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'IF GRANDMA HAD WHISKERS ... ': COULD THE ANTI-BOLSHEVIKS HAVE WON THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS AND CIVIL WARS? OR, THE CONSTRAINTS AND CONCEITS OF COUNTERFACTUAL HISTORY

Recent decades have seen a conspicuous flowering of counterfactual or 'virtual' history, nurtured by a fecund mulch of post-modernist critiques of empiricism, the vulnerability of Marxist history (as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union), and the genre's voguish allure to the general public. Never immune from such challenges, both exogenous and endogenous, the history of the Russian revolutions and civil wars has long felt their impact, and they have sprouted anew, if somewhat weakly, in some publications linked to the revolution's centenary. This article examines the roots of these inherently thistly but straggling scions of the counterfactual thicket, as well as explicit dystopias and utopias found in earlier White émigré and Soviet dissident fiction (notably the works of P. N. Krasnov and V. P. Aksenov), before proceeding to test the 'alternatives to Bolshevism' suggested more implicitly in Western histories of the period. It finds that these proffered alternatives have been, for the most part, insubstantial but that counterfactual history is not necessarily devoid of utility.

Keywords: Counterfactual history; Russian revolution; Russian civil wars; Bolsheviks; anti-Bolsheviks

It seems to us that the past is our property. Well, on the contrary – we are its property, because we are not able to make changes in it, while it fills the whole of our existence. (Leszek Kołakowski, *Klucz niebieski*, 1964)

This subject requires a couple of opening qualifications. Firstly, although the fact came to be avoided, elided or even gainsaid in Stalinist and post-Stalinist writings in the Soviet Union, Lenin's party had precious little to do with the toppling of the tsar in February 1917: the Bolsheviks did not 'win' the February Revolution; albeit fleetingly and provisionally, non- and anti-Bolshevik (chiefly liberal and moderate-socialist) forces did. Secondly (and much less widely appreciated), the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the government (Sovnarkom) that it formed in October 1917 to replace the toppled Provisional Government, despite the formation of a mighty Red Army, did not

fully triumph in the Russian civil wars: it was not able to spread its authority across all the former tsarist empire – key provinces in Finland, the Baltic, and Poland were lost to nationalist forces and the incorporation of Bessarabia into Romania and of the Kars region into Turkey had to be accepted – while the demands of creating a militarized and centralized polity to fight the wars meant that the brutal Stalinist form of Soviet socialism that emerged in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s bore little or no resemblance to that imagined by the Bolsheviks of 1917.¹ This was a loss for which Soviet citizens would pay dearly in the subsequent decades. Still less were the Bolsheviks able to realize their plans of inspiring and sponsoring successful revolutions abroad, particularly in proletarian Europe, to help them to convince peasant Russia of the merits of socialism. That the foundations of an allied Soviet state were fashioned in feudal Mongolia was but meagre consolation.²

Yet, the USSR *was* constituted and became one of the most powerful states on the planet, whilst at the same time blackening the name of socialism. But could the outcome of the revolutions and civil wars have been different? As one commentator put it, even prior to the recent flourishing of counterfactual history, ‘the central issue which has always engaged the historians of 1917 is whether or not the ultimate outcome, the Bolshevik seizure and retention of power, was preordained ... [or] was any other outcome possible?’³

When A.J.P. Taylor mischievously quipped that there is no point asking historians to predict the future because ‘frankly, we have a hard enough time predicting the past’,⁴ he did not have in mind the rise of counterfactual history and attendant predictions of alternative pasts, but his sentiments are nevertheless apposite. After all, through their selection of subjects, sources and methodologies, and the manner of their presentation, all historians are to a lesser or greater degree predictors of past possible outcomes and it is on those bases that schools of historical interpretation are built, challenged, and defended. Unalloyed practitioners of counterfactual history – those who explore alternative outcomes to historical events, the better (they claim) to provide contingency and to understand what did happen – it might be said, only differ from ‘real’ historians (actually they are often one and the same) in their frank admission of what it is they are up to.⁵

Certainly, counterfactuality – which has its modern, Anglophone roots in a 1931 collection of eleven speculative essays authored by such notables as Hillaire Belloc, Winston Churchill, and G.K. Chesterton,⁶ but has numerous antecedents⁷ – has soared in popularity in recent decades. Supporters of it say that it allows for greater perspective in assessing the importance of the individuals, events and processes on which they focus and would point out that at any given moment historical actors could have taken different decisions, which would have changed their future (and, by extension, our present).⁸ Others argue, in my view plausibly, that ‘counterfactualism has its uses, providing illuminating perspectives while encouraging wit and creativity’. But it also has its dangers, as (even if contingencies make an impact) ‘history is fundamentally an organic process, rather than a conglomeration of interchangeable parts’. That is, counterfactualism’s inevitable foregrounding of ‘sudden crises caused by sudden events’ and the decisions of key individuals should not blind us to the primacy of ‘deep and continuous forces’.⁹ Outright critics of the genre belittle it as, at best, an idle parlour game and at worst a *folie infantine* that distracts historians from a duty to pursue the truth, whilst too often perpetuating a conservative ‘Great Man’ or ‘kings and battles’ view of history.¹⁰ For Alec Nove, counterfactual history was a field that attracted only ‘intellectual inferiors’,¹¹ while none other than E. H. Carr once

determined that ‘a historian should never deal in speculation about what did not happen’.¹² Another eminent Russianist put it even more bluntly: ‘This kind of speculation on the “might-have-beens” of the past is a pointless exercise ... and quite frankly a waste of time’, opined Alan Wood.¹³ Most blunt of all was E. P. Thompson, who derided the outpourings of counterfactualists as *Geschichtswissenschaftlopff* (‘historical shit’).¹⁴ Such nay-saying, however heartfelt – and, as the battle-lines between generally right-wing ayes and often leftist nays are the most prominent, the opposing cases regarding counterfactualism are usually made with some brio – has not stemmed the tide. There has recently developed a mini-industry in the publication of works offering alternative outcomes to the First and Second World Wars alone, for example, or suggesting the consequences of these calamities having been avoided.¹⁵ But, oddly, even though the origins of this new wave of ‘what ifs’ coincided closely chronologically with the collapse of the USSR and of communism in Eastern Europe, at and before or since that time there have been, until recently, remarkably few attempts to focus the lens of what is also sometimes referred to as ‘virtual history’¹⁶ on what is generally held to be another of the defining moments of the twentieth century, the Russian Revolution.¹⁷ An exception here was a collection of essays published in 2016, in which a *pot-pourri* of western experts examined key ‘turning points’ of the revolutionary period and asked whether the outcomes with which we are familiar, adding up to an incomplete Bolshevik victory, were ‘historically inevitable’.¹⁸ Another was an essay by Simon Sebag Montefiore, who presented a facile argument that ‘it all depended on Lenin’, who was ‘plain lucky’ – apparently asking us to forget the decades of study and revolutionary work that the Bolshevik leader and thousands of others had undertaken prior to 1917 – whilst blithely asserting that ‘without Lenin there would have been no Hitler’, no Mao or Kim Jong-un and no Cold War.¹⁹

Taking a contrasting approach, meanwhile, one enterprising if idiosyncratic author, Philip Cunliffe (a self-styled ‘gonzo Marxist’), has recently imagined the consequences of the triumph in Russia, then Europe and the wider world, of a Bolshevism less addicted to force and terror and freer to promote human progress and wellbeing (although he avoids explaining how this blissful modern Arcadia was born in Russia).²⁰ Moreover, although welcome that he seizes the flag of counterfactuality from generally conservative, military and diplomatic historians, Cunliffe nevertheless lays himself open to the charge that he prefers to reimagine not a *Russian* revolution, but a more cultured, more *European* and less ‘Asiatic’ one.²¹ He also breaks the golden rule of counterfactual writing: simply taking things too far.²² It might be interesting to consider what fascism might have been without Hitler, but suggesting that Hitler without fascism would have become a coprophiliac speed-freak is absurd. That said, Cunliffe deliberately plays it for laughs (‘It’s the political economy, stupid’ is a section title), even if not all his jokes are funny,²³ and does offer some diverting speculations wherein Eleanor Roosevelt lives out her life as a lesbian (and has an affair with Amelia Earhart, who teaches her to fly), while Churchill flees the British revolution only to endure a protracted exile in Canada alongside a royal family he cannot abide, and Yiddish remains a major European language.²⁴

