



Original Research Article

ECONOMIC POLICIES IN RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR, 1918 – 1920: RED VERSUS WHITE

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Received: 25.07.2023

Accepted: 02.06.2023

Published: 12.08.2023

Abstract

This paper studies economic policies of the belligerent governments during the Russian Civil War, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Red, and the Russian State in Siberia, the White. This paper compares policies targeted at land question, monetary system, and government finance, with an analysis of the ideological basis for policy making on each side. Policies of the Red, though termed war communism, were not exclusively driven by war exigency but were based upon ideological guidance for the installation of socialist order. Policies of the White lacked a firm ideological foundation, attempted at a pro-liberal market system, and were constantly subject to modifications forced by war exigency. Non-predetermination rendered policies of the White lack of a long-term plan. Impacts of the rule of the Red and the White are viewed through the lens of agricultural produce. It is found that the losing side of the civil war, the White, enjoyed better agricultural yields between 1918 and 1920, and areas under constant military conflict yielded less agricultural produce than areas in relatively stable control of either the Red or the White.

Keywords: Russian Civil War, Bolshevik revolution, White movement, War Communism, Non-Predetermination

Introduction

As an attaché to the staff of British Military Mission, Spencer (1921) recalled a vivid episode from his experience in Siberia in 1919:

One hungry workman who ran amok and began swinging a heavy chain round his head to the tune of “Svoboda! tysecha rublei!” (“Liberty, a thousand roubles”) was very promptly quieted with a five-rouble note and a hunk of bread; this was the only revolutionary that I met in nine months. (p. 190)

It seems that for the common people, the desire for a stable economy overshadowed the battle between the communism of the Red and the patriotism of the White. Then, what was the economic condition in Russia in the context of civil war? What were the measures adopted by the conflicting sides in mobilizing their wartime economy? What was the role played by ideologies in policymaking? This paper attempts to address these questions with a comparative study of the Russian Soviet

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Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and its major enemy in Siberia from 1918 to 1920 – the Russian State (*Rossiiskoe Gosudarstva*) under the Supreme Ruler Admiral Kolchak – to unveil a more detailed picture of Spencer's recollection.

This paper finds that economic policies of both sides set the military success as the priority, especially in dealing with the land question and the relation with the peasantry. The Soviet authority's socialization of land and the Russian State's acquiescence of peasants' seizure of private estates were both targeted at smoothing the supply of food to cities and the army. This paper also finds that policies of the anti-Bolshevik authority, under the principle of non-predetermination, were mostly driven by wartime expediency and lacked a long-term plan. In contrast, measures of the Soviet government were not only for winning the civil war but also for ideological purposes – the transition to socialism, which will eventually lead to communism. For instance, the abolishment of money circulation, though eventually failed, was considered as a prerequisite of achieving communism. Moreover, the Soviet government had a more determined leadership under Lenin, while the White leader Admiral Kolchak detested politics and was influenced by his ministers. The Soviet leadership considered themselves as the current and the future leader of the country, and winning the civil war was one of the tasks needed to be fulfilled to solidify their rule. In contrast, the Russian State saw its ruling as a temporary existence, and ending the civil war with the destruction of the Bolsheviks, in a sense, was the ultimate purpose of its existence. When socio-economic affairs became too complicated, the often-used strategy was to postpone the matter until the civil war ends, after which a Constitutional Assembly or a National Assembly would be convened, and those issues would be determined by the will of the people. This vague promise was the result of the lack of a strong mind from the leadership.

This paper also compares economic outcomes to analyze the impact of the rule of the Red and the White. Since statistics during the civil war were scattered, incomplete, and sometimes dubious, and the best data were found in agricultural output, agriculture is chosen for analysis in this paper. And since agriculture was the most important sector of Russian economy at that time, agricultural output can, to some extent, represent the effectiveness of economic policies. This paper finds that the impacts of the First World War and Revolution on agricultural outputs were delayed in White areas compared to the impacts in Red areas due to the particular geographical and economic characteristics of Siberia, and that from 1918 to 1920, the White areas enjoyed better agricultural yields.

Among the literature on the economic history of Soviet Russia over the period of civil war, Malle (1985) traces the initial steps taken by the Bolsheviks upon seizing power and provides almost every detail of war communism; Nove (1992) and Barnett (2004), each spends one chapter describing the essential characteristics of war communism; Boettke (1990) focuses more on the ideological impacts on Bolsheviks' economic policies. On the side of anti-Bolshevik governments in Siberia, Smele (1987, 1996) analyses the economic background in Siberia prior to the revolution and how the economic system collapsed under the White rule, and Rynkov (2006) focuses on the monetary and financial policies of various anti-Bolshevik governments in Siberia. Moving beyond the literature, this paper compares and contrasts economic policies of the conflicting sides by focusing on how the two sides instituted different policies to solve for problems that they both had to face, including agrarian issue, money disorder, and deficit. These differences were rooted in the role of ideology in policymaking of each side.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: section 1 presents the historical background of the events in concern; section 2 compares economic policies of RSFSR and the Russian State (policies of the Provisional Siberian Government, which impacted policies of the Russian State, are also discussed); section 3 analyses outcomes of agricultural produce; section 4 concludes. Dates of events are given according to the Gregorian calendar. Transliteration of Cyrillic letters follows the Library of Congress system.

1. Historical background

The First World War dragged the Russian Empire to the brink of political and economic catastrophe. The February Revolution of 1917 ended the Empire and at the same time, gave birth to a “dual power”, a coexistence of the Provisional government and the Petrograd Soviet. This uneasy alliance lasted until the October Revolution, after which the Provisional Government collapsed, and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was established. The February and October Revolution were capital affairs; however, in Siberia, despite its remoteness from the capital, underwent a rapid increase in regional activities as the demise of monarchy raised open debate of Siberian autonomy. A Siberian version of “dual power” emerged with the left organizing themselves into soviets and the right forming coalition committees in almost all towns in Siberia (Pereira, 1996). Compared to European Russia where tensions between workers’ and soldiers’ soviets and the Provisional Government were evident, Siberia enjoyed a more stable political condition throughout 1917 as local soviet agents were mostly willing to cooperate with the Provisional Government.

After the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, in Siberia were established a host of “democratic” counter-revolutionary governments, followed by a military dictatorship between 1918 and 1920. At one point in 1918, there existed at least 19 different “governments” in Siberia (Wood, 2011). The reason why Siberia became one of the main battlegrounds of the anti-Bolshevik movements was rooted in the socio-economic peculiarities of this vast area. The land traditionally did not belong to private landlords, but to state and crown or peasants themselves (Pereira, 1987). Plus, Siberia was far away from the fiercest battlefield of the World War. Thus, the two main weapons of Bolsheviks’ propaganda, land crisis and anti-war sentiment, did not work as effectively in Siberia as in European Russia. Besides, the industrial base was weak in Siberia with only rudimentary working-class organization. As a result, the Siberians in general were not very receptive to revolutionary agitations, and the Bolsheviks in Siberia did not win the popularity over the Party of Socialist Revolutionary (PSR) in either rural or urban regions (Pereira, 1987 and 1996).

