating Russia following the chaos of the Revolution and the Civil War.

Appendix 1

General Holman's order to the British Military Mission, July 1919

POLICY OF H. M. GOVERNMENT, AND DUTIES
OF BRITISH MILITARY MISSION, SOUTH RUSSIA.

1. The purpose of H. M. Government is to assist the Armed Forces of South Russia to such extent as may be possible, in order that the Bolsheviks may be defeated, and, when this is done, to leave the Russian people, free from terrorism, to shape their own destiny.
2. Consequently, the British Military Mission is to confine itself to the study of the military needs of the Armed Forces of South Russia, to avoid politics except where politics are inseparable from military questions, and to render every possible assistance to the Russian Commander by accurately interpreting his views to the War Office, and by facilitating the delivery to him of the aid which H. M. Government may be able to send him.
3. The duties of the British Military Mission will be to:—
 - (a) Keep the War Office constantly informed of the military situation, of the strength and intentions of the Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik forces, and of the progress of operations.
 - (b) Inform the War Office of the military needs of General Denikin, to enable him to conduct his military operations.
 - (c) Ensure that material, stores and equipment supplied by H. M. Government are promptly off-loaded at the original destination, safeguarded, forwarded and distributed in accordance with the requirements of the military situation.
 - (d) Furnish Gen. Sir George Milne with a copy of all reports and recommendations made to the War Office, and in every way to work in closest touch with him.
 - (e) Maintain, through G. H. Q., Constantinople, touch with the British forces operating in Trans-Caucasia, and with Allied troops operating in Russia.
 - (f) Furnish, if possible, reports of value for historical purposes.

H. C. HOLMAN, Major-General,
COMMANDING BRITISH MILITARY MISSION, SOUTH RUSSIA.

Source: Lancaster papers, IWM.

Appendix 2

British matériel issued to the White forces in South Russia

	<u>Denikin,</u> April 1919 - March 1920	<u>Wrangel,</u> April 1920 - June 1920	Total
<u>Artillery</u>			
18-pdr field guns	491	143	634
Ammunition	1,463,210	215,000	1,678,210
4.5" howitzers	181	59	240
Ammunition	261,861	-	261,861
60-pdr medium guns	60	-	60
Ammunition	97,934	8,010	105,944
6" howitzers	61	-	61
Ammunition	70,490	-	70,490
8" howitzers	8	-	8
Ammunition	8,455	-	8,455
3" Stokes mortars	106	97	203
Ammunition	16,142	48,150	64,292

<u>Tanks</u>			
Mark V Heavy tanks	56	–	56
Ammunition for 6-pdr tank guns	20,000	–	20,000
Whippet light tanks	18	–	18
Rolls Royce armoured cars	6	–	6
<u>Aircraft</u>			
RE8 and DH9 reconnaissance bombers	196	22	218
<u>Machine guns</u>			
Vickers heavy machine guns	1,913	333	2,246
Lewis light machine guns	4,264	530	4,794
<u>Rifles</u>			
Russian 7.62, SMLE, Ross	198,015	38,365	236,380
Ammunition	500 million	72 million	572 million
<u>Hand-guns, swords etc.</u>			
Webley revolvers	1,257	–	1,257
Ammunition	154,480	–	1,257
Bayonets	70,524	–	70,524
Cavalry swords	13,094	–	13,094
Cavalry lances	2,500	–	2,500

<u>Uniforms etc.</u>			
Complete sets of British uniforms	520,000	58,000	578,000
Boots	662,408	105,999	768,407
Steel helmets	103,378	–	103,378
<u>Transport vehicles</u>			
Lorries	402	–	402
Touring cars	227	–	227
Motorcycles	279	–	279
<u>Medical equipment</u>			
General hospitals for 500 beds	12	–	12
Field hospitals	25	–	25
Ambulances	174	6	180
Field dressings	800,000	72,000	872,000

Sources: Maj.-Gen. Sir H.C. Holman's Final Report of the Military Mission, South Russia. WO 33/971, PRO. 'Resume of work by the RAOC with the British Military Mission in South Russia', by Lt-Col. Symons, Symons' Papers, PLA. 'Nekatoraia perepiskaia po voprosam' snabzheniia Armii v Krymu s maia po oktiabr'1920 g.', Kusonskii Collection, Box 2 file 2, HIA.