Whilst the actual Soviet Union existed, though – and it lasted long enough to confound Cold-War suggestions during the 1970s that it might not even survive long enough for its full-blown Orwellian potentials to mature²⁵ – imaginings of alternative futures for it were dominated by a mixture of the quasi-utopian and full-blown dystopian visions of authors resident *in* the post-revolution USSR (or only recently emigrated from

it or desirous of leaving), from lauded non-conformist mavericks such as Evgenii Zamiatin (*We*, 1921) and Mikhail Bulgakov (*The Fatal Eggs*, 1924, and *Heart of a Dog*, 1925) through less known idealist (some say theosophist) agronomists such as Aleksandr Chaianov (*Puteshestvie moego brata Alekseia v stranu krest'ianskoi utopii*, 1920),²⁶ to caustic yet playful Soviet dissidents, notably Vladimir Voinovich (*Moscow in 2042*, 1986).²⁷ Many of these works were satirical in form and many might almost be classified as science fiction, but most were deadly serious in intent, for which prices were paid: Zamiatin was permitted to emigrate but died in poverty in France in 1937; Bulgakov was not permitted to emigrate and, debarred from meaningful work for a decade, suffered depression before his death in 1940; Voinovich endured years of harassment before being forced to emigrate in 1980; and Chaianov was persecuted and exiled to Kazakhstan before being executed in 1937.²⁸

In contrast, it is striking to the historian that, although opponents of the Soviet regime who had been active during the era of revolutions and civil wars, and formed part of the first emigration, left memoirs and histories that suggested various points at which things might have turned in their favour during the revolutionary period, beyond the discredited and dog-eared pre-October party programmes of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Kadets *et al.*, they were either sketchy or altogether silent on the details of what any non-Bolshevik, post-revolutionary state might have looked like: full expositions of an alternative to Bolshevism – the ‘utopias of the losers’ they might be called – are rarer than the teeth of those devilish hens and other oviparous inhabitants of Bulgakov’s *Fatal Eggs* once they had been exterminated by a sudden frost.²⁹

A notable exception here is a novel, *Za chertopolokhom* (*Beyond the Thistle*, 1922), penned in Berlin by the exiled General P. N. Krasnov, the former Ataman of the Don Cossack Host from May 1918 to February 1919. The work depicts the collapse of Bolshevism through famine and mismanagement (an attempted invasion of Europe meets with disaster when Soviet gas bombers accidentally attack their own territory, killing millions) and its replacement by a restored but primitive tsardom, protected by a deadly forest wall (fertilized by the corpses of those killed by the gas bombs and subsequent plague epidemics) that bars access from the ‘rotting, democratic West’ (portrayed as a socialist hell, ravaged by depraved *avant-gardisme*) and buttressed by a one-party state apparatus (under the ‘Brothers and Sisters of Christ’) and blue-shirted paramilitary formations. This bucolic, pre-Petrine regime somewhat incongruously harnesses and glorifies modern technology, but in a manner that serves rather than enslaves its peaceful and patriarchal Orthodox population, and seeks spiritual and moral renaissance through its Eastern traditions rather than aping the corrupt and degenerate West (whilst, of course, excising all Jewish influence). But this pallid exercise in *völkisch* romanticism and antisemitism, mixed with predictably lame science fiction (flying trains powered by harvested lightning and rain-making machines abound), although popular among contemporary Russian nationalists, courtesy of deluxe republications in 2000 and 2003, is badly tainted by its author’s affinity with the doomed fascism to which he became affiliated in the inter-war years. Unlike many of Krasnov’s other novels, it did not sell well at the time of its publication, except among the most extreme of conservative émigré Eurasianists, and it remains untranslated to this day.³⁰

Another, more artful, counterfactual novel, by the Soviet dissident and émigré V. P. Aksenov (the son of Evgeniia Ginzburg), imagines the survival of the Whites on

the *Island of Crimea* (*Ostrov Krym*, 1981).³¹ There, in a technicolour landscape that Americanized locals refer to as ‘OK’ – surely a jokey allusion to LA that is typical of Aksenov’s inventive language – a sort of Russian Hong Kong develops: a ‘den of iniquity’ and an ‘El Dorado of spies and adventurers’, populated by skyscrapers, fast cars, sharp-suited *businessmen*, blue-jeaned hipsters, imported fine wines, Cyrillic Coca-Cola signs, jazz bars, and strip joints. This rip-roaring, brazen and ‘tinselly Russia’ on its underbelly – far removed from the portrayals of Crimea as a peaceful and tranquil haven common in earlier Russian literature³² – is grudgingly tolerated by Moscow (which values it as a conduit for hard currency and electronics, whilst fearing the consequences of attempting to incorporate such a degenerate and lawless *bagnio* – where ‘even the air is pornographic’ – into the immaculate Socialist Motherland). But the island’s gullible and deluded (in Aksenov’s view) pinko-liberal elite (the sons of the Volunteer fathers) seem determined to sacrifice it to ‘the Common Fate’, through reunion with the USSR, in the misguided anticipation that their worldly values would temper Moscow’s messianism and barbarity.³³ Amusing as it is, though (and most insightful regarding the injured and fractious psychology of the Whites in emigration and the disappointments of Aksenov’s Thaw generation), the impact of this work as a counterfactual piece is diminished by its author having to manipulate and reconfigure not only the unfathomable vicissitudes of events and human action but also the hard facts of physical geography: Aksenov’s Crimea actually *is* an island; it is only the imagined absence of the Perekop isthmus that enables General Wrangel’s Whites (aided by the cod-heroic exploits of a British ‘Lieutenant Bayley-Land’)³⁴ to repel the Red Army in November 1920 and hold out there that sustains the conceit of the tale.³⁵ Even then, Aksenov’s capitalist Crimea eventually rejoins Moscow, albeit through an invasion reminiscent of the fate of Czechoslovakia in 1968, during a mock war game (or is it a Hollywood blockbuster?), for the sake of salving Red and White *amours propres*. Intriguingly, the youngest member of the novel’s central family, Anton Luchnikov, who is a supporter of a Young Russian–Tatar alliance party, the Yaki (equipped with its own bamboozling Russo-Tatar-American idiom but few concrete ideas), is last seen aboard a vessel bound for Turkey – which is perhaps a cryptic comment on Eurasianism, though is more likely a dig at the fecklessness of hippyish youth (Aksenov was a product of Bebop and Beat, not the Beatles or Bob Dylan). Of course, back in the real world, although Taiwan retains a precarious independence, Hong Kong eventually rejoined China in 1997, as did formerly Portuguese Macau in 1999, but hardly by choice, even if the accompanying theatrics were definitely Aksenovesque.³⁶ Meanwhile, Russia’s seizure of Crimea in 2014 may soon result in its full integration into Russia as a consequence of the construction of road and rail bridges over the Kerch Strait and the subsequent reinforcement of Russian economic, cultural and media hegemony on the peninsula.³⁷