Ironically, the socio-economic peculiarities also became one of the many reasons leading to the eventual failures of all these anti-Bolshevik bodies. The overwhelming popularity of PSR resulted in its too diverse membership which prevented the formation of an agreed *démarche*. Within PSR, the left wing was ready to cooperate with Mensheviks and even Bolsheviks, while the right wing was prepared to cooperate with anyone against Lenin. Another factor which confused the political condition in Siberia further was the Constituent Democrats (*Kadets*) who drew themselves closer to the right-wing PSR. The ultimate product of polarization was the rivalry between Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (*Komuch*) based in Samara and the Provisional Siberian Government (PSG) based in Omsk. The transitory solution to this rivalry was the short-lived Ufa Directory, also known as the Provisional All-Russian Government, whose collapse after the Omsk coup on 18 November 1918 drew the end of struggling for a democratic Siberia and pursuing a democratic counter-revolutionary path. This episode somewhat mirrored the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 by the Bolsheviks, which marked the failure of moderate socialism in European Russia.

Following the Omsk coup, the council of ministers obtained the full power of the state, promoted Vice-Admiral A. V. Kolchak to a full admiral, transferred to Admiral Kolchak the supreme state power, and conferred on him the title of the Supreme Ruler of the Russian State (Balushkina et al., 2021). However, the one-man dictatorship failed to meet the expectations of those who fervently welcomed the coup to unify all anti-Bolshevik forces and restore the united, indivisible Russia, where there is no Bolshevism. At one point, the Supreme Ruler was recognized by anti-Bolshevik leaders in the south, north, and north-west of Russia, but there was never a unified anti-Bolshevik front. The Siberian White Army, despite a brief run of victories in its Spring offensive in 1919, was driven back by the counter-offensive Red Army starting from the end of April. On 14 November 1919, Omsk, the capital of the Russian State and the center for anti-Bolshevik struggle in Siberia since the beginning of 1918, fell to the 5th Red Army.

2. Economic policies of Red and White

Economic matters became the central concern for the Bolsheviks after they seized state power. In November/December 1917 and January 1918, four key points of legislation that was particularly relevant to the economy were enacted: “decrees on workers’ control, the creation of a Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh), the nationalisation of the banks, and the socialisation of the land” (Barnett, 2004, p. 59). Lenin considered the initial steps of the Bolsheviks with respect to economics as “state capitalism”, an attempt to install state control over leading elements of capitalist economy and to pave way for the transition to socialism. However, intensification of internal affairs which eventually resulted in the eruption of the civil war ended the short-lived “state capitalism” (Barnett, 2004). Policies undertaken by the Bolsheviks during the civil war are customarily termed as war communism. The most significant element of the war communism was *prodrazverstka*: a compulsory requisition system for obtaining agricultural supplies, including the confiscation of rural household surplus above essential requirements, which was then distributed to urban consumers through rationing in order to maintain the basic necessities for urban citizens. Principles governing the war communism was “the maximum extension of state authority, the forced allocation of labour, the centralised management of economic activity, a class basis for distribution and the naturalisation of economic life” (Barnett, 2004, p. 62).

Economic policies of anti-Bolshevik governments in Siberia were aimed at ameliorating economic crisis through stabilizing financial standing of the government and stabilizing the currency in Siberia (Smele, 1996). In particular, economic policies of the Russian State were motivated by the belief that equalization of property, which was advocated by socialists and communists, deprived people of the incentive to do productive work. In order to coordinate the activities of the government in finance and supply, State Economic Conference (SEC) was convened. Representatives from banks, trade, commerce, industries, and since June 1919, from zemstvos and cities, were invited to attend. The president of SEC had the right to bypass the head of the government and to directly report to the Supreme Ruler. Sessions were held daily, and since May 1919, representatives from the press were invited to join. In one of the first sessions of the SEC on 2 December 1918, six principles for economic policies were proposed: 1) abandonment of prefixed prices, 2) abandonment of requisition, unless in the most extreme case and mainly in the frontline, 3) eliminations of all restriction on imports and exports, 4) limitation on monopolistic activities, 5) reduction of economic activities of the treasury, and 6) control over purchase and transportation of products. Economic policies of the Russian State were pro-market, with adjustments to war exigency. The complete freedom of entrepreneurial initiatives was allowed, with exceptions of government financing those private enterprises of importance to national defense. These policies were welcomed by the entrepreneurial class which favored the spirit of free trade and individual free will. The role of the government was restricted, unless extreme conditions of the warfare required the government to call on industrialists to produce what is of critical importance to the state, not what is profitable, and ask industrialists to limit their demand on the government (Khandorin, 2018). From these policies, it is seen that the Russian State attempted to preserve at least part of the functionality of the market, given the context of the war.

The rest of this section compares measures by both sides in dealing with the land issue, money disorder, and government poverty, and tries to explore the ideological basis underlying these measures.

2.1 Agrarian policies

Issues regarding agriculture were probably the most urgent throughout the revolution and civil war, not only because peasantry constituted about 80% of the population, but also because failing to coordinate rural matters effectively would result in food crisis in urban areas. Prior to the October Revolution, the Provisional Government had come up with measures such as making grain trade a state monopoly, exerting control over food production and distribution, and establishing fixed prices on agriculture products. However, the Provisional Government was neither able to provide adequate

industrial goods in exchange nor was strong enough to enforce these policies with a heavy hand, and passed all the problems to its successors.

One of the very first measures of the Bolsheviks upon seizing power was targeted on the land question. On the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 26 (November 8) 1917, Lenin issued his "Decree on Land", which abolished landed proprietorship and placed all lands, including those of crown, monastery and churches at the disposal of the *volost'* land committees and the *uezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly (Lenin, n.d.). This decree was followed by another decree issued at the end of January 1918 on land socialization, which declared that all land was transferred to the use of all working people, the right of private ownership was abolished forever, the right to use land was authorized only to those who cultivated it, and the employment of hired labor was outlawed (Barnett, 2004). The new land law published on 15 February 1918 highlighted the principle of state ownership of land and aimed at forming a unified system of socialist agriculture by means of state farms and collective farms (Malle, 1985).

The major beneficiaries of decrees on land tenure were poor peasants of the central agricultural zone. For peasants in Siberia, the Soviet land legislation seemed less appealing. These measures were susceptible to various interpretation upon actual implementation due to their inherent vagueness. Nevertheless, these decrees did benefit those landless peasants by providing them with means of subsistence. However, policies on food procurement were disastrous to the peasantry. *Prodrazverstka*, the foundation of food procurement, was formally installed by the decree of *Sovnarkom* on 11 January 1919, ordering each peasant household to deliver its surplus to the state according to obligatory quota. Reaffirming that the need of the state dominates the need of individuals, *prodrazverstka* deprived peasants of the right to any surplus over their own consumption (Malle, 1985). To enforce this policy, workers' detachments, later joined by committees of poor peasants, were sent to discover and seize grains from the hands of peasants and punish the hoarders. Through these measures, the central authority was waging war between those relatively better-off peasants and the government, and among the peasants of differing levels of wealth (Nove, 1992).

