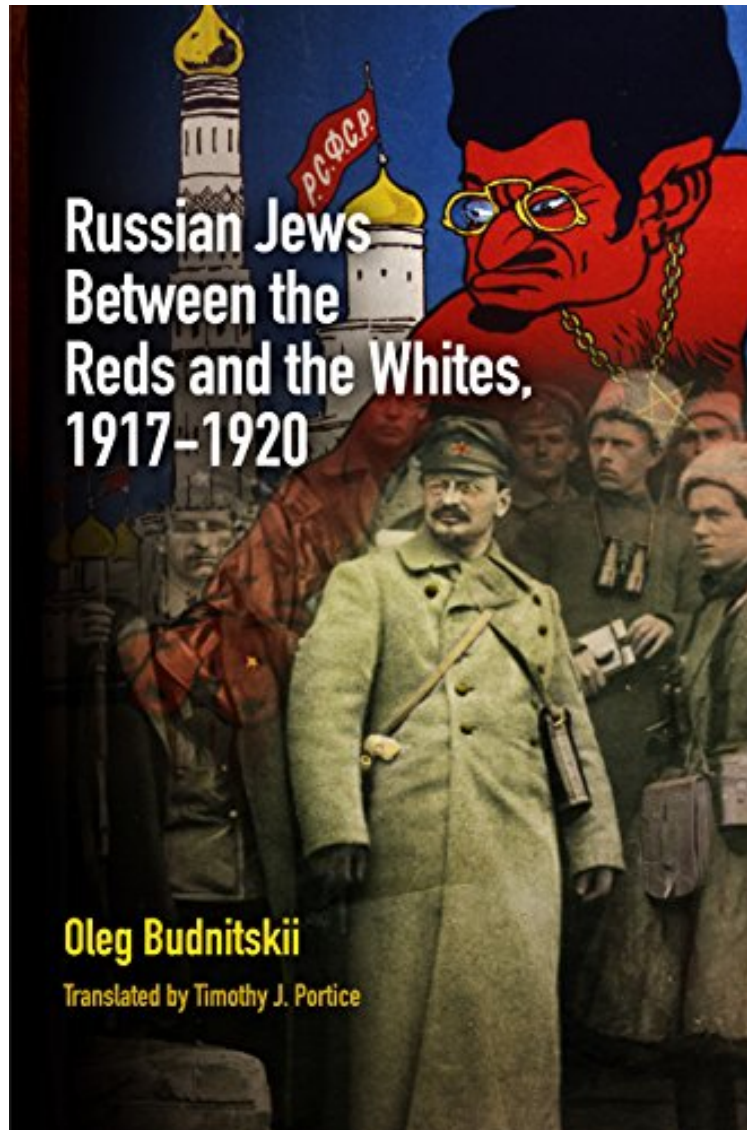


(Ebook free) Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920 (Jewish Culture and Contexts)

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*Oleg Budnitskii*

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**Oleg Budnitskii : Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920 (Jewish Culture and Contexts)**  
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russian Jews Between  
the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920 (Jewish Culture and Contexts):

In the years following the Russian Revolution, a bitter civil war was waged between the Bolsheviks, with their Red Army of Workers and Peasants on the one side, and the various groups that constituted the anti-Bolshevik movement on the other. The major anti-Bolshevik force was the White Army, whose leadership consisted of former officers of the Russian imperial army. In the received and simplified version of this history, those Jews who were drawn into the political and military conflict were overwhelmingly affiliated with the Reds, while from the start, the Whites orchestrated campaigns of anti-Jewish violence, leading to the deaths of thousands of Jews in pogroms in the Ukraine and elsewhere. In *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920*, Oleg Budnitskii provides the first comprehensive historical account of the role of Jews in the Russian Civil War. According to Budnitskii, Jews were both victims and executioners, and while they were among the founders of the Soviet state, they also played an important role in the establishment of the anti-Bolshevik factions. He offers a far more nuanced picture of the policies of the White leadership toward the Jews than has been previously available, exploring such issues as the role of prominent Jewish politicians in the establishment of the White movement of southern Russia, the "Jewish Question" in the White ideology and its international aspects, and the attempts of the Russian Orthodox Church and White diplomacy to forestall the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The relationship between the Jews and the Reds was no less complicated. Nearly all of the Jewish political parties severely disapproved of the Bolshevik coup, and the Red Army was hardly without sin when it came to pogroms against the Jews. Budnitskii offers a fresh assessment of the part played by Jews in the establishment of the Soviet state, of the turn in the policies of Jewish socialist parties after the first wave of mass pogroms and their efforts to attract Jews to the Red Army, of Bolshevik policies concerning the Jewish population, and of how these stances changed radically over the course of the Civil War.