So, were there alternatives? Obviously, as A.J.P. Taylor again perty reminded us, ‘nothing is inevitable until it happens’.³⁸ At best, we might add, some things are more inevitable than others. But the scarcity and flimsiness of even fictional dreams of a non-Bolshevik outcome to the revolution might suggest that even Lenin’s sworn enemies found this concept to be intractable, untenable or a subject suitable only for farce. And, after all, although a cult of the Whites has blossomed in contemporary Russia, manifesting itself in the raising of statues and shrines to their fallen heroes, booming sales of White militaria, a flood of republished memoirs and sympathetic (and sometimes idolatrous) secondary accounts, the production of a romanticized biopic about

Admiral A.V. Kolchak – the most expensive feature film ever made in the country (*Admiral*, dir. Andrei Kravchuk, 2008, together with a successful spin-off television series) – and even the reburial of General A.I. Denikin in Moscow's hallowed Donskoi Monastery, only fanatics and fantasists give credence to the notion that the politically inept Whites might have actually rebuilt a powerful and popular 'Russia, One and Indivisible', while (to the bafflement of many Western commentators, who forget what he achieved as they justifiably excoriate the means by which he achieved it) it is Josef Stalin who is still widely regarded by Russians as the greatest of their leaders.³⁹ With regard to the latter, one can hazard a fairly safe guess that, whilst he might seek to distance his regime from revolutionary Bolshevism to the extent of permitting the toppling of statues to Soviet leaders, denigrating the memory of October through the continued cancellation of the celebration of Revolution Day (7 November) and seeming to at least consider the closure of the Lenin Mausoleum and the burial of the remains of its occupant, Vladimir Putin too would surely, if not publicly, answer in the affirmative a famous and seminal question posed by Alec Nove about Lenin's heir, 'Was Stalin really Necessary?'⁴⁰

That said, it is worth exploring some key events of the revolutionary period that might – or, at least, have been claimed might to – have turned out differently and might, consequently, have altered the course and even the outcomes of the revolutions and civil wars. The precarious balancing of one 'might' upon another, like giant logs in a game of garden Jenga, is, of course, a characteristic of the worst forms of counterfactual history.⁴¹ What follows is by no means a comprehensive list of allegedly potential turning points, and space does not permit a full analysis of any of them, but the exercise is (hopefully) not a pointless one. After all, even Trotsky once indicated that, to his mind, the key turning point of the civil wars was not the much lauded defeat of Admiral Kolchak, the repulsion of White forces from the suburbs of Petrograd or the defeat of General Denikin in 1919, but the nascent Red Army's far less celebrated success in, at the very last ditch, preventing Komuch's People's Army from breaking out westwards from Kazan' in August–September 1918 and thereby opening up the 'practically unobstructed road' to Moscow.⁴² That battle could very easily have gone the other way. Yet, whilst reminding us that, given the unpredictability of human agency, potential alternatives are always real, some, it must be accepted, are infinitely more real than others. Indeed, a perusal of the alleged alternatives to Bolshevism in the revolutionary period may specifically and convincingly demonstrate that, when considering the positing of a full-scale anti-Bolshevik victory in the revolutions and civil wars, one must recognize and name a winged pig when one sees one. In short, it may underscore the sagacity of the venerable Russian proverb that reminds us 'if grandma had whiskers, she'd be grandpa'.⁴³

Forks in the road: dead ends, dead herrings, chimeras, canards, cuckoos and wild ducks cooked

As Eric Hobsbawm put it, 'arguments about counterfactuals and alternatives cannot be settled by evidence, since evidence is about what happened and hypothetical situations did not happen. They belong to politics or ideology and not to history'.⁴⁴ Always with that qualification in mind, it is nevertheless fruitful to engage with the bearers of 'what ifs'. At the very least such contests encourage historians to scrutinize their own allegedly

evidenced-based assertions and to differentiate them from assumptions. So, how successfully have counterfactual approaches challenged more evidential accounts of October, its origins and its outcomes?

One can trace the origins of the Bolshevik Revolution back as far as one's stamina, imagination, or patience can endure – to the 1905 Revolution (Lenin's 'dress rehearsal' for 1917), to the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 ('1861 begat 1905', Lenin again), or to the reign of Peter the Great (the 'crowned Jacobin'). One could even trace the potentials for post-October Soviet despotism to the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, which for both the defenders of autocracy and promoters of Soviet centralism was not a yoke but, as for N. M. Karamzin, 'a blessing'.⁴⁵ Certainly one has to buttress discussion of these events with considerations of less tangible or auditable processes – notably, the radical consequences of Russia's precipitate economic and social modernization around the turn of the 19th–20th centuries and the embattled Imperial regime's (not unrelated) insensate maltreatment of its political and nationalist opponents and even its would-be collaborators (Russian liberals, Baltic Germans, etc.) in the same period. To this already combustible compound must be interlarded an admixture of the personal factor: the role of 'Genghis Khan with a telegraph', prophesized for future tsars by A. I. Herzen in the 1850s (according to Tolstoy),⁴⁶ was far beyond the range of Nikolai Aleksandrovich Romanov (even though he had upgraded his device from the telegraph to the telephone), but he was fated to play that part as Tsar Nicholas II. Yet, it has always been the case that commentators on and historians of the Russian revolutions and civil wars have seen those events as being especially – even umbilically – linked to one particular catastrophe: Russia's involvement in the First World War.⁴⁷ In recent years that has become even more explicit, with historians of the Russian Revolution stretching their chronologies backwards and forwards from 1917,⁴⁸ or extending views of the Russian civil wars back through 1917 to the events of the Great War and forward beyond dates normally cited as their terminus.⁴⁹

Of course, the issue of whether or not Russia's involvement in the First World War had diverted it from a constitutional path of development was the inevitably unresolved counterfactual that long drove much of the historiography of the revolution in the West, engaging historians in their own sort of proxy war, away from the unshifting and unbreachable fronts of Cold War contests more obviously, directly and uncomfortably related to the legitimacy (or not) of October. In this Korea of the chroniclers, so-called 'optimists' argued that peaceful, progressive reform was possible in 'Constitutional Russia', while 'pessimists' countered that it was not.⁵⁰ But this now somewhat otiose debate has obscured another intriguing 'what if': could, or should, Russia have stayed out of the war? One can dismiss the view of Soviet historians that the regime deliberately *chose* war in 1914 to head off incipient proletarian revolution – in July of that year the Bolsheviks were incapable of managing even a general strike in St Petersburg, the heartland of their meagre organization, let alone a revolution – but there were many contemporaries who argued that it should avoid, or should have avoided, war with Germany. Among them were the unlikely bedfellows of Sergei Witte, the ailing former prime minister and architect of Russia's industrial boom of the 1890s, and Rasputin,⁵¹ but perhaps the most cogent was Nicholas's minister of the interior, P. N. Durnovo, who rehearsed his views in a letter to the tsar of February 1914 ('The Durnovo Memorandum').⁵² However, Durnovo seems mostly concerned with the potentially fatal domestic repercussions of the war ('Russia will be flung into hopeless anarchy') and