Peasants' discontent of Bolshevik policies should have served as a weapon for the White movements to win the support of the vast majority of population upon which the White army was going to depend for food and conscription. However, instead of grasping this opportunity, successive governments based in Omsk implemented measures which intensified peasants' fear of the restoration of the old order. Consequently, even Siberian peasants, who benefited little from the Bolshevik land legislation, resented Bolshevik food procurement, and contributed to overthrowing local Bolshevik-controlled soviets in summer 1918, turned against the White cause. In order to deal with the aftermaths of Bolshevik law on land tenure, the Provisional Siberian Government (PSG), within days of assuming power, issued the decree 'On the Return of Estates to Their Former Owner' on 6 July 1918, which ordered all land (including livestock and tools) seized by peasants during revolution to be returned to the previous owners, pending a final resolution of land issue by the Constituent Assembly (Piontkovskii, 1925). This decree, by the time of its issuance, did not have much influence since under the control of PSG were territories to the east of Urals where landlordism was virtually unknown (Smele, 1996).

With the execution of spring offensive at the beginning of 1919 and the army moving towards European Russia, the land problem became a more urgent issue for the Russian State of Admiral Kolchak. On 5 April, the PSG's decree was repealed and on 8 April, Kolchak's "Proclamation on Land" came out. Since the government was unable to satisfy property rights of peasantry and demands of refugee landlords simultaneously, this proclamation, instead of providing an unequivocal solution to the land problem, merely served as an attempt to facilitate the supply of food and forge to the army. Acquiescing the status quo of peasants' seizure of lands, this proclamation affirmed that

everyone who now possesses the land, who sowed it and worked on it, even though he was neither the landowner nor the renter, has the right to gather the harvest ... [and] ... to

facilitate the transfer of land to the hands of peasant households, the Government will widely open the opportunity of acquiring these lands in full ownership (Piontkovskiĭ, 1925: p. 302).

Though peasants' land security was guaranteed for the year of 1919, it remained ambiguous whether land would be returned to former landowners in the future, for fear that further promise would violate the principle of non-predetermination, infuriate the conservative sectors of the government, and undermine the government's commitment towards private property (Smele, 1996).

2.2 Monetary policies

Another issue that the belligerents had to confront was monetary instability, resulted from the abolition of Gold Standard by the Tsarist government and exacerbated by revolution and civil war. Various paper currencies were circulating in both European Russia and Siberia, from Romanov notes and Kerensky tokens to labels of particular brands of cigarettes (Smele, 1996). Accompanied with such disorder of currencies were hyper-inflation and paralysis of domestic and foreign trade. No matter how the Red and White regimes differed in ideology, their monetary policies shared the following two common characteristics: the unrestrained increase in the issue of money and the lack of any measure aimed at fighting against inflation.

Some Bolshevik ideologists saw in the collapse of ruble and disruption of monetary trading the beginning of socialist economy and the end of monarchy. Bolsheviks' money control started with the occupation of the State Bank by the People's Commissar of Finance on 20 November 1917. By 27 December 1917, the largest commercial banks were occupied by troops. Following the nationalization of banks were decrees ordering the transfer of all banking operation to the State Bank and authorizing the State Bank to control all forms of deposits (Malle, 1985). A campaign for the abolition of money was duly raised, based upon ideas of introducing a new unit of economic accounting to replace paper money and its derivatives (Barnett, 2004). The Supreme Economic Council declared in August 1918 that all transactions had to be carried out by accounting operations without using money. This policy was gradually brought into full effect during 1919. Underlying the effort to eliminate money circulation was the idea of naturalizing economic relations. As money kept losing its value, private trade was declared illegal, and naturalization of all industrial enterprise was undertaken (Nove, 1992). However, the printing press never stopped working over the period of war communism despite the high degree of naturalization. On the one hand, issuing money was probably the only measure to finance wartime economy. On the other hand, some economists thought that further depreciation of money would eventually result in its annihilation, which conforms to the ultimate purpose of abolishing money, a step toward communism. Nevertheless, a substitute for money was never found. Ideas such as 'labor unit' and 'energy unit' were proposed but did not come into practice.

In contrast to the Soviet regime's policy of abolishing money, anti-Bolshevik governments in Siberia set the restoration of normal monetary circulation as one of the main purposes of their economic policies. The stabilization of monetary system was not an easy task. Firstly, the retreating Bolsheviks evacuated more than a billion rubles from the Urals, Siberia and the Far East and thus resulted in money hunger. States bonds and interest loan bonds were issued but were far from being enough. Second, a significant amount of money surrogates issued by local authorities were circulating in the market. In the fall of 1918, the Ministry of Finance of the Provisional Siberian Government was forced to issue its own currency, familiarly known as *sibirki*. At the same time, multifarious money surrogates were recognized temporarily. The Russian State continued to issue *sibirki* during its ruling. It was hoped that in the near future when the financial system became stabilized, those already issued *sibirki* would be withdrawn altogether with other money surrogates for the establishment of a new, unified monetary system.

Unfortunately, this hope was not realized. Issued by an unrecognized government without gold backing, the *sibirki* became the least respected currency in Siberia. Another obstacle to *sibirki* came from the smuggling of Kerensky rubles (*kerenki*) across the Urals by Bolshevik agents (Smele, 1996). It was under such circumstances when the Minister of Finance, I. Mikhailov, made another

attempt at unification of money circulation by declaring his monetary reform on 18 April 1919, whereby the *kerenki* was withdrawn from circulation and replaced by *sibirki*. This reform was a precipitate decision without pondering over either interests of population or the regional peculiarities of market, specifically in the Far East, where *kerenki* were the major means of exchange. Mikhailov did not even worry about insufficient *sibirki* to replace all *kerenki*, since he was under the illusion that a colossal amount of banknotes would soon arrive from the United States, which had an agreement with the Provisional Government in 1917 (Smele, 1996). What coincided with all these faults was the unexpected retreat of the Russian Army which made people less willing to surrender their *kerenki*. As a result, Mikhailov's monetary reform contributed only to destabilizing the financial system and strengthening anti-government sentiment among the population. Throughout the second half of 1919, the monetary policy of the Russian State consisted of issuing unlimited *sibirki* and pressing the United States on the delivery of banknotes.

