

ADMIRAL KOLCHAK: A CONTRAST OF
HOPE AND BETRAYAL FOR RUSSIA 1918-1920

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The purpose of this paper is that of an investigation into a crucial period in Russian history and serves to show to what extent the outcome and hope for a democratic Russia depended on the roles of certain key individuals. In particular it was the leader of the White or anti-Bolshevik army, Admiral Alexander Kolchak, who assumed all responsibility for leading the Whites against the Bolsheviks during the years 1918-1920. Little information has been detailed about Admiral Kolchak, but it was the impact of his personal and political rule during this period that is significant to the outcome. Most of the information on Kolchak does come from a few accounts from members of his military or of correspondences written from the U.S. State Department in regard to the Russian White movement.

Kolchak has been the subject of many contrasting and contradicting views from others during this time, stemming from the fact that his personality and character was so variable to most of those who knew him. He is seen as both a savior and dictator of the Russian Republic, having had both respected and loyal followers as well as the hatred of political enemies.

Primarily though, Kolchak represented a real hope for Russia at a time when there was the conflict and unknown anticipation toward the reorganization of a new Russian government built on the crumbled empire of the last Tsar.

In addition to the events in Russia, the period 1918-1920 also involved the reorganization of the European Allies and the United States after World War I. Allied involvement in the Russian situation began with the sending of small amounts of troops and supplies during the war and grew to become one of the most confused and contradictory Allied policies in modern diplomatic and international history. The question of whether or not to send aid in support of Kolchak and the White army, and to what extent this aid should be given, makes this study one of extreme complexity, but it also played a significant part in determining the fate of the White army and of Admiral Kolchak.

Thus, in the midst of this Allied involvement and the weakening of the White army, Kolchak ultimately became a victim of a situation he had little control over. This included the political corruption within his own government and troops, a hope for a strong Allied policy that never materialized, his betrayal at the hands of the Allies, leading to his eventual capture and death by the Bolsheviks in 1920. This period then, was a crucial one to the future of the Russian government, and to the Western Allies, as the hope for a democratic Russia was virtually lost with the death of Kolchak and the end of the Russian White army.