grievously underplays other imperatives. His assertion that 'the vital interests of Germany and Russia do not conflict', as 'Germany's future lies on the sea', does not bear much scrutiny when it is considered that German foreign trade and investment was overwhelmingly directed towards the Near East (compared to its paltry dealings with its colonies in Africa and the Pacific), that the Turkish navy was being equipped and trained by Germany's *Kaiserliche Marine*, that a senior German officer (General O. V. K. Liman von Sanders) was overseeing the garrison of Constantinople, and that Germany was still set upon completing the Berlin-to-Baghdad Railway – all to cement Berlin's influence, if not control, over a 'place in the sun' a very long way from Samoa or Togoland. Wilhelm II, in the tradition of Moltke the Elder, coveted the Ottoman Empire (which he visited in 1889, 1898, and 1917), as did the influential Pan-German League, in a manner that posed a mortal threat to the Russian Empire.⁵³ So, the truth was that, in July 1914, Russia opted for war less to save Serbia than to at least preserve its position in the Ottoman Empire and, if possible, extend it through annexation of the Straits.⁵⁴ Furthermore, although Austro-German intervention in the former Russian Empire did not occur until after the Ukrainian National Republic and Soviet Russia had formally withdrawn from the war under the terms of the first and second Treaties of Brest-Litovsk in February–March 1918, it is hard to believe other than that something akin to that intervention and its attendant territorial losses (as evinced by Kurt Reisler's *Septemberprogramm* of 1914 and the putative Regency Kingdom of Poland of 1917) would not have been imposed upon Russia had the tsar opted not to join the Allies in war against the Central Powers during the July Crisis. It is at least possible, also, that, in response, something akin to the Allied intervention in Russia of 1918 might have occurred earlier – even in 1915 – had Russia not entered the war. After all, and at the very least, had the Schlieffen Plan worked (as it probably would have done but for the Russian advance into East Prussia in autumn 1914), the tsar's domains west of the Dvina and the Dnepr would surely have then been made subject to German economic domination and exploitation and the riverine Baltic provinces would have been forfeited, whether or not Nicholas II had opted for war in July.⁵⁵ Would the Allies have merely stood by and watched as their blockade of Germany was unravelled by their enemy's subjugation of the food- and resource-rich East?

Another red herring worth laying to rest concerns Nicholas II's assumption of the command of the Russian Army in September 1915. Generations of students have assured us that this was 'a mistake', as thereafter 'all Russia's losses were attributed to him'. Hence the February Revolution and the ensuing chaos, the story goes. But serious historians have accepted for decades that Russia's military performance in the war was not as bad as it has often been painted and that it got notably *better*, not worse, after the tsar had replaced the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich as commander-in-chief. Those in the overcrowded and underfed Russian cities at the time may not have seen it like that; but, equally, they would have noticed that, in the last major operation under the tsarist regime, in January 1917, the Russians re-captured and held Riga.⁵⁶ Moreover, the canard of Nicholas's folly in assuming command has also long since been bagged. The truth was that, having decided that his cousin should be dismissed, family politics, tradition, and good manners dictated that only a Romanov of higher standing might take the grand duke's place. The dutiful and well-mannered Nicholas II would have felt that he had no choice in this, other than to refuse to serve as commander-in-chief and

thereby further humiliate his sacked relative.⁵⁷ His stock among the wider royal family and the Court was low enough already without inflicting the consequences of that upon his nearest and dearest, his beloved wife and children.

So, Russia did go to war against the Central Powers and Nicholas II became commander-in-chief. Despite a creditable performance on the Eastern Front (including the Brusilov Offensive) and a most respectable one on the Caucasian Front (the successful battles of Erzurum, Trebizond, and Erzincan of 1916), on the home front the situation declined precipitously, resulting in a renewed strike movement, disorders in bread queues and the political protests, politickings and uncertainties in Petrograd that spawned the February Revolution. The question then arose of what sort of revolution this was going to be. There was no likelihood that a socialist government would be formed – the Left, including most Bolshevik leaders on the scene, deemed themselves, Russia, and the international situation unready and unpropitious for that. The possibility of a continuation of monarchical rule, meanwhile, was scuppered when Nicholas refused to allow his haemophilic infant son, Alexei, to succeed him and then the next in line to the throne, the Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, declined the succession. The consequence was the Kadet-dominated Provisional Government with which we are familiar. The best-renowned of its members, though, the Kadet leader P. N. Miliukov, who served as foreign minister, deemed this to be a disaster, regarding the continuity of monarchical rule ('the axis of Russia') in a constitutional framework to be a precondition for post-revolutionary stability in a state as primitive and volatile as Russia.⁵⁸ But could the monarchy have survived the tsunami of February in any form?

This seems to me to be, at best, unlikely. Certainly, to Miliukov's despair, no other credible Romanov candidate stepped forward to claim the throne refused by Mikhail, while schemes for a regency mooted by the Octobrist leader and industrialist A. I. Guchkov since mid-1916 were instantly deflated by Nicholas having abdicated on behalf of his son and evaporated as speedily as did the active political career of their author.⁵⁹ Indeed, both Miliukov and Guchkov were forced out of office by May 1917, to little public disquiet, as the Provisional Government was joined in coalition by socialist representatives. (The hitherto devoutly pro-Allied Miliukov was now so disconsolate regarding Russia's capability to solve its own problems that he subsequently involved himself in June 1918 in Kiev in encouraging German intervention!)⁶⁰ Thereafter, monarchist sympathies did not entirely disappear but they were a minority interest and had to be voiced in private. Kerensky's declaration of a republic on 1 September 1917 hardly raised a ripple of protest, even though on paper it was the most flagrant and basic breach of the Provisional Government's commitment to 'non-predetermination' ahead of the summoning of the Constituent Assembly. Even conservative figures among the military, notably the commander-in-chief General L. G. Kornilov, declared themselves republicans; and later, under the Whites, Romanov flags and symbols were banned, as was the tsarist national anthem ('God Save the Tsar').⁶¹ The Whites rightly saw the monarchy as dead and divisive – to deter restorationists, the Kolchak regime even released information indicating that Nicholas II and his family had all been executed by the Reds before it had the evidence to sustain such a claim. Only last-ditch desperation (tinged with his usual political blinkeredness) seems to have inspired General M. K. Diterikhs in his doomed invitation to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov (Nicholas II's uncle) to wield the sceptre over an *opéra bouffe* monarchical crusade launched in Vladivostok in 1922 as the Red Army engulfed the Maritime

Province.⁶² In the light of all that, Guchkov and Miliukov's chances of engineering an afterlife of the monarchy in 1917, however ceremonial or *ad interim*, seem infinitesimally slim.⁶³

The revolutionary year itself, 1917, is full of diverting counterfactual potentials: What if Lenin had been unable to return from Switzerland? What if Kerensky had put the Bolshevik leaders on trial for treason in the wake of the July Days and revelations about their German funding? What if Kerensky had thrown his support behind General Kornilov instead of 'betraying him' and thereby alienating both the army command and the Kadets? What if Kerensky had not ordered the disastrous military offensive of June–July 1917 that further radicalized the soldiery and deepened divisions in the non-Bolshevik Left? What if the Constituent Assembly had been summoned earlier to create a legitimate government? What if real progress had been made on social reform? What if more amicable and equitable relations had been established between the Provisional Government and the periphery (especially Ukraine)? All these imponderables, however, rested to one considerable degree or another upon Russia extricating itself rapidly from the Great War. A separate peace was deemed unthinkable. Of course, the Bolsheviks would achieve one (at huge cost) in 1918, but those daring to argue for such unilateral action in 1917 (among whom even the Bolsheviks were not numbered) were immediately accused of treachery akin to that associated with Rasputin and the 'dark forces' alleged to have befouled imperial policy prior to the February Revolution. So, all prospects for peace relied upon persuading the Allies to renounce the central plank of their war aims: the unconditional surrender of Germany and the Central Powers. By the time that was achieved, Grandma would have been sporting a full Kris Kringle, as Kerensky repeatedly found when he dared nervously to raise the issue with Allied ambassadors, and as would-be delegates to the aborted socialists' Stockholm Conference discovered when they were refused passports by their governments.⁶⁴ With that in mind, we will move swiftly on to post-October possibilities.