Appendix 3

Map: Russia 1919



SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival sources

Great Britain

Cambridge University Library

-Hardinge papers

Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge

-Chartwell collection (papers of Sir W.S. Churchill)

-de Robeck collection

Imperial War Museum, London

Personal collections:

-Andrus, Brig. T.A.

-Beresford-Ash, Maj. D.

-Butler, Maj. Gen. S.S.

-Cullen, Lt. A.A.

-Harrison, Cmdr. R.

-Henderson, Maj. Gen. P.H.

-Howes, Maj. B.E.

-Hutchings, Pte. W.A.

-Lancaster, Capt. J.W.C

-Shrubsole, Eng. Cmdr. P.J.

-Stafford, Air Marshall S.C.

-Stokes, Col. C.B

- Wade, Maj. Gen. A.
- Williamson, Brig. H.N.H
- Wilson, Field Marshall Sir Henry
- de Wolff, Lt.Col. Sir Charles
- Wood, Maj.Gen. G.N.

Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London

Personal Collections:

- Lever, Capt. G.H.
- Lister, Lt-Col. F.H.
- Poole, Maj-Gen. Sir F.C

The Liddle Collection, University of Leeds

Personal collections:

- Albery, Pte. W.J.
- Bilney, Air Vice-Marshal C.
- Boustead, Col. Sir Hugh
- Bruce, Capt. R.
- Clifton, L.Cpl. D.A.
- Goldsmith, Vice-Admiral Sir Lennon
- Hakewill-Smith, Maj.Gen. Sir Edmund
- Norris, Maj. Sir Alfred
- Pendred, Lady Nina
- Symons, Lt.Col. J.
- Theodore, Lt. F.
- Wade, Maj.Gen. A.

-Wood, Maj.Gen. G.N.

The National Archives, London

Admiralty

-ADM 53, Ships' Logs

-ADM 137, War Histories

Air Department

-AIR 1, Operational Reports

Cabinet Office

-CAB 23-24, Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda

-CAB 25, Supreme War Council 1917-1919

-CAB 44, Historical Section; Official war histories

Foreign Office

-FO 371, General Correspondence; Russia (South), Caucasus

-FO 608, Paris Peace Conference 1919

War Office

-WO 32, Registered Papers,

-WO 33, Reports

-WO 95, War Diaries

-WO 106, Intelligence

-WO 154, War Diaries; Supplementary

-WO 157, Intelligence Summaries

-WO 158, Correspondence and Papers of Military Headquarters

Public Record Office

-PRO 30, Private Papers; Balfour, MacKinder & Milner

The United States of America

Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, California

- Alekseev papers
- "Dobrovol'cheskaia armiiia" collection
- "Donskaia armiiia" collection
- Krasnov, P.N., Discours du Generale Krasnov, Ataman du Don le 13. Dec. 1918 lors de sa rencontre avec le Generale Poole.
- Lockhart papers
- Kusonskii papers
- Lukomskii papers
- Melgunov papers
- Relations between the South Russian Volunteer Army and Georgian Mensheviks, 1919-1920. Compiled by D.P. Dratsenko.
- "Ruskaia narodnaia armiiia" collection
- Shcherbachev papers
- Treloar papers
- Vrangel papers

PRINTED SOURCES

Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii , Berlin, 1922-1924.

Bunyan, James, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism. April-December 1918; Documents and Materials*, Baltimore, 1936.

Directivy Glavnogo komandovaniia Krasnoi Armii (1917-1920). Sbornik dokumentov, Moskva, 1969.

Direktivy Glavnogo komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii (1917-1922). Sbornik dokumentov I-IV, Moskva, 1974-1978.

Hansard Parliamentary Debates: Official Report of the House of Commons, 5th Series, Vols. 110-121 (1918-1920).

Iuznyi front: Sbornik dokumentov (mai 1918-mart 1919), Rostov na Donu, 1962

Iz istorii grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR, Moskva, 1960.