"Oleg Budnitskii, in this thoroughly researched, clearly written, and well-documented book, shows that the story of Jews in the Civil War years is much more complicated than simply being Red or White. . . . Rather than seeing pogroms as the outcome of ideological fights between Communists and anti-Communists in times of civil war, Budnitskii situates anti-Jewish violence in the broader context of war." David Shneer, *The Russian*, in a review of the Russian edition "Budnitskii's excellent study will become the starting point for all future investigations of Russia's Jews between Reds and Whites." Donald J. Raleigh, *Kritika*, in a review of the Russian edition About the Author Oleg Budnitskii is Professor of History and Director of the Center for the Study of the History and Sociology of World War II at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction From 1918 to 1920, Russian Jewry suffered persecution and devastation on a scale that had not been seen since the Khmel'nitskii Uprising in the seventeenth century. Of all the tragedies in the annals of Jewish History, only the Holocaust would surpass this period in savagery and wanton murder. To this day, experts still differ as to the total number of Jews who perished in the pogroms, the bloodiest of which took place in Ukraine in 1919 and 1920. Literature on the subject places the total number of victims anywhere in the range of 50,000 to 200,000 killed or mortally wounded. Not included in this number are countless other victims who were robbed, raped, or permanently disfigured. Perhaps due to the shadow of the Holocaust, the causes, conditions, and consequences of these events have yet to be sufficiently studied. At the same time, a number of scholars have attempted to draw comparisons between the Holocaust and the pogroms that had occurred some twenty years earlier. Avraam Greenbaum, for example, claimed that "in some ways especially since killings were sometimes carried out as a kind of "national duty" without the usual robbery they bear comparison with the Holocaust some twenty years later." David Roskies deemed the mass murder of Jews during the Civil War to be "the Holocaust of Ukrainian Jewry." Richard Pipes, writing much in the same vein, claimed that "in every respect except for the absence of central organization to direct the slaughter, the pogroms of 1919 were a prelude to and a rehearsal for the Holocaust. The spontaneous looting and killing left a legacy that two decades later was to lead to the systematic mass murder of Jews at the hands of the Nazis: the deadly identification of Communism with Jewry . . . in view of the role this accusation had in paving the way for the mass destruction of European Jewry, the question of Jewish involvement in Bolshevism is of more than academic interest." Though these contributions are valuable, the pogroms of 1918-20 and the role of the "Jewish question" in the larger context of the Civil War have hardly been examined in the detail they deserve. Still, the goal of the present study is not limited to investigating the tragic events of the pogroms themselves in isolation. Though any study of the period would be remiss to ignore these events, the suffering of the Russian Jewish population was but a part of the larger tragedy of the Russian Revolution and the ensuing Civil War. In this tragedy, Jews played the role of both victim and executioner. Like many of the peoples of the former Russian Empire, the Jewish population found itself fragmented into a number of different groups and organizations during this "new time of troubles." These groups, each having its own worldview and set of priorities, often came into conflict with one another. In the given historical context, it is impossible to talk about the Jews "in general." Instead, this study will focus on those groups and individuals who were important participants in the political and social development of Russia as a whole, as well as those who participated in the numerous Jewish nationalist movements. This does not mean that I will be focusing exclusively on prominent politicians and social activists. Jewish privates who served in the Volunteer Army during its Ice March to Kuban, Jewish members of the Red Army, Jewish tailors and accountants who would go on to become Chekists, the

