

Review

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The Struggle for Tsaritsyn during the Civil War in Russia: On Publication of the Collective Monograph

Abstract

The review of the monograph “The Civil War in Tsaritsyn: 1918–20” considers Volgograd

historians-archivists' views on the struggle between the Reds and the Whites in the South of Russia, resuming discussion on the role of J. V. Stalin in the organization of Tsaritsyn's defense and of impact of the battles for the city on the overall development of military and political confrontation of the warring parties. The reviewer confirms the opinion of the authors that decreased significance of Tsaritsyn events of 1918–19 in the national historiography sprang from intention to diminish the merits of J. V. Stalin and his associates. Eventually, stubborn battles for the most important industrial and transport center and efforts to solve the food supply issues in the Soviet Republic turned into ordinary episodes of the history Civil War in Russia. The review emphasizes validity of the conclusions on the causes of successes and failures of the Red Army near Tsaritsyn: mood fluctuations of the Don Cossacks, contradictions between the Ataman of the Don Army P. N. Krasnov and the leaders of the Volunteer army, low discipline and manageability of military units defending the city. The materials of the monograph are consistent with the achievements of modern foreign historiography, which pays increasing attention to the episodes of the Civil War that made J. V. Stalin a politician and the leader of the Soviet state. The review substantiates the importance of the published book for analysis of food policy of the Bolshevik government, of significance of German aid for fighting efficiency of the Don Army, of socio-economic features of the region, which determined the balance of opposed forces. It underscores the relevance and information value of unique photographs and documents, found in the fonds of the central and local archives and published in the monograph. Visual sources provide an opportunity to consider the early stages of formation of historical memory of the events in the South of Russia in 1918–19. The reviewer expresses his opinion on the prospects of further research involving documents from the Russian State Military Archives (RGVA), which permit to identify the specifics of city life over years of martial law. The analysis of issues of wartime everyday life, of survival under during terror, military operations, and constant mobilization of resources can enhance the perception of the Civil War as a tragedy, contributing to national reconciliation in Russia.

### Keywords

Historical sources, historiography, Civil War in Russia, J. V. Stalin, P. N. Krasnov, Cossacks, Tsaritsyn

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