Gilbert, Martin, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol.IV, Companion Documents, London, 1975.

Krasnyi arhiv, vols. 21, 22, 26, 46, 62 & 64, Moskva, 1927-1935.

Lenin, V.I., *Collected Works*, vols. 26-31,35,36,42&44, London, 1964-1970.

Murphy, A.B., *The Russian Civil War, Primary Sources*, London 2000.

Murphy, A.B., *Rostov in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920 The Key to Victory*, London 2007.

Piontkovskii, S., *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii*, Moskva, 1925.

Trotsky, L.D., *How the Revolution Armed: Military Writings and Speeches*, I-III, London, 1979-1981.

The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922, Vols. 1-2, The Hague, 1964 & 1971.

Woodward, E.L. & Butler, R., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (DBFP), First Series Vol.II - V, London, 1949.

NEWSPAPERS

Iug Rossii, Rostov na Donu, 1919.

The Times, London, 1918-1921.

Velikaia Rossiia, Rostov na Donu, 1919.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Acton, E., Cherniaev, V.I. & Rosenberg, W G. (ed.), *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1997.

Adamija, V.I., *Iz istorii anglijskoi interventsii v Gruzii*, Suhumi, 1961.

Aleksashenko, A.P., *Krakh denikinshchiny*, Moskva, 1966.

Allen, W.E.D. & Muratoff, P., *Caucasian Battlefields*, Cambridge, 1953.

Anderson, M.S., *The Eastern Question*, London, 1966.

Antisovetskaia interventsia i ee krah 1917-1920, Moskva, 1987.

Aten, M. & Orrmont, A., *Last Train over Rostov Bridge*, London, 1962.

Arslanian, Artin, 'The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, 1917-1919', PhD diss, UCLA, 1974.

Austin, H.N., 'Some Experiences in Russia, 1919', *Army Quarterly*, vol. XXX (1935).

Avalishvili, Z., *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics*, London, 1940.

Bechhofer-Roberts, C.E., *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*, London, 1921.

Beloe delo, 6 vols, Berlin, 1926-1928.

Bidwell, S. & Graham, D., *Fire-Power, British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945*, London, 1982.

Bihl, W., *Die Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte*, Wien, 1975.

Blagov, V. A. & Sapozhnikov, S.A., *Beloe dvizhenie; Pohod na Moskvu*, Moskva, 2004.

Bodger, A., *Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1979.

Bogaevskii, A.P., *Vospominaniia 1918 goda*, New York, 1963.

Bond, Brian, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, Oxford, 1980.

Bourke, Joanna, *An Intimate History of Killing*, London, 1999.

Bowyer, C., *RAF Operations 1918-1938*, London 1988.

Boyd, Alexander, *The Soviet Air Force since 1918*, London , 1977.

Brinkley, George F., *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia*, Notre Dame, 1966.

British Army Personnel in the Russian Civil War, London, 2010.

Brook-Shepherd, Gordon, *Iron Maze, the Western Secret Services and the Bolsheviks*, London, 1998.

Brough, Ray, *White Russian Awards to British and Commonwealth Servicemen during the Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1920*, London, 1991.

Brovkin, Vladimir N., *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War*, Princeton, 1994.

Brovkin, Vladimir N. (edit.), *The Bolsheviks in Russian Society*, New Haven, 1997.

Busch, B.C., *Madras to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in Asia 1918-1923*, New York, 1976.

Bushnell, J., 'The Tsarist Officer Corps, 1881-1914, Customs, Duty, Efficiency', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 86 (1981), No. 4, pp. 103-120.

Callwell, C.E., *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries*, 2 vols, London, 1927.

Carley, M.J., *Revolution and Intervention. The French Government and the Russian Civil War 1917-1919*, Montreal, 1983.

Carr, E. H., *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 3 vols, London, 1950.

Chamberlin, William, *Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, New York, 1935.

Churchill, Winston S., *World Crisis: The Aftermath*, London 1929.

Cohen, Michael J., *Churchill and the Jews*, London, 1985.