An enduring 'what if' of the civil-wars era concerns White military strategy. One glance at a map reveals that, with Generals E. K. Miller, N. N. Iudenich and A. I. Denikin encamped in the north, north-west and south, respectively, and Admiral A. V. Kolchak moored in the east, the Whites had the Reds surrounded in early 1919.⁶⁵ If they had advanced simultaneously, surely the Bolshevik baby would have been strangled at birth. Such prognoses have proved attractive to armchair strategists down the years. But there are very good reasons why such a coordinated White advance did not take place.⁶⁶

In North Russia, Miller's forces were isolated, plagued by sniping socialists, desertions and Karelian separatists, and were always meagre in number. The Northern Army mustered only 25,000 at its height and its furthest advance up the Dvina and along the Murmansk–Petrograd railway line in August 1919 could not be organized in time to forge a meaningful union with Kolchak's Siberian forces, who were, by then, retreating swiftly back across the Urals.⁶⁷ Moreover, these operations were almost entirely the doing of British interventionists, whose aim was not to crush Bolshevism but to secure a temporal and spatial buffer to facilitate their own withdrawal from Russia, which was completed in September. Iudenich's North-West Army was even smaller (18,500 men in the active army at its height) and was hosted only as a most unwelcome guest on Estonian territory. The authorities at Reval (Tallinn) welcomed its advance on Petrograd in October 1919, but viewed that action primarily as a Russian withdrawal

from Estonia and promptly disarmed and interned this returning White cuckoo when the Red Army defeated it and pursued it back across the Narva–Pskov border towards its nest.⁶⁸ In the south, Denikin's powerful Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR), a union of White Volunteers and Don, Kuban, Terek and other Cossacks, was far more numerous (numbering 270,000 men at its height, although less than half of these were in the active army) and enjoyed considerable Allied technical support (equipment and weaponry, including tanks and aircraft, as well as trainers and instructors) once the Straits were re-opened in November 1918. However, Denikin was surely correct in calculating that before any meaningful advance on Moscow could be attempted it was necessary to secure his rear and, in particular, to clear the North Caucasus (home of his vital Terek and Kuban Cossack allies) of the 150,000 scattered Bolshevik forces lingering there, alongside other chaotic detritus of the disintegrating Caucasus Front of the former imperial army. Consequently, although the AFSR was able to move upon and capture Tsaritsyn on 2 July 1919, this was again too late to secure a union with Kolchak: intermittent contact was made, on the right bank of the Volga, with outriders of the admiral's Urals Army, but by that time these forces were themselves in retreat and had lost meaningful contact with the Kolchak's *stavka* at Omsk. (In fact, so divorced from Omsk had the Urals Army become that its operational direction was transferred to the command of the AFSR on 25 July 1919, which rather defeated the point.) Denikin's forces then moved on a three-pronged offensive towards Moscow (following the general's 'Moscow Directive' of 3 July 1919) but the left flank sank into the Ukrainian quagmire, the Kuban Army on the right flank proved incapable of moving up the Volga beyond Tsaritsyn and in the centre the Volunteer Army stalled at Orel, 200 miles short of the Kremlin. During the subsequent retreat, efforts to regroup were thwarted by the unstable conditions in the territory recently captured by the AFSR – much of it overrun by forces of Nestor Makhno's anarchist Revolutionary-Insurgent Army in southern and south-eastern Ukraine – thereby driving home the dangers of not fully preparing and reinforcing the rear prior to an advance in conflicts as fluid and kaleidoscopic as the Russian civil wars. As for Kolchak himself, the Spring Offensive of his 680,000-strong Russian Army (of whom less than a quarter were at the front) began in March 1919, before Miller, Iudenich or Denikin, for good reasons, were able to join him, was turned 30 miles short of the Volga in April–May, and began an almost uninterrupted 5,000-mile *Katabasis* to the Far East that saw White forces in Siberia decimated and Kolchak captured and executed by the Bolsheviks at Irkutsk in February 1920.

Kolchak's early advance has been described as ill-considered, not least by his advisor and nominal *chef d'arrière*, Major-General Alfred Knox (head of the British Military Mission to Siberia),⁶⁹ but it is difficult to argue that the admiral, for all his inexperience of land warfare, did not have solid grounds for its timing. It is true that some White generals were suicidally over-confident and could not bring themselves to accept that the bunch of journalists and criminals squatting in the Kremlin (most of them allegedly Magyars or Germans, girded by Chinese Chekists) might resist a real Russian army. Kolchak's chief of staff, General D. A. Lebedev, even informed an American visitor that the Siberian Army's capture of Perm' in December 1918 presaged nothing less than 'the realization of the old dream of a Russian Constantinople'.⁷⁰ But Kolchak and other White leaders were all too well aware that although there were ranks of irreconcilable anti-Bolsheviks in and around the governments in London, Paris, and Washington, there were many Allied

politicians who did not fear the Soviet government and even some who hoped to use Russia's discomfort to their own countries' advantage. Consequently, if Kolchak and his supporters were to win what they desired above all else – the admittance of Russia to the family of Allied 'victor nations', a seat at the Paris Peace Conference, and the opportunity to ensure their country was properly rewarded for the very considerable part it had played in the world war – the lesson was clear. A few days after having assumed the mantle of 'supreme ruler' in November 1918, Kolchak had spelled that lesson out:

The day is dawning when the inexorable course of events will demand victory of us; upon this victory or defeat will depend our life or death, our success or failure, our freedom or ignoble slavery. The hour of the great international peace conference is now near and if, by that hour, we are not victorious then we will lose our right to a vote at the conference of victor nations and our freedom will be decided upon without us.⁷¹

Kolchak's calculations were correct. In November–December 1918, nothing was done by the Allies to dissuade Romania from snatching Russian Bessarabia from its German occupiers (to reverse the settlement of the Treaty of Bucharest of 1812). Then, at meetings during 12–19 January 1919 in Paris, the Council of Ten ruled that no Russian representatives would be afforded a seat among them. Days later, in accordance with a scheme devised by Lloyd George and Robert Borden, the prime minister of Canada, an invitation was sent out by radio (from a transmitter atop the Eiffel Tower) suggesting that all warring parties in Russia, including the Bolsheviks, should meet at a separate peace conference on Prinkipo, off Constantinople, in the Sea of Marmara. Some weeks afterwards, in early March 1919, a senior American diplomat, William C. Bullitt, was already being entertained in Moscow, parlaying in a semi-official manner with Lenin on behalf of Woodrow Wilson, and was offering very generous terms to end the intervention. These insults – 'a betrayal of the minor brigands by the major ones', Trotsky termed it – would be repeated throughout 1919.⁷² In these circumstances, it seems to me to be unsurprising that the Supreme Ruler opted for an early advance: the civil-wars dice were already loaded against him and he was right to seize the initiative.

So, all musings on a coordinated White advance against the Red heartland are pipe-dreams. Moreover, even if such a combination had been possible, the scattered White forces, based around the underdeveloped periphery of the former empire, would have had to overcome Bolshevik resistance from a relatively populous, economically developed and ethnically homogeneous territory centred on Moscow that also contained most of the military infrastructure and manpower of old army. From it the Bolsheviks would muster a Red Army of 5,500,000 men by 1920, dwarfing its White opponents. As even one of the foremost advocates of Allied intervention in 1919 put it a decade later: 'The ancient capital lay at the centre of a web of railroads ... and in the midst a spider! Vain hope to crush the spider by the advance of lines of encircling flies!'⁷³

Of course there were other options. The Whites could have initiated wholesale and revolutionary social, political and economic reforms; they could have ceded territory to Poland and Finland to win their support; they could have recognized an independent Ukraine. They could, in short, have renounced everything that had inspired them to take to the field in the first place. They could have stopped being Whites.⁷⁴ And grandma might have grown whiskers ...

