Civil War
1918-1921
Civil War

- Lenin faces two challenges to his authority- and these battles are often combined under the title of “Civil War”

- This period is made up of two distinct threats
  - Internal threat: Reds (Bolsheviks) confronted by Whites (anti-Bolshevik forces)
  - External threat (1918-21), where several nations try to force Russia back into the war against Germany

- As a result of conflict, Communists were now forced to adopt dictatorial methods of discipline and control- this later becomes an integral part of the party (even after the war)
Whites as an internal threat

- Internal dissent commenced as soon as the Bolsheviks came to power (for instance SRs)
- White armies consisted of traditional conservative forces in Russia.
- Led by officers of the former Russian Army, were supported by peasants, land owners, businessmen, socialist revolutionaries...
- They threatened the Soviet Republic from every direction.
- Each attack overlapped and for more than three years provided a serious and constant opposition.
Overview:

- **Reds: Bolsheviks or Communists**

- **Whites:** all opponents of the Bolsheviks: Tsarists, nobles, middle class constitutional democrats, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.

- **Greens:** Independent groups of nationalists, peasants, bandits who roamed Russia at this time. Fought anyone and raided villages, towns.

- **Main struggle was between the Reds and Whites. Greens were fighting for themselves, not for control of Russia.**
Geographical factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REDS</th>
<th>WHITES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• They held the central area of Western Russia-</td>
<td>• Scattered around this central area- hundreds of miles separating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contained large industrial centers- able to</td>
<td>different armies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>produce munitions, war supplies</td>
<td>• Communications were difficult- if the generals wanted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They had control of railway lines, connecting</td>
<td>communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrograd/ Moscow with rest of country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDS</td>
<td>WHITES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They had only one aim: to stay in power so that they could build</td>
<td>• Different aims: Some wanted the Tsar back, some wanted a military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the new socialist society.</td>
<td>dictator, others want a constitutional government, others want a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>revolutionary change. The only aim they had in common was to defeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Bolsheviks, they agreed on little else.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Leadership and unity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REDS</th>
<th>WHITES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • They had a superb leader in Trotsky. He built the Red Army from nothing, introduced conscription for men over 18. brought in nearly 18000 Tsarist officers and appointed political commissars to make sure that officers did their job.  
• Trotsky was very courageous. He had a special train that took himself and an army of hand picked men to areas where fighting was the hardest. | • They lacked good leaders. Commanders were cruel, treating men with disrespect.  
• White generals did not trust each other- would not co-ordinate attacks. Reds could ‘pick off’ Whites one by one.  
• Whites had problems inside their armies. Often fighting and squabbling because they had different aims and beliefs. |
Foreign intervention

- Whites had the advantage of support from Foreign powers.
- Britain, France, Japan and the USA sent forces to help them.
- These governments don’t want to see the spread of Bolshevism across Europe.
- Most international troops sent, did not want to fight against Bolsheviks, were sympathetic to them. USA only there to make sure that Japan didn’t seize territory.
- Allied intervention then, was half-hearted and ineffective.
- Intervention of foreign countries helps communists- portray the Whites as Capitalist forces- they the Reds- defenders of the Russian people.
The War:

- End of 1918, Civil War was not going well for the Reds.
- White forces pressing from all sides - Reds suffer a series of defeats.
- Whites don’t attack together, this allowed Trotsky ability to move his forces to confront one attack at a time.
- Middle of 1919 that real test came: Yudenich is 30 miles within Petrograd, Denikin advancing from the south - 200 miles of Moscow.
- Kolchak army needed to join with Denikin’s forces from the east - but his forces fall apart because they can’t cooperate with one another.
The War

- Red Army now fights against Denikin, and they manage to push him back.
- In the east Kolchak’s forces disintegrate.
- By 1920 the main White threat was over.
- The war lingers, until a treaty signed with the Poles in 1921, Treaty of Riga.
- Role of peasants crucial. They made up the largest numbers- so who they decide to support win. They chose Reds, because they believed Reds would give them land, Whites wanted to restore Russia back to the old system.
The Whites attack:

- **December 1917-20: General Denikin’s Southern Threat** Denekin was a nationalist, wanted to restore the old regime. He commanded 150,000 soldiers, advanced through Kiev and Ukraine. Wrangel takes Denikin’s place.

- **1918-1920: Kolchak’s Eastern Threat:** Kolchak was admiral of the Black Sea Fleet during WW1. He hated socialism, set up an anti-Bolshevik government in Siberia. He commanded an army of 100,000 soldiers, was supplied with 1 million rifles by the allies. Was considered by the allies as the most important of the anti-Bolshevik forces... He was shot by the Red Army.

- **September 1918: Miller’s Northern Threat:** Socialist Revolutionaries establish a government in the North, but were overthrown by Wrangel who opposed any form of Socialist government.
The Whites attack:

- **October 1919: Yudenich’s North Western Threat:**
  Yudenich led an army of 14,400 Russian soldiers who had been captured/released by Germans. Their biggest challenge to the Reds was an attack on Petrograd in October.

- At the same time, Denikin’s forces reach their closest point to Moscow, before being defeated at Orel.

- **1920-21 Green Armies Threat:** These were a collection of peasant and Cossack forces that gave their allegiance to neither Red nor Whites. They wanted greater autonomy from Moscow.
Foreign intervention:

- **April 1918, British Threat:** British Marines landed in Russia’s two northern ports. They provide physical/financial resources to Whites.

- **April 1918, French Threat:** French assist English, though pull out a year later.

- **April 1918, Japan and USA:** Sent troops to Siberia. Japan want to gain more territory— the USA to restrain the Japanese and protect the Trans-Siberian railway.

- **April- October, Polish Threat:** Poles want to seize more territory. Forced back to Warsaw by Reds. Resulted in stalemate. Signing of Treaty takes place.
Reasons for Bolshevik success:


2. Cheka: Enforced compliance through fear/terror. Did not allow for dissidence.

3. Unity of Purpose: Patriotism, dedication. Greater commitment to their cause.

Defending a central location: Central location, with industry nearby- accessibility to railways, munitions, communications if when necessary.
Why the Whites lost..

- 1. Divided in purpose: no common purpose, motivation. Own agenda, lack of leadership and cooperation.

- 2. Lack of Propaganda: Unable to capitalise on peasants. Whites not seen as a better alternative than the Reds. Whites had less commitment from the peasants.