Denikin, Anton I., *Ocherki russkoi smuty I-V*, Paris 1921-1926.

Deriabin, A. (ed.), *Oktabr' 1920-go, Poslednie boi russkoi armii generala Vrangelia za Krym*, Moskva, 1995.

Dobrynin, V., *Borba s bolshevizmom na iuge Rossii*, Prague, 1921.

Dobson, George, 'Russia under the Red Terror', *The Great War, The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict*, vol. XIII, edited by Wilson, H.W and Hammerton, J.A., London 1919.

Dockrill M.L. & Goold J.D., *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences 1919-1923*, London, 1981.

Drummond, I.M., *British Economic Policy and the Empire 1919-1939*, London, 1972.

Dunsterville, L.C., *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, London, 1920.

Elcock, H.J., *Portrait of a Decision. The Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles*, London, 1972.

Erickson, John, 'Pens Versus Swords: A Study of Studying the Russian Civil War 1917-22', *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A.J.P. Taylor*, edited by C. Wrigley, London, 1986.

Ferguson, Niall, *The Pity of War*, London, 1998.

Figes, Orlando, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917-1921)*, Oxford 1989.

Figes, Orlando, 'The Mass Mobilization during the Russian Civil War', *Past and Present*, 129 (1990).

Figes, Orlando, *A People's Tragedy, The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*, London, 1996.

Figes, Orlando & Kolonitskii, Boris, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution. Language and Symbols of 1917*, Yale UP, 1999.

Foglesong, David S., *America's Secret War against Bolshevism; U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War 1917-1920*, the University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Freund, Gerald., *Unholy Alliance: Russian-German Relations from Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to Treaty of Berlin*, London, 1957.

Ghambashidze, D., *Mineral Resources of Georgia and Caucasia*, London, 1919.

Gilbert, Martin, *World in Torment, Winston Churchill 1917-1922*, London, 1975.

Gillard, David, *The Struggle for Asia, A Study in British and Russian Imperialism*, London, 1977.

Gilmour, David: *Curzon*, London, 1994

Gökay, Bülent, *A Clash of Empires: Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism 1918-1923*, London, 1997.

Goldstein, Erik, *Winning the Peace, British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916-1920*, Oxford, 1991.

Golubintsev, Gen., *Russkaia vandeia. Ocherki grazhdanskoi voiny na Donu 1917-1920*, Miunhen, 1959.

Grazhdanskaia voina i voiennaia interventsia SSSR, Entsiklopediia, Moskva, 1983

Gurko-Kriatzhin, V.A., 'Angliiskaia interventsia 1918-1919 gg. v Zakaspii i Zakavkazie,' *Istoriik Marxist*, No. 2, Moskva, 1926.

Hassman, Heinrich, *Oil in the Soviet Union*, Princeton, 1953.

Heretz, Leonid, 'The Psychology of the White Movement', *The Bolsheviks in Russian Society: the Revolution and the Civil Wars*, edited by V.N. Brovkin, New Haven, 1997.

Hodgson, John, *With Denikin's Armies*, London, 1932.

Holmes, Colin, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939*, London, 1979.

Holmes, Richard, *Firing Line*, London, 1985.

Holmes, Richard, *Tommy, The British Soldier on the Western Front*, London, 2005.

Holquist, Peter, 'A Russian Vendée: the Practise of Revolutionary Politics in the Don Countryside, 1917-1921', PhD diss., Columbia, 1995.

Hovannisian, R., *The Republic of Armenia*, 2 vols., Berkeley, 1971, 1982.

Hovannisian, R., 'The Allies and Armenia', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3 (January 1968) pp.145-68.

Hovi, Kalervo, *Cordon sanitaire or barriere de l'Est? The Emergence of the New French Eastern European Alliance Policy 1917-1919*. Turku, 1975.

Hudson, Miles, *Intervention in Russia 1918-20, A Cautionary Tale*, London 2004.

Hughes, Michael, *Inside the Enigma, British Officials in Russia 1900-1939*, Cambridge 1997.

Iakushkin, E. & Polunin, S., *Angliiskaia interventsia*, Moskva, 1928.

