

COLD WAR - The Russian Civil War

Source 1

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the use of British and French forces, or money, but only
Mr Churchill, continuing, said that the War Cabinet must face the fact that the North of Russia would be over-run by Bolsheviki, and many people would be murdered. He was increasingly distressed with the way the situation had developed since the Armistice. Everything was going wrong. The continued disheartening of the Russian forces friendly to us had led to a great falling off in their moral. When firing stopped, the Ukraine was occupied by the Germans. We requested them to withdraw, but we put in no Allied force there, and now that area, rich in food, was in the hands of the Bolsheviki. The Bolsheviki were taking Nicholiev and Kherson, and were advancing on the Black Sea. Odessa might soon be invested. Four months had passed in a policy of drift, and great potential resources which might have helped us were being dissipated. It was idle to think we should escape by sitting still and doing nothing. Bolshevism was not sitting still. It was advancing, and unless the tide were resisted it would roll over Siberia until it reached the Japanese, and perhaps drive Denekin into the mountains, while the border Baltic States would be attacked and submerged. No doubt when all the resources friendly to us had been scattered, and when India was threatened, the Western Powers would bestir themselves

Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the British War Cabinet in March 1919. This extract contains comments from Winston Churchill about the situation in Russia at that time.

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Source 2

Mr Bonar Law said that an effort must be made to distinguish our activities in the Baltic States from the larger Russian policy. We had undertaken to support the Baltic States against the menace of Bolshevism.

Mr Chamberlain said we had decided that we were not going to fight the Bolsheviks all along the line. It was beyond the capacity of France and Britain to do so, and the United States would not co-operate. That could be made plain to the General Staff. They should address themselves to the question of what was necessary to prevent the Baltic

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Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the British War Cabinet in March 1919. This extract contains comments from Austen Chamberlain, Andrew Bonar Law and Winston Churchill about the situation in Russia.

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Source 3

The Secretary of State for War said that the one bright spot in Russia was the present position of General Denikin, who was now half-way to Saratoff. General Holman, who was now the head of our Military Mission with Denikin, had been up to see the recent fighting, and had been much impressed by the powers of quick movement and fighting qualities of Denikin's volunteer troops. Denikin seemed to be welcomed everywhere, and many volunteers were coming forward to join him, while others asked to be conscripted in order to save their face in case the tide in that part eventually turned in favour of the Bolsheviks. One of Denikin's staff, General Dragomiroff, who was at present in England, said that Denikin's intention was to continue his advance towards Moscow. Only the other day he had captured 10,000 prisoners, and he had now coal, oil, and other resources at his disposal which would enable him to carry on operations in the winter. The plan of Lenin and Trotsky undoubtedly was to smash Kolchak first, and then to turn south and crush Denikin. He (Mr. Churchill) thought it a pity that Kolchak had decided to make a stand at Cheliabinsk, as he had lost a large number of his training officers and an immense amount of stores. A far better policy would have been to retire slowly and draw the Bolsheviks after him.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, in reply to a question, said that he did not know how many men it would be possible for Denikin to enlist or what their fighting qualities would be. He thought that the transport facilities of the Bolsheviks must be very indifferent, more especially as they no longer controlled the coal supplies.

Extract from the minutes of the British Cabinet in August 1919. This extract contains a report by Churchill on events in the Russian Civil War at the time.

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Source 4

Mr. Barnes felt that Great Britain had fully discharged her obligations to these peoples. In his opinion, we were always backing the wrong horse. The real governing force in Russia was the Soviet Government, and he asked how long we were to continue to bolster up the various little States and temporary Governments such as Denikin's and Kolchak's. If we were to go on doing this, we must get a guarantee from the United States that the Americans would stand in with us.

The Minister of Health said that the draft despatch advocated—

- (a.) Our continuing to resist Bolshevism.
- (b.) Our continuing to support Denikin.

Extract from the minutes of the British Cabinet in August 1919. This extract contains discussions about British policy towards Russia at the time.

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Source 5



A Bolshevik cartoon published in 1919. The dogs are labelled (from left to right) Yudenich, Kolchak, Denikin. These were the commanders of the three main White armies.