Widely considered in the historiography have been the proponents of an alleged socialist ‘alternative to Bolshevism’ in the revolutionary maelstrom that hit Russia in 1917 and relentlessly buffeted it during the civil-wars years that followed. At least two studies of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (SR) have utilized that phrase in their titles, while the Menshevik Georgian Republic has been promoted as an ‘experiment’ of such an option by another.⁷⁵ Influential works by Geoffrey Swain have also (and consistently) touted the SRs as an alternative to Bolshevism in the civil-wars period.⁷⁶ Of course, these centre-left parties had harnessed their wagon to the fate of the Constituent Assembly. Thus, a combination of the Mensheviks’ disastrous showing in the elections to that body (they won just 2.6% of a vote generally held to be a fair mirror of public opinion) and the farcical manner in which the Assembly was meekly dispersed by Bolshevik sailors, with barely a murmur of popular protest, following its single thirteen-hour convention on 5 January 1918, despite a national SR majority approaching 60% of the popular vote,⁷⁷ might lead us to dismiss claims for such an alternative as wishful thinking. The unalterable fact of the matter was that, whatever was the concrete and symbolic importance of the Constituent Assembly for the SR leaders, for ordinary (overwhelmingly peasant), inhabitants of the collapsing Russian Empire it was at worst an irrelevance and at best a meaningless, amorphous abstraction that mysteriously obsessed the distant, urban party ‘chiefs’.⁷⁸ Indeed, popular reactions to the event seem to have been the very definition of indifference. The quotidian mood was poignantly reflected in observations made by the first character introduced in the most celebrated Russian poem of the era, Alexander Blok’s ‘The Twelve’, which depicts the petrified streets of post-October Petrograd:

From building to building
 Stretches a cable
 On the cable’s a placard:
 ‘All Power to the Constituent Assembly!’
 An old woman keens and weeps beneath it.
 She just can’t understand what it means.
 Why such a huge scrap of cloth
 For such a placard?
 It would make so many footwraps for the boys,
 So many are without clothes or shoes ...⁷⁹

And this unconcern with the fate of the SRs’ totemic gathering by that party’s rural constituents has to be set against the background of a city, in which the doomed convention met, where the Bolsheviks had won 45% of the vote to the elections (to the SRs’ 41%), with a garrison and nearby frontline wards where soldiers and sailors had given 60–80% of their vote to Lenin’s party.⁸⁰ Wending his way home from the rudely adjourned meeting of the Constituent Assembly of 5–6 January 1918, the SR N. V. Sviatitskii confided optimistically to a friend: ‘We shall see – perhaps this is not the end’. A decade later, however, he admitted that the Constituent Assembly had perished that night. And not because of the intervention of unruly Bolshevik sailors or because of Lenin’s duplicity but ‘as a consequence of the indifference with which the people responded to our dissolution, which had permitted Lenin to dismiss us with a wave of his hand: “Let them just go home!”’.⁸¹

Likewise, there had never been any real hope that in October-November 1917, having seized power in collaboration with many of their Left-SR allies, the Bolsheviks would agree to an all-socialist government in the negotiations towards 'a government that will have the confidence of the democracy as a whole' forced upon them by the powerful railwaymen's union (Vikzhel), whose Left-SR-led members were bringing the railway network to a standstill, even as the success of the revolution in Moscow lay in the balance and a Don Cossack force mustered by Kerensky at Pskov closed on Petrograd from Gatchina. Some prominent Bolsheviks, including L. B. Kamenev, A. I. Rykov and D. B. Riazanov, might have favoured such a move in principle but even they began gradually returning to the fold (despite their resignation from government posts on 4 November) when some hardline SR and Menshevik negotiators made a *sine qua non* of their joining such a coalition the exclusion from it of both Lenin and Trotsky and possibly all Bolsheviks, while the Left-SRs soon accepted a Bolshevik compromise that admitted exclusively members of their newly founded party into a reformed, coalition Sovnarkom.⁸² Even Vladimir Brovkin, the Mensheviks' most ardent cheerleader among historians of the period, admitted that 'the record of the Menshevik leadership in the Vikzhel negotiations ... was extremely inconsistent and contradictory', reflecting a reluctance to accept a compromise that might split the party.⁸³ Moreover, it is clear that Lenin and his supporters (including Trotsky) never saw the negotiations 'as anything other than a delaying action while the regime strengthened itself, i.e. warded off the military threat[,] ... [and] established control in Moscow' and rebuffed the Cossacks, who had only undertaken their action most reluctantly and were anxious return to the Don territory.⁸⁴ Although it is possible that Bolshevik compromisers might have yet won the day at a mooted emergency party conference had Kamenev *et al.* not quit the party's Central Committee, thereby leaving Lenin to guide its retrenchment against a background of news of pro-October victories in other cities (including Moscow) and waning military opposition,⁸⁵ it is surely inconceivable that a Kamenev-compromise faction (or even majority) within the party, albeit transiently victorious, could have held out against Lenin's will for one-party rule any more than the Left Bolsheviks were able to turn their party majority into support for a revolutionary war against Lenin's will for peace in January-March 1918. It seems unhelpful, therefore, to signpost this as one of the 'forks in the road' that democratic socialism missed.⁸⁶ By their own actions, Mensheviks, SRs, Left-SRs and Bolshevik compromisers had eschewed such a tine.

If the farcical fate of the Constituent Assembly was pre-ordained long before its meeting in January 1918, and the post-October coalition negotiations were similarly stillborn, might a more successful proffering of a socialist alternative to Bolshevism have been made by the SRs and Mensheviks prior to October? Given what was to ensue, those parties clearly should not, for example, have voted down but voted in favour of Julius Martov's resolution to the Soviet Central Executive Committee on 4 July 1917 advocating an all-Socialist government.⁸⁷ That would have saved them from further costly, reputation-shredding association with Kerensky and the flailing Provisional Government, as it postponed land reform and stumbled from the shocks of opening a breach with the Ukrainian Rada and the July Days, through the disastrous Kornilov Affair towards the regime's October dénouement. Even here, though, one can sense the whiskers of wishful thinking sprouting luxuriously (on Grandma and hirsute historians alike), as most mainstream SRs and Mensheviks had many (what

seemed to them) utterly convincing reasons for *not* voting in favour of Martov's resolution: Petrograd was not Russia and Russia was not ready for socialism; they were not organizationally prepared to lead it towards socialism; the Allies and the command of the Russian Army would oppose such a government; etc. On every point they were probably right. Only hindsight would convince some that they should nevertheless have tried and should have supported Martov. As for the option sometimes suggested of the moderate socialists insisting upon summoning a constituent assembly much earlier, rather than accepting the Kerensky government's repeated postponement of elections, there were, again, solid reasons for why the SRs and Mensheviks acted as they did: Russia had nothing to compare with the experience in democracy, civil association, and public politics that, for example, pump-primed the summoning of a constitutional assembly at Weimar within two months of the German Revolution;⁸⁸ and the Kadets, whom most SRs and Mensheviks believed were essential to the success of any Petrograd government being able to hold its own against the Allies and the generals, were in control of the electoral commission for the Constituent Assembly and had their own reasons for delaying the elections (notably, fear of the disruption a national vote would cause if it were to be held during potentially active periods on the front).⁸⁹ The subsequently signposted 'forks in the road' of 1917-18, therefore, were regarded as uninviting and potentially hazardous dead ends by those taking decisions at the time.