Ianchevskii, N.L., *Grazhdanskaia borba na Severnom Kavkaze, Rostov na Donu*, 1927.

Istorija grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR 1917-1922, Moskva, 1959.

Jacobson, J., 'Strategies of French Foreign Policy after the World War I', *Journal of Modern History*, 55, 1983.

James, Robert Rhodes, *Churchill, A Study in Failure*, London, 1970.

Jeffery, Keith, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922*, Manchester, 1984.

Jones, H.A., *Over the Balkans & South Russia, Being the Story of No. 47 Squadron RAF*, London 1923.

Kadishev, A. V., *Interventsiia i grazhdanskaia voina v Zakavkaze*, Moskva 1960.

Kakurin, N, *Kak srazhalas revoliutsiia I-II*, Moskva 1925-26.

Karmann, Rudolf, *Der Freiheitskampf der Kosaken - Die weisse Armee in der Russischen Revolution 1917-1920*, Puchheim, 1985.

Kazemzadeh, Firuz, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, Oxford, 1951.

Kazemzadeh, Firuz, 'Russia and the Middle East', *Russian Foreign Policy: Essays in Historical Perspective*, ed. by I.J. Lederer, Yale, 1962.

Kenez, Peter, *Civil War in South Russia*, 2 vols, Berkeley, 1971 & 1977.

Kenez, Peter, 'A Profile of the Pre-Revolutionary Officer Corps', *California Slavic Studies*, VII (1973)

Kenez, Peter, 'The Western Historiography of the Russian Civil War', *Essays in Russian and East European History, Festschrift in Honor of Edward C. Thaden*, ed. by L. Schelbert and N. Ceh, New York 1995

Kennedy, Paul, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy, Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980*, Glasgow, 1981.

Kentmann, Paul, *Der Kaukasus: Hundertfünfzig jahre russische Herrschaft*, Lipzig, 1943.

Kettle, Michael, *Russia and the Allies*, 3 vols, London, 1981, 1986 & 1991.

Kinvig, Clifford, Churchill's Crusade, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia 1918-1920*, London, 2006.

Knox, A.W.F., *With the Russian Army*, London, 1921.

Lehovich, Dimitry, *White against Red; the Life of Gen. Anton Denikin*, New York 1974.

Liddle, Peter H. & Richardson, Matthew J. "*Voices from the past: An Evaluation of Oral History as a Source for Research into the Western Front Experience of the British Soldier, 1914-18.*" *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol.31. No.4. 1996.

Lincoln, W. Bruce, *Red Victory - A History of The Russian Civil War*, New York 1989.

Lockart, R.H. Bruce, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, London, 1932.

Lotochkii, S.S. (ed.), *Armiia Sovetskaia*, Moskva, 1971.

Lukomskii, A.S, *Vospominaniia*, Berlin 1922.

Makhrov, P.S., *V beloi armii generala Denikina*, Sankt-Peterburg, 1994.

Malet, M., *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, London 1982.

Marks, S., *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918-1933*, London, 1976.

Mawdsley, Evan, *The Russian Civil War*, London, 1987.

Mayer, A.J., *Politics and and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles 1918-1919*, London, 1963.

Miller, M.S., *The Economic Development of Russia 1905-1914*, London, 1926.

Mints, I.I., *Pobeda za sovetskoi vlasti v Zakavkaze*, Tbilisi, 1971.

Mints, I.I., *Istoriia Velikogo Oktiabria*, vols. 2-3, Moskva, 1977-79.

Neilson, Keith, *Strategy and Supply*, London, 1982.

Nicolson, H.G., *Peacemaking 1919*, London, 1964.

Norris, D., 'Caspian Naval Expedition 1918-1919', *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, Vol. X, 1923, pp. 216-40.

Official History: Operations in Persia 1914-1919, London, 1987.

Palič, Michael, *The Anarchism of Nestor Machno 1918-1920*, University of Washington Press, 1976.

Pares, Sir B., *My Russian Memoirs*, London, 1931.

Pavlov, V.E., *Markovtsy v boiakh i pokhodakh za Rossiю*, vols. I-II, Paris, 1964.