"bourgeois" Jews who were persecuted by those very same Chekists, and the large number of Jews who were not involved in any sort of political activity would all come to play vital parts in the historical events of 1918-20, and their stories deserve to be told as well. Of less concern for my investigation are the "internationalists" who rejected their Jewish heritage, and the Zionists who tried to distance themselves from the political events inside Russia. They will not, however, be completely ignored. Trotsky (who once claimed that the Jews interested him as much as the Bulgarians) will make an appearance, as will a number of Zionists who were unable to stay completely "above the fray" due to varying circumstances (including, on occasion, the Cheka). It is worth bearing in mind throughout that for the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population, the central goal during the Civil War was survival and escape from the violence that was taking place all around them. In this they differed little from the non-Jewish population, who faced similar challenges. It should be noted, however, that surmounting such challenges was particularly difficult for those of Jewish heritage. I would like to emphasize that this study is concerned not only with Jewish history. It is rather about the history of the Civil War in Russia. At the same time, writing a full history of the Jewish experience of the Russian Civil War, or examining all aspects of the "Jewish question" during the Russian Civil War, would be an impossible task. I will focus instead on two main themes: Jewish participation in the struggle between the Reds and the Whites, and the role of the "Jewish question" in the internal politics of these central participants of the Civil War. In order to better understand the events at hand, I will provide a brief summary of the history of the Jews in Russia during the imperial period, paying particular attention to those aspects that would prove to be influential in the years to come. Furthermore, the events of World War I were to play a greater role in the following years for Russia's Jews than for any other nationality in the former Russian Empire. With this in mind, I will occasionally include details from 1914-17 and earlier historical periods in order to provide a clearer historical context for the events at hand. Among the numerous topics to be addressed are Jewish participation in the White movement, and the attitude of the Reds and Whites towards Jews in both their internal and external politics; the attempt by the leadership of the Russian Orthodox church to prevent the founding of a Jewish state in Palestine; the pogroms of the Civil War period; the role of Jews in the establishment of the Soviet state; and the role played by Jewish socialist parties in Red Army recruitment, including attempts to create Jewish organizations within the Red Army. Nearly all of the Jewish political parties, socialists included, severely disapproved of the Bolshevik coup. The Jewish population at large likewise found little good in the Bolsheviks' program of liquidating private property and religious institutions, and the Red Army was hardly without sin when it came to pogroms against Jews. These stances were to change radically over the course of the Civil War. In this study, I will attempt to show how such a marked change was made possible. A significant part of the current monograph is dedicated to problems that have thus far remained nearly untouched, such as Jewish participation in the White movement and the Whites' attitudes towards the "Jewish question." The very posing of such issues might at first seem surprising, given that the White movement is most often associated with pogroms and antisemitism. An equally persistent stereotype is the notion that Lenin and his associates were generally supportive of the Jewish population. The reality of the situation is much more complicated. The anti-Bolshevik movement in the south of Russia, as I shall attempt to show, received material and financial support from a number of individuals of Jewish descent, and the Volunteer Army's political program, at least at the beginning, was decidedly liberal. As a rule, the White leadership refrained from making antisemitic statements. In fact, on several occasions they would declare their disapproval of antisemitic pogroms. The ideology of the movement was considerably influenced by the Constitutional Democratic Party (the Kadets), which had continually agitated for Jewish equality. Kadets were among the most important members of Denikin's inner circle, and two Kadets (first N. E. Paramonov and, later, K. N. Sokolov) were put in charge of Denikin's propaganda efforts. Thus it would seem that the Jewish population would have less to fear from Denikin's Volunteer Army than from any other anti-Bolshevik force. On a few occasions, Denikin's forces were even greeted as liberators in Jewish areas they had captured from Bolshevik forces or from Petliura's army. Tragically, the very same Jews who were the first to welcome the Whites often became the first victims of the ensuing pogroms. Such bitter contradictions abound in the events of the period. Why, for example, did some politically active Jews support and participate in the White movement at the beginning of the Civil War? Moreover, why did some Jews continue to support the movement even after the Volunteer Army began to carry out pogroms? How did the Whites, who had begun the conflict with liberal political slogans, turn into a band of pogromists? What role was played by the liberal members of the Russian intelligentsia (the Kadets in particular), who had always stood for Jewish equality, but who in supporting the White movement tacitly approved of antisemitism? And finally, was there any real choice between the Reds and the Whites for Russia's Jews? Or to put the same question in a slightly different fashion, what was the "correct" course of action for Jews to take in a country that had been torn asunder by internal contradictions, a place where Jews were an undesired and unwanted minority? In order to find answers to these questions we must refrain from looking at Jews as victims only; Jews were active participants in the political processes taking place on both sides of the front. It is also necessary to examine how the leadership on both sides related to the "Jewish question" within the context of the Revolution and the Civil War. Finally, the relationship between Jews and the leadership of the Whites must be examined, starting at the very origins of the anti-Bolshevik movement. Only recently has the possibility of gaining an adequate understanding of the Civil War, particularly in

regard to events that concerned the Jewish population, become truly feasible. This is largely due to two reasons. First of all, researchers now have access to sources and archival materials that were unavailable during the Soviet period. Secondly, it is only now that we are able to reevaluate these events within the larger context of the historical legacy of the twentieth century.