The doleful comments by Sviatitskii quoted above, on the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 marking its irrefutable end, should not be swallowed entirely whole, as the assembly's ghost was conjured up in several eidolonic apparitions in the course of the civil wars.⁹⁰ During the so-called 'Democratic Counter-Revolution' of the summer of 1918, SR-Popular Socialist regimes were established at Samara (Komuch, the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly) and Arkhangel'sk (The Supreme Administration of the Northern Region) in regions where the SRs had often won 80% or more of the votes to the Constituent Assembly and at a time when recently introduced policies and practices of Sovnarkom were beginning to arouse the hostility towards Moscow of peasants and workers alike: the Food Dictatorship, the Committees of the Village Poor, the abandonment of workers' control, the blatant interference in Soviet elections, the unleashing of the Cheka, the launch of the Red Terror, etc. Yet the flow of recruits to Komuch's People's Army and the forces of the Arkhangel'sk government never rose above a strangulated, impotent trickle and neither regime could have established itself without Allied intervention (the Czechoslovak Legion on the Volga and British forces in the North). Both regimes collapsed when Allied support for them was withdrawn, to be replaced by unstable halfway houses (the Ufa Directory and the Provisional Government of the Northern Region) before succumbing – having suffered more Allied interference – to the unalloyed military dictatorships of Admiral Kolchak in Siberia and General Miller in the North.⁹¹

The will-o'-the-wisp of a Komuch consolidation and revival has recently been identified in reassessments of its political and military efforts during the final weeks of its existence in November 1918 offered by Geoffrey Swain and Evan Mawdsley.⁹² But this must surely be recorded as another insubstantial *ignis fatuus*, raising more false hopes. Both authors place probably too much emphasis on the capacity of one Director, General V. G. Boldyrev, to influence affairs in a direction favoured by the socialists, but the politically moderate general was not trusted by the Siberian Kadets or army officers

(who only very reluctantly accepted his candidature for the Directory as a substitute for the ailing General M. V. Alekseev).⁹³ They also surely exaggerate the importance of the People's Army's counter-attack around Kandry station (near Ufa) on 10 November 1918, which was chiefly the work of volunteer units raised by Colonel V. O. Kappel', both of which were held in icy contempt among the White military, as Kolchak's *stavka's* subsequent misuse and abuse of these *kappel'evtsy* during and after Kolchak's advance was to prove.⁹⁴ After all, what counted for the Bolsheviks' opponents in the civil wars was not a flash-in-the-pan military revival (Ufa was duly recaptured, in short order, by the Reds on 29–31 December 1918) but steady, protracted and dependable Allied support. There are various reasons why that support was not forthcoming in the case of Komuch and its confrères (ranging from the pro-White attitudes of Allied military figures on the ground in Russia to doubts in London and Paris about the advisability of any form of intervention that might engender a revived and united Russia), but the bottom line was that London, Paris, and Washington had had their fingers burnt in supporting the fractious Provisional Government in 1917 and had no desire to feed the flames again.⁹⁵ This much was clear from the frosty reception accorded to the endlessly squabbling emissaries to Allied headquarters and capitals of the Democratic Counter-Revolution in 1918 – those Right-SRs, Popular Socialists and Left-Kadets corralled in the Union for the Regeneration of Russia.⁹⁶ Even a year later, in November 1919, by which time the defeated Kolchak's own stock with the Allies (to say nothing of that of the brutal Cossack warlords G. M. Semenov and I. P. Kalmykov who claimed to represent him east of Baikal) had fallen to an all-time low, Allied diplomats who dared encourage a new wave of SR and *oblastkik* (regionalist)-led rebellions against the White government were to find themselves not encouraged but rebuked and recalled by their governments.⁹⁷

Subsequently, in the Far East, the Allies did nothing to reinforce the admittedly meagre chance of SRs and Mensheviks in influencing the pro-Bolshevik government of the Far Eastern Republic (FER), refused to recognize the putative state or to invite it to the Washington Conference, and stood by as its forces captured Vladivostok and petitioned for union with RSFSR on 14 November 1922. The Allies had surely guessed all along that, whatever its democratic trimmings, the FER was, for Moscow, no more than a useful cloak that could be dispensed with the moment that the time was right (just as had been the Vikzhel negotiations of November 1917). It was another of those *culs de sac* subsequently signposted as an alternative route by those with a faulty historical satnav. The FER was duly absorbed into the RSFSR the very next day.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, on the pretexts of supporting a Bolshevik uprising in Tiflis and protecting Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatists, but in reality utilizing the breathing space provided by the armistice recently signed with Poland at Riga to complete its conquest of Transcaucasia, the 11th Red Army invaded Menshevik Georgia in February 1921, abruptly terminating that 'experiment', and proclaimed Soviet power. It was no coincidence that, still fuming at Georgia's separate peace with Germany of 28 May 1918 (the Treaty of Poti), the Allies had vetoed its membership of the League of Nations in November 1920.⁹⁹

The potentials of Leftist anti-Bolshevism are, therefore, in the main, quite straightforwardly dismissible: the correlation of national and international forces holed and then sank them. The propensity of historians of the revolution to posit SR-ism or Menshevism as a viable 'alternative to Bolshevism' is, however, more puzzling. After all, it requires us

to forget that, during the inter-war years, moderate-socialist and democratic governments (many of them with radical, SR-like land reform programmes) were usurped all across Eastern, Central and Southern Europe by regimes of a more right-wing and authoritarian stamp. The question surely begs to be asked: why should we believe that, but for the triumph of Bolshevism, the outcome would have been any different in Russia?¹⁰⁰ This is a thorny question, as it seems to bestow legitimacy upon (or, at least, offer gratitude to) a system that begat Stalinism, but it is one that awaits an answer.

Despite the usually implicit alternatives to Bolshevism explored in the examples above, unmitigated and explicit counterfactualism has yet to find a comfortable home in the field of Russian revolutions and civil wars history. Although an event as earth-shaking as the revolution might be expected to have attracted phalanxes of counterfactualist authors intent on foregrounding startling ‘turning points’ and charismatic ‘great men’, whilst diminishing the role of sometimes glacially slow economic and cultural changes,¹⁰¹ with some largely dishonourable exceptions they have been deterred. Well-renowned historians of the subject may briefly acknowledge potential alternatives in studies published for the revolutions’ centenary,¹⁰² but they have not consummated such asides to the extent of blurring fact and fiction. In some ways this is odd, as the roots of counterfactualism are surely embedded in contemporary scepticism towards general theories and the post-modern critique of meta-narratives, especially Marxism, that are widely understood as positing over-arching, adamant theories to explain how history in general (and the fate of the Russian Revolution in particular) is determined.¹⁰³ But such an approach is misleading and has been alien to leading proponents of Marxism since its inception. As Marx himself once wrote, History would:

be of a very mystical nature, if ‘accidents’ played no part. These accidents naturally form part of the general course of development and are compensated by other accidents. But acceleration and delay are very much dependent on such ‘accidents’, including the ‘accident’ of the character of the people who first head the movement.¹⁰⁴

In deference to this (and, admittedly, in an attempt, in exile, to deflect accusations that he was prone to exaggerating his own role during October and the civil wars), even Trotsky would venture that the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power in 1917 and retention of it thereafter, whatever the ineluctability of ‘the chain of objective historical forces’, might not have been possible but for Lenin’s personal direction of party strategies.¹⁰⁵

Conscientious historians, then, must no more succumb to passive fatalism and inexorably linear, Sophoclean determinism – accidents really do happen – than they should accept all contingencies as equally possible – pigs really do not fly. Rather, when faced with an allegedly stark and mutually exclusive choice between the selection of ‘facts’ and the maligned method of imagination, historians should reserve the right to oscillate creatively between the two, as long as they can do so without uncoupling themselves entirely from what is known to be true.¹⁰⁶ In sum, the chimerical chaff of wishful thinking and fantasy must be threshed from the wheat of the probable, even if that remaining grain is mixed (by necessity) with some irksome but irrefutably *echt* husks of the toothsome accidental.¹⁰⁷ After all, even if his case was (again) built upon a foundation of self-exculpation, in explaining how a severe chill he contracted during a soaking in a freezing lake,

whilst on an unexpectedly prolonged hunting jaunt (necessitating his subsequent absence from crucial Central Committee meetings during the crisis of Lenin's succession in 1923–24), Trotsky was surely right to insist that 'one can foresee a revolution or a war, but it is impossible to foresee the consequences of an autumn shooting-trip for wild ducks'.¹⁰⁸