2.3 Government finance

Taxation was the main source of government revenue. The Bolsheviks in 1917 advocated a radical change in the tax system by abolishing all indirect taxes and introducing a progressive property tax which would shift the main tax burden to the exploiting class. However, financial policies were not significantly changed after the advent of the Bolsheviks to power: the principle of balancing government budget by increasing taxation and decreasing government expenditure was not overthrown, although preference was given to direct income and property taxes rather than indirect levies (Malle 160). In the first half of 1918, the main source of revenue for the Soviet power were indemnities, exerted on the propertied class of the society. Until November 1918, the Soviet authorities had collected indemnities amounting to 816.5 million rubles, which flowed into the state and local treasuries. In October 1918 the Bolshevik government introduced a one-off ten-billion-ruble tax on non-proletarian population by which it was hoped to fulfil two-thirds of revenue; however, only 1.6 billion was collected (Rynkov, 2006). In addition, instead of being abolished, indirect levies were increased, from 5 per cent of the estimated revenue in 1918 to 8.9 per cent of the 1919 revenue (Malle, 1985).

The anti-Bolshevik governments also had to rely on tax collection to boost government income and eliminate the budget deficit. Unlike the Bolsheviks who tried to abolish indirect taxes, from 27 July 1918, the Provisional Siberian Government introduced substantial increases on indirect taxes on items which were labelled as "necessities", including tea, tobacco, matches, yeast, and vodka (Smele, 1994). To adjust for the pace of inflation, the government had to constantly increase tax rates and introduce new taxes. In autumn 1918 tax benefit was abolished and enterprises subjected to tax collection were expended. In April 1919, mandatory income tax was imposed on salaries of civil servants. In September 1919, another five "emergency taxes" were imposed on the well-to-do classes. These policies were aimed at facilitating the process of tax collection. At the same time, state monopoly on sugar and alcohol was resumed as a result of frequently increasing prices. Another source that the Russian State could resort to was the Imperial Gold Reserve. The amount of gold stored by the Bolsheviks in the State Bank in Kazan, which amounted to 651,532,000 rubles, was captured on 6-7 August 1918 by the forces of *Komuch* and subsequently transported to Omsk (Smele, 1994). However, during the first six months of his rule, Kolchak refused to expend the gold reserve, adhering to the principle that the reserve had to be maintained for the future, regenerated Russian state (Smele, 1996). It was not until May 1919 when the offensive Russian Army was driven back did Kolchak abandon this principle and expend the gold reserve for the last hope of the White movement in Siberia.

2.4 Ideological origin

In terms of ideology, the Red possessed a much more united and clearer stance. The Bolsheviks were Marxists, and Lenin's leadership was rarely questioned (Kenez, 1980). On the basis of Marxism, Lenin was trying to develop a unique Russian path towards communism. As a matter of fact, many argued that war communism was not simply an improvisation due to war exigency but a

consciously designed step toward socialism. Malle (1985) pointed out that although Marxist ideology did not provide concrete guidance about the economic organization, it provided a blueprint on what to be kept and what to be abandoned in the path of economic development. Among Russian Marxists, there was no doubt that socialism had to carry forward the latest achievement of the capitalist. War exigency, argued by Malle (1985), was one explanation for why the legislation of economic organization was in a spasmodic way and sometimes in an anarchic fashion. Boettke (1990) argued that efforts to nationalize the economy were necessary for the replacement of market method of allocation by centralized allocation and distribution, which was a consistent application of Marxian ideology. As interpreted by Lavoie (1985), Marx saw the solution to the inherent contradiction between the private and public spheres of society lying in the eradication of competitive market relations and the broadening of democratically based public sphere to encompass all social life.

The proposed solution is to widen democracy to the whole sphere of economics and completely abolish private ownership of the means of production, thereby eliminating the competitiveness of market relations as a basis for economic decision making ... The commonly owned means of production would be deliberately and scientifically operated by the state in accordance with a single plan. Social problems would henceforth be resolved not by meekly interfering with a competitive market order but by taking over the whole process of social production from beginning to end.' (Lavoie, 1985, pp. 18-19)

Another eminent ideology underlying many of the economic measures was class struggle. The Bolsheviks were fully aware of the fact that the consolidation of the regime depended on the support of urban proletarians. The resentment of the working class towards peasantry had been developed since the early days of Bolsheviks' rule. It seemed to the working class that the standard of rural life was considerably improved due to land distribution while urban life deteriorated due to lack of food. This resentment found its way to the ideology of Bolshevik leadership "who were inclined to interpret the food crisis in terms of speculation and kulak's greed" (Malle 1985, p. 329) instead of emphasizing the general economic disorganization, especially the often-congested transportation system. The leadership's tendency to minimize the role of the rural population in the national economy was also resulted from the lack of peasant constituency in the Bolshevik Party.

To the contrary, the anti-Bolshevik camp was not oriented around a single party and lacked a powerful and strong-minded person comparable to Lenin. Though the moderate socialist policy of the Party of Social Revolutionary was briefly raised in Siberia at the beginning of 1918, the impact of Social Revolutionaries kept diminishing. With the fall of the Ufa Directory and the establishment of the Russian State, democratic anti-Bolshevik movement gave way to military anti-Bolshevik movement. As a former naval officer, Kolchak was neither familiar with nor interested in any political or socio-economic program.

Recalled by Fedotoff-White (1939), who once had a personal interview with the admiral in 1919, Kolchak was not like a man of destiny, 'but rather one thoroughly tired of groping and struggling in an unfamiliar environment' (pp. 215-6). Unlike Lenin, who always proposed a cornerstone for any crucial decision, Kolchak tended to rely on his ministers and advisors in dealing with civil affairs. The economic policies, developed mainly by the Ministry of Finance, favored market system and private properties, but failed to provide explicit resolutions to the economic chaos.

The lack of an ideological base had been evident since the first day of the Russian State. Admiral Kolchak, on 18 November 1918, the day that he was made the Supreme Ruler, made an appeal to people: "I will follow neither the reactionary path nor the deadly path of partisanship. My main goal is the creation of a combat-ready army, the triumph over the Bolsheviks, and the installation of law and order, so that people can freely choose the form of the government and implement the great idea of freedom, which is now declared throughout the world" (Balushkina et al., 2021, p. 50). During his ruling period, Kolchak stressed more than once that his government was merely a provisional regime, whose priority was to destroy the Bolsheviks, and thus did not have the right to determine the future for the Russian people.

Nevertheless, at least some ideological traits can be detected from the land policy of the Russian State. The government intended to satisfy the demands of the peasantry and even to acknowledge their rights to seized lands during the revolution. The Land Department of Ministry of Finance advised the Supreme Ruler that the nobility must give up its place to the peasantry. In Kolchak's subsequent message to the Allies, he averred that the solution to the land question must reflect the interest of the broadest mass of population. In a later public declaration prior to the launching of the spring offensive, Kolchak emphasized that there must be a change in land-owning relations and there should not be a return to the old order (Smele, 1996). However, the later issued "Proclamation of Land" was full of ambiguity, indicating that under the pressure of the reactionary elements in his government, even had Kolchak a determined idea, he was unable to install it.