Poliakov, I.A. (ed.), *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii: perekrestok mnenii*, Moskva, 1994.

Pipes, Richard, *The Formation of Soviet Union - Communism and Nationalism*, Harvard, 1964.

Pipes, Richard, *The Russian Revolution 1899-1919*, London, 1990.

Pipes, Richard, *Russia Under The Bolshevik Regime 1919-1924*, London, 1994.

Pokrovskii, G., *Denikinshchina*, Berlin, 1923.

Popov, A.L., 'Iz epokhi angliiskoi interventsii v Zakavkazie', *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia*, Nn 5.-9., Moskva, 1924.

Pridham, Sir Francis, *Close of a Dynasty*, London, 1954.

Raevskii, A., *Angliiskaia interventsii i musavatskoe pravitelstvo*, Baku, 1927.

Rapaport, Vitaly & Alexeev, Yuri, *High Treason, Essays on the History of the Red Army 1918-1938*, Durham 1985.

Rigby, T.H., *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917-1922*, Cambridge, 1979.

Ross, G., *The Great Powers and the Decline of European States System, 1914-1945*, London, 1983.

Rowland, Peter, *Lloyd George*, London, 1975.

Samra, C.S., *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1947*, Bombay, 1959.

Schmid, Alex P, *Churchills privater Krieg, Intervention und Konterrevolution im russischen Bürgerkrieg 1918-1920*, Freiburg, 1974.

Schultz, G., *Revolution and Peace Treaties 1917-1920*, London, 1972.

Schwartz, Benjamin, 'The British and the German threat against India 1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 28, 1/1993.

Seaton, A. & Seaton, J., *The Soviet Army: 1918 to the Present*, New York, 1987.

Shkuro, A.G., *Zapiski belogo partizana*, Buenos Aires, 1961.

Silverlight, John, *Victor's Dilemma*, London, 1970.

Smele, J. D., *Civil War in Siberia, The anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920*, Cambridge, 1997.

Somin, Ilya, *Stillborn Crusade: The Tragic Failure of Western Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1918-20*, New York 1996.

Stewart, George, *The White Armies of Russia*, New York, 1933.

Stone, Norman, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, London, 1975.

Suny, Ronald G., *The Baku Commune: 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution*, Princeton, 1972.

Suny, Ronald G., *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Indianapolis, 1994.

Suomen Talvisota, Vol.1, Porvoo, 1977.

Swain, Geoffrey, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War*, London 1995.

Swain, Geoffrey, *Russia's Civil War*, Stroud, 2000.

Tacho-Godi, A.A., *Revoliutsiia i kontr-revoliutsiia v Dagestane*, Machashakale, 1927.

Terraine, John, *White Heat: the New Warfare 1914-1918*, London, 1982.

Thompson, John M, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, Princeton, 1967.

Transcaucasia, ed. by Suny, R.G, New Haven, 1981.

Travers, Tim, *The Killing Ground, The British Army, The Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918*, London, 1987.

Trotter, W.R., *A Frozen Hell: The Russo Finnish Winter War 1939-40*, New Haven, 1994.

Uldricks, T.J., *Diplomacy and Ideology: the Origins of Soviet Foreign relations 1917-1930*, London, 1979.

Ullman, Richard, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*, 3 vols, Princeton 1961, 1968 & 1973.

Wildman, A., *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 2 vols, Princeton, 1980, 1987.

Wise, S. F., *Canadian Airmen and the First World War, the Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, vol. I, Toronto 1980.

Wollenberg, Erich, *The Red Army*, London, 1978.

Wrangel, Alexis, *General Wrangel, Russia's White Crusader*, London 1990.

Wrangel, P. N., *Kenraali Wrangelin muistelmat*, Hämeenlinna 1930.

Zeidler, Manfred, *Reichswehr und Rote Armee 1920-1933, Wege und Stationen einer ungewöhnlichen Zusammenarbeit*, München , 1994.

Zürner, Werner, *Kaukasien 1918-1921, Der Kampf der Grossmächte um die Landbrücke zwischen Schwarzem und Kaspischem Meer*, Düsseldorf, 1978.