Notes

1. Of course, this assertion is open to debate – and not only by those of an arch conservative or neo-liberal stamp (the doyen of which, of course, was Richard Pipes, in, *inter alia*, *The Russian Revolution, 1899–1919* and *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*), who view socialist projects as inherently doomed and regard totalitarianism as the deliberate (but covert) aim of nefarious Bolshevik conspirators. However, many socialist and libertarian critics of Bolshevism, for example, also argue that the roots of Stalinism can be perceived in the actions of Lenin's government in the first weeks of its existence (the rejection of coalition government, the foundation of the Cheka, restrictions on freedom of the press, the suffocation of factory committees, etc.). See, for example: Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*.
2. On the Bolsheviks' attenuated victory, see: Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*, 240–4.
3. Frankel, '1917: The Problem of Alternatives', 3.
4. Stove, 'A.J.P. Taylor is History'.
5. We should discount those who are only in it for the money and practitioners of 'alternate history', who write works of fiction quite divorced from reality (but not necessarily fiction itself, which can sustain rich strands of counterfactuality). For an insightful analysis of this genre's popularity in contemporary Russia, where it has taken on a supernatural gloss in a country inured against handbrake turns in historiography by years of clumsy Soviet maneuvering, see: Laurelle, 'Conspiracy and Alternate History in Russia'.
6. Squire, ed. *If it had Happened Otherwise*, in which each contributor's title begins with the words 'What if'. One could, though, cite an earlier but less celebrated volume: Chamberlin, *The Ifs of History*. Of course, numerous less scholarly examples could be adduced. Notable for our purposes are the often lurid propaganda pieces inspired by contemporary opponents of the Bolsheviks' revolution: for example, Cournos, *London under the Bolsheviks*, in which, comically to modern ears, the post-revolutionary British currency is named 'The MacDonald'! In the United States, the First Red Scare inspired a similar wave, including Edgar Rice Burrough's *The Moon Men* (1925), which was first submitted to publishers in a more explicitly anti-Bolshevik form as *Under the Red Flag*. Such works might be regarded as an extension of the scaremongering invasion literature popular in Britain since Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* of 1871, crossed with a virulent strain of technophobia only annealed by Lenin's futuristic 1921 pronouncement that 'Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country': Lenin, 'Our Foreign and Domestic Position'.
7. From Livy's occasional imaginative embellishments in his *History of Rome* (27–9 BC), via Pascal's 17th-century digressions on Cleopatra's nose (see below, n. 22), to Gibbon's 18th-century musings in *The Decline and Fall* on the Islamization of Oxford after the Arabs' victory at Poitiers in 732. However, the first volume fully devoted to a recognizable counterfactual history may be Louis Geoffroy's *Napoléon*

et la conquête du monde 1812–1832, of 1836, in which Napoleon defeats Russia in 1812, invades Britain in 1814, and relaunches the conquest of Egypt before conquering India, China and Japan to become ‘Emperor of the World’, prior to his death in 1832. Although the author, the son of a French officer killed at Austerlitz, presents all this as a panegyric, ‘a satirical reading imposes itself’, as two French scholars note, ‘depicting a world desolated by Napoleonic tyranny and by the standardization of a universal monarchy’. Deluermoz and Singaravelou, ‘Explorer le champ des possibles’. This, interestingly, suggests a direct line to the works of Zamiatin and Bulgakov discussed below.

8. See, especially, Ferguson, *Virtual History*; Cowley, *What If?*; Clark, *Our Shadowed Present*; Gallagher, *Telling it like it Wasn't*; Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds*.
9. Dukes, ‘The Problem with Counterfactualism’. After all, as Dukes implies, decisions and actions by individuals tell us little of the origins and impact of the ‘Great Acceleration’ of agricultural and industrial production and population (and associated climate change) – the most serious challenge facing mankind today.
10. See, especially: Tucker, ‘Historiographical Counterfactuals’; Evans, *Altered Pasts*. Also: Evans, ‘“What if” is a waste of time’. One researcher found, indeed, that fully 32% of 500 historical works sampled that were devoted to so-called ‘turning points’ involved subjects that were explicitly military (if a war or battle had gone differently), 25% were political (if a close election or legislative decision had gone differently), and 15% concerned individual leadership (if a key actor had died earlier or lived longer): Brian Lowe, ‘Paper delivered at Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Association’, cited in Collins, ‘The Uses of Counter-Factual History’.
11. Nove, *Political Economy and Soviet Socialism*, 219.
12. Carr, *What is History?*, 127. Carr’s influential work was largely written in response to Isiah Berlin’s published 1954 lecture on *Historical Inevitability*, in which he (to some degree unfairly) castigated Marxists and determinists for their failure to recognize the role of the accidental, free will and the individual. Read today, Carr’s book can be viewed as an unstated attempt, in an undeclared (and very un-British) *Historikerstreit*, as the Cold War froze, to defend the inevitability of the Bolshevik victory against those who might suggest, however implicitly or obliquely, that alternative outcomes were possible.
13. ‘The Dead Cow, the Turbulent Priest, and the Russian Revolution’.
14. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, 300. This, of course, is a play on the allegedly more respectable *Geschichtswissenschaft* (‘historical science’).
15. Authors here took their cue from Robert Harris, *Fatherland* – a best-selling 1992 thriller set in the Third Reich twenty years after Hitler had won the Second World War. They might have been better advised to consult Tolstoy’s thoughts on the powerlessness of ‘great men’ in war and history offered in the second part of the ‘Epilogue’ to *War and Peace* (1869).
16. Ferguson, *Virtual History*. This seems to me to be a self-belittling nomenclature, almost akin to the more popular adherents of Marxism in Russia accepting Lenin’s unjust denigration of them as *mensheviks* (‘minoritarians’).
17. This is doubly odd, as possibly the most heated debate among historians of Russia concerns an unadorned counterfactual question: was tsarist Russia capable of sustaining and deepening its post-1905 experiment with constitutionalism and progressive reform, and thereby avoiding revolution, but for the intervention of war in 1914? This debate was sparked by the negative (‘pessimistic’) answers suggested by

Leopold Haimson in the 1960s: 'The Problem of Social Stability in Tsarist Russia'. It is best summarized in McKean, *The Russian Constitutional Monarchy*. McKean deemed himself to be 'an optimistic pessimist' and was, therefore, unusually well-qualified to referee this debate.

18. Brenton, *Historically Inevitable?*
19. Sebag Montefiore, 'What if the Russian Revolution had Never Happened?'
20. Cunliffe, *Lenin Lives!* Prior to Cunliffe, excursions into the counterfactual have been rare among Leftist historians. Towards the end of his career, the life-long Marxist Eric Hobsbawm expressed a cautious interest in it in a chapter entitled 'Historians and Economists II' ('Unlike some other historians I am also ready to welcome its excursions into imaginary or fictional history known as "counterfactuals" ... All history is full of implicit or explicit counterfactuals.'). but by the time he wrote the Preface for the volume in which that chapter was collected he seems to have changed his mind ('In short, I believe that without the distinction between what is and what is not so, there can be no history'): Hobsbawm, *On History* (compare pages 150 and ix).
21. See: Hatherley, 'After the End of the World'.
22. What might be termed the 'Cleopatra's Nose Syndrome', after Pascal's notion that had Mark Anthony not been so enraptured by the pharaoh's beguiling proboscis there would have been no affair between the two and, consequently, the Second Triumvirate would not have disintegrated and the Roman Republic would have endured. His point was to emphasize the role of chance in History: 'Cleopatra's nose, had it been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed' (*Pensées*, 1669). But, as E. H. Carr archly noted, the male's weakness for female charms is one of the most predictable and most common causations in History: Carr, *What is History?*, 99.
23. Unlike those famously cracked in James Thurber's *ne plus ultra* of the genre, 'If Grant had been Drinking at Appomotox'. The American Civil War has been another favourite battleground of counterfactualists, and here Thurber was lampooning a piece by Winston Churchill in *Scribner's Magazine* (December 1930) entitled 'If Lee had not won the Battle of Gettysburg', in which the future prime minister artfully writes from the point