3. Agricultural output

Data collection is a challenge because accurate scrutiny of many categories of statistics was carried up to 1917, then came to a break, and was recovered again in 1920. This resulted in a lack of statistics covering the period of civil war, especially for the White areas. In addition, those documented data may not be 100% trustworthy. Statistics on agricultural output is relatively more complete than other categories and is drawn from Soviet documents published in the 1920s, including *Sbornik Statisticheskikh Svedeniĭ po Soiuzu S. S. R. 1918-1923*, *Sel'skoe Khoziastvo Rossii v XX Veke*, and *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 1918-1920*, both of which were publications of TsSU, as well as the monograph by Rynkov and Il'inykh (2013), *Desiatiletie Potriasieniĭ: Sel'skoe Khoziaĭstvo Sibiri v 1914-1924 gg.*

The overall output of grains on the territory of RSFSR in 1917 and 1921 is compared in

Table 1. Each listed grain experienced a significant decrease in output from 1917 to 1921. Among all the grains, the best was winter rye, whose output in 1921 was 65% of 1917. The worst was winter wheat, whose output in 1921 dropped to merely 28% of 1917. The fall in productivity of traditionally exported grains, such as wheat, was more significant than that of poorer quality grains such as rye, oats, and barley. This can be resulted from the role of the institution. Policies on foreign trade and surplus requisition dissuaded peasants from cultivating marketable grains and induced them to grow more grains for farm consumption (Malle, 1985).

Table 1 Total output of selected grains in 1917 and 1921 (thousand poods)

	1917	1921	1921 as % of 1917
Winter Rye	933,791	612,281	65.57
Winter Wheat	396,377	114,916	28.99
Spring Rye	18,021	9,254	51.35
Spring Wheat	637,723	225,413	35.35
Barley	432,013	158,505	36.69
Oats	674,488	318,480	47.22

Source: Sbornik Statisticheskikh Svedeniĭ po Soiuzu S. S. R. 1918-1923, p. 131

It is found that between 1916 and 1921, sown areas decreased more in the central agricultural region which were under constant Soviet control, than in Siberia. However, the decrease in total output was not only resulted from the reduction of the sown area but also from the fall of productivity, in other words, per unit area output. The productivity of winter rye and oats from 1910 to 1921 is plotted in **Error! Reference source not found.**-4, covering nine *gubernii* under constant Red control during 1918 – 1920, located in the central industrial and the central agricultural regions and five *gubernii/oblasti* under constant White control during 1918 – 1920, located in Siberian and Steppe regions. The productivity of each grain is standardized to the 1913 level for an easier comparison.

Generally speaking, three conspicuous drops of productivity can be observed in **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.:** the first was in 1914 with the outbreak of the Great War; the second was in 1917 with revolutions and Bolsheviks’ seizure of power; the third was in 1919 when civil war entered its fiercest stage. From 1918 to 1920, winter rye productivity was below the level of 1913 for most *gubernii*. Even in 1921 when the Red won the civil war in most part of the country, there were only two *gubernii* whose winter rye productivity was beyond the 1913 level. Another observation was that from 1918 to 1920, all nine *gubernii* in **Error! Reference source not found.** except Yaroslavl’ experienced a decrease in productivity of winter rye. The situation for productivity of oats in Red territory was worse than that of winter rye. From 1918 to 1920, none of the nine *gubernii* achieved higher productivity of oats than in 1913.

The picture for the White region is quite different (**Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). Neither in 1914 nor 1917 was witnessed a sharp decrease in productivity of winter rye or oats. It seems that the impacts of World War and Revolution were delayed. In **Error! Reference source not found.**, decreases in winter rye productivity occurred in 1915 and 1918. In **Error! Reference source not found.**, a decrease in oats productivity occurred in 1915, while in 1917 and 1918, four out of the five regions on the plot enjoyed an increase in productivity of oats. The delayed effects look more evident once the annual means of productivity in the Red and White areas are plotted (**Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). This is probably due to the geographical alienation of Siberia and Steppe from the front of World War and the center of Bolshevik uprising. Over the years of civil war, the productivity of winter rye remained above the 1913 level, with Semipalatinsk *oblast’* as the only exception. And from 1918 to 1919, only Enisei *gubernia* experienced a drop in winter rye productivity, while the productivity in the other four *gubernii/oblasti* increased. Interestingly, it was after the overthrow of the Russian State when the productivity of winter rye dropped from 1920 to 1921. The productivity of oats in 1918 and 1919 was, in general, better than that in 1913, except for the Akmolinsk *oblast’* whose productivity dropped from more than 160% of 1913 to less than 70% of 1913, from 1918 to 1919. The other region where a decrease of oats productivity occurred over these two years was Enisei *guberniia*, but its productivity did not drop below the 1913 level.

Figure 1. Productivity of winter rye in the Red area over the period of 1910 – 1921 (expressed in percentage of 1913 productivity)

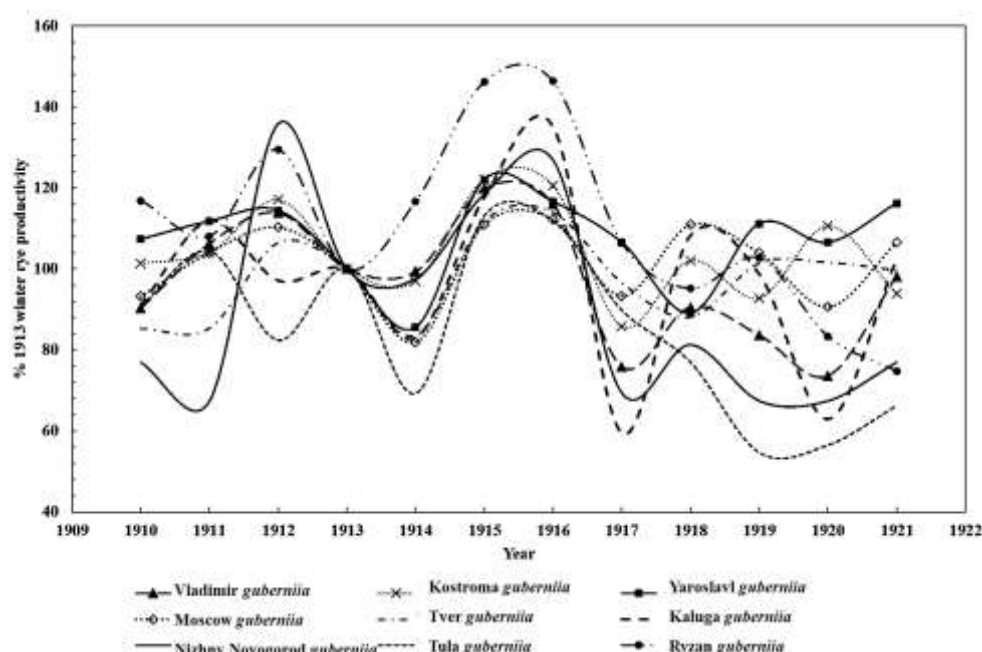


Figure 2. Productivity of oats in the "Red" area over the period of 1910-1921 (expressed in percentage of 1913 productivity)

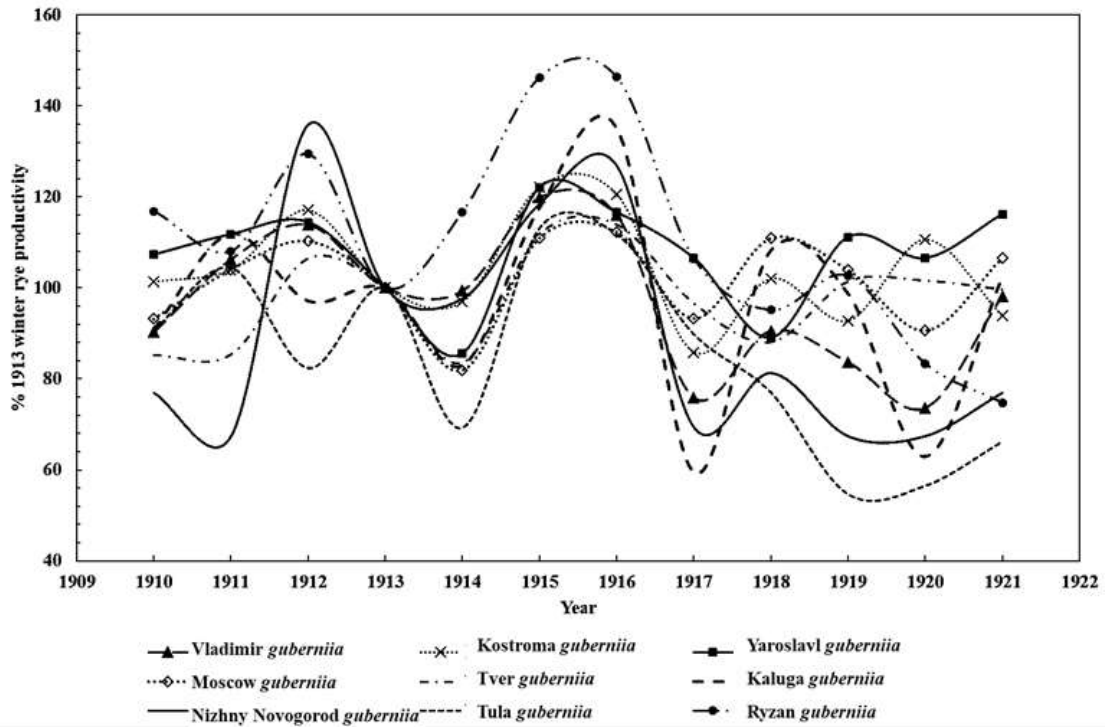


Figure 3. Productivity of winter rye in the White area over the period of 1910 – 1921 (expressed in percentage of 1913 productivity)

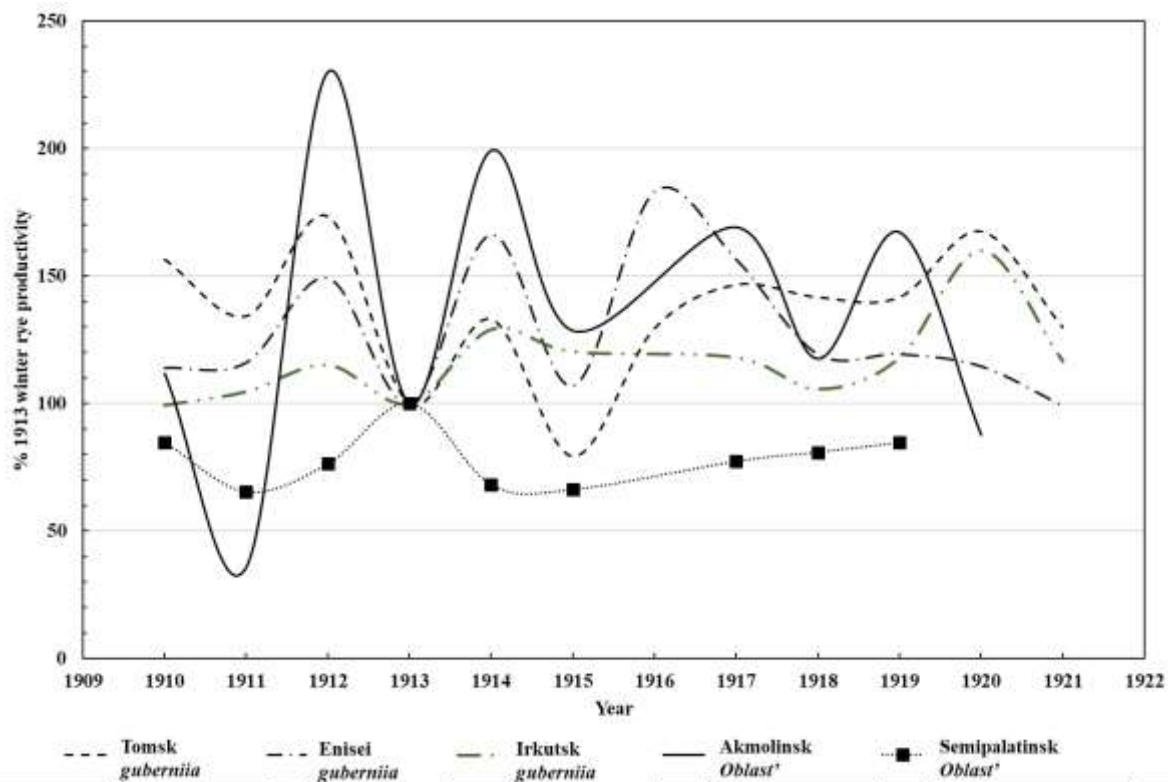


Figure 4. Productivity of oats in the White area over the period of 1910 – 1921 (expressed in percentage of 1913 productivity)

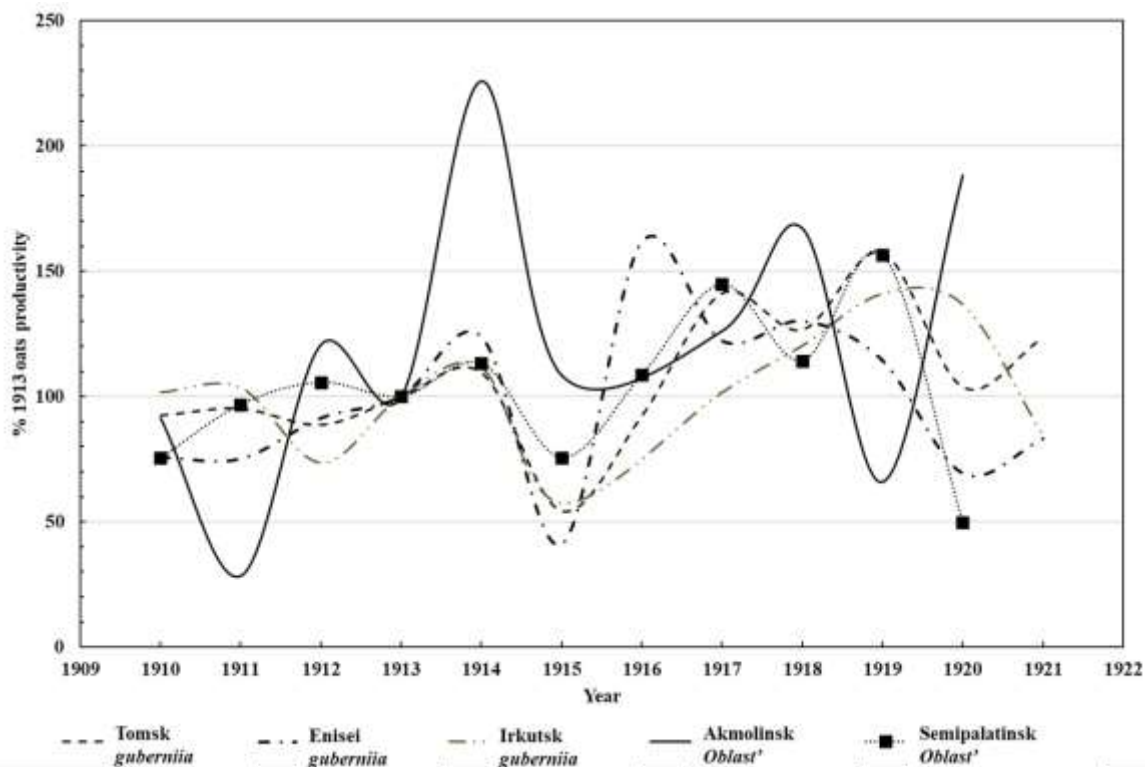


Figure 1. Average annual productivity of winter rye in the Red and White areas, 1910-1921

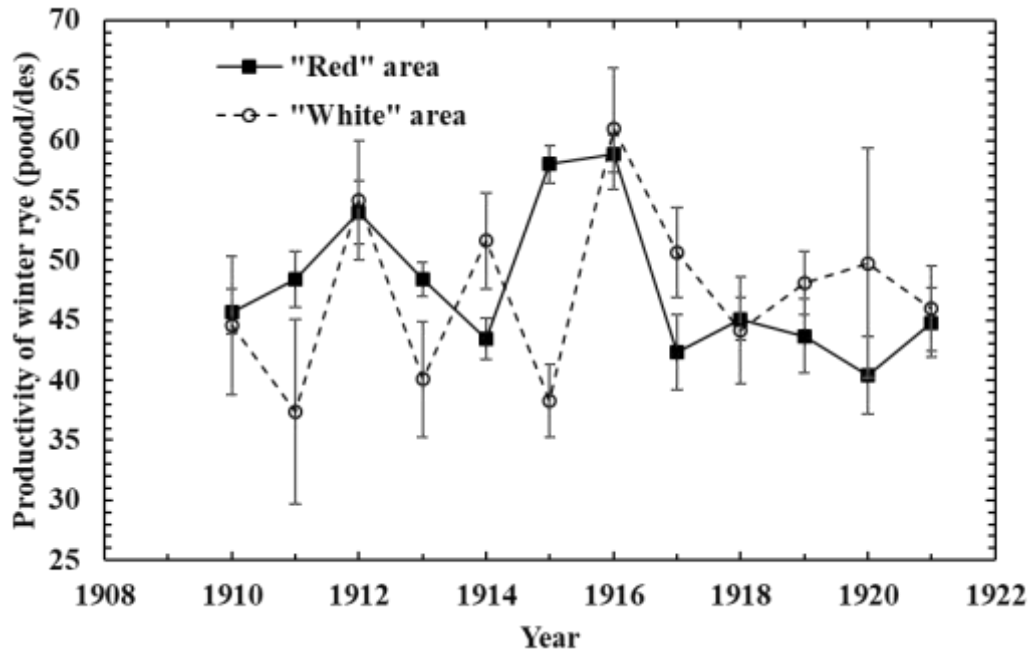
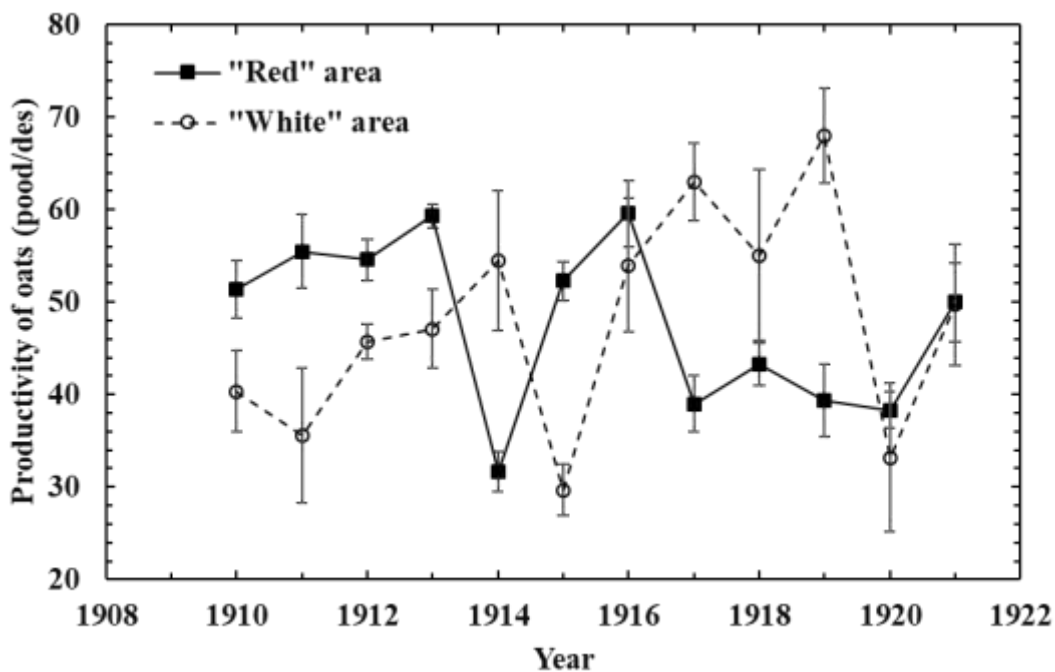


Figure 2. Average annual productivity of oats in the "Red" and "White" areas, 1910-1921



The decrease of productivity in Red area may be due to the distribution of land into small plots and the introduction of the backward three-field system of cultivation which yielded less (Popov, cited in Malle 1985). Moreover, the system of *prodrazverstka* destroyed any incentive for the peasants to produce surplus. The seemingly more favorable statistics in White area do not necessarily imply that peasants under White rule live a much higher standard. There were always insufficient tools in the

countryside due to the paralysis of transportation. What raised more resentment among the peasants were the misrule of local Cossacks and savage punitive detachment sent by the government into areas refusing tax payments or suspected of harboring partisan bands. One of the reasons to explain the abnormal behavior of Enisei *guberniia* and Semipalatinsk *oblast'* was that in these regions settled the largest numbers of new arrivals, especially *frontoviki* (former soldiers), who were more receptive to revolutionary agitations (Pereira, 1987).

A closer look at the winter rye productivity in 1918 and 1919 reveals how the shift of frontline affected the productivity of grain crops (

Table 2). Regions which experience a sharper decrease in productivity in 1919 compared to 1918 were those changed hands between the Red and White, such as Samara *guberniia*, Voronezh *guberniia*, and Orenburg *guberniia*. In most of the *gubernii* under constant Red rule, such as Ryzan, Nizhny Novgorod, Kostroma, Kaluga, Tver, and Tambov, the decrease in productivity was less significant, and in the last two *gubernii* productivity even increased in 1919. Productivity of regions under constant White control exhibited a better performance: in Altai *gubernia*, Tyumen *gubernia*, and Omsk *oblast'* where a decrease in productivity is observed, the productivity in 1919 is more than 85% of that in 1918, while in other White regions, an increase in winter rye productivity was observed. To summarize, among regions where productivity dropped, the decrease was larger in those within the zones of battlefield than in those under constant control of either Red or White authority. Considering Table 1 and Table 2 together implies that productivity was negatively influenced by institutional factors and was further depressed by the warfare.

Table 2. Per *desiatin* output of winter rye, 1918-1919 (pood)

<i>Guberniia or oblast'</i>	1918	1919	1919 as % of 1918
Samara <i>gub.</i>	58.00	28.00	48.28
Voronezh <i>gub.</i>	63.00	32.20	51.11
Orenburg <i>gub.</i>	52.00	27.00	51.92
Saratov <i>gub.</i>	43.20	22.50	52.08
Tula <i>gub.</i>	42.00	29.80	70.95
Ryzan <i>gub.</i>	46.30	37.60	81.21
Nizhny Novgorod <i>gub.</i>	41.00	34.00	82.93
Orel <i>gub.</i>	42.90	36.50	85.08
Altai <i>gub.</i>	60.00	51.60	86.00
Tyumen <i>gub.</i>	41.00	35.40	86.34
Kostroma <i>gub.</i>	44.00	40.00	90.91
Kaluga <i>gub.</i>	47.30	43.10	91.12
Kursk <i>gub.</i>	39.30	36.20	92.11
Vladimir <i>gub.</i>	40.60	37.50	92.36
Moscow <i>gub.</i>	58.30	54.60	93.65
Omsk <i>oblast'</i>	42.20	39.70	94.08
Semipalatinsk <i>oblast'</i>	45.00	47.10	104.67
Irkutsk <i>gub.</i>	43.00	48.00	111.63
Tambov <i>gub.</i>	37.00	42.00	113.51
Tver <i>gub.</i>	45.60	52.50	115.13
Yaroslavl <i>gub.</i>	44.30	55.30	124.83

Akmolinsk <i>oblast'</i> .	29.90	42.50	142.14
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Source: *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik 1918-1920*

4. Why did the White fail?

This present paper, which focuses on how belligerent governments in Russian Civil War settled economic issues while fighting a war, is far from sufficient to provide a comprehensive answer to why the anti-Bolshevik movement in Siberia failed. But findings from this paper can suggest that economic performance is unlikely the main contributor to the result of the war. Economic performance in terms of agricultural produce demonstrated that areas ruled by the White turned out better than those ruled by the Red. But the Russian State lost the faith of the population even before they lost the war. The answer could be from the ideology. This is not to argue that the Bolsheviks, the winning side, had an ideology which truly benefited people. But having a guiding ideology, rather than a shaky ground of non-determination, did secure the Bolsheviks a more advantageous position than the anti-Bolshevik White. Purposed at paving way to communism, the Bolsheviks never hesitated about sacrificing some classes of the population when designing policies. Suppressing the market, nationalizing industries, and concentrating crucial capitals to state control, Bolsheviks framed themselves as the fighter against the propertied class for the exploited, property-less class. They never dreamed of being supported by the heterogeneous groups of population, but they managed to secure some groups of the population at their back. The anti-Bolshevik governments – the Russian State and its predecessors – never behaved as if they had a clear idea of whom to estrange and whom to befriend. The lack of a firm ideology led to policies which intended to appease conflicts among classes and saved resources for fighting the Bolsheviks but ended up disappointing every class of the population.

Economic policies of the Russian State were supposed to guarantee the functionality of the free market and protect the private property. Even before the Russian State coming to power, upon the dispersion of local Bolshevik regimes in Siberia, private ownership was restored, and many of the industries were denationalized. And the Russian State intended to carry through these measurements. If there were no war, people from various social classes may have benefited from the free market. But with the pressing warfare, the government had to require industries to prioritize the demand for equipping the army. And in order to economize on the limited resource, certain market activities were restricted. Thus, the well-off population was annoyed by the government's violation of its promise on free market. Response from the worse-off population was no better. During wartime, a market system could be more devastating than central planning in terms of the stabilization of governance. With a planned economy, everyone could be made at least equally poor, and thus jealousy among people and resentment toward the government could be less severe. But with a relatively free market and scarce goods, the wealthier group could make purchases by bidding up the price while the poorer group could not. Hence the intensification of the discount of the poor toward the government. Plus, due to the brevity of Bolshevik rule in Siberia, most of the population could not share the hatred toward the Bolsheviks but were more irritated by the deterioration of life because of the war.

Another urgent issue facing the Russian State was how to settle land ownership in areas recaptured from the Bolsheviks. Under the Bolshevik rule, lands were taken from the original owners and reallocated among peasants. Whether to return those lands to their original owners or to acknowledge the right of new owners demands a resolution. The proposed policy took the middle ground: the harvest of this year (1919) belongs to its harvesters, and the government will work on the process of acquiring full ownership of land. No further steps were made since there was no new year for the government, which was ousted from its capital, Omsk, by the 5th Red Army in November 1919. Such a land policy, which was supposed to ameliorate the conflicts between the old and new owners of the land, could hardly please either group since each group considered that their own interest was compromised by the government to please the other group. The old owners criticized the government's failure to protect private property, whereas the new owners criticized the government's favoring the rich class. Thus, just like market policies in cities, the land policy alienated both groups that the government wished to please.

The Russian State mistakenly believed that the “anti-Bolshevik” slogan was strong enough to make people set aside their divergences in interest and political views. Policies based on such a misbelief, instead of uniting all, estranged all. Since mid-1919, many of those who were sympathetic toward the anti-Bolshevik movement turned to the Bolshevik side and thus expedited the liquidation of the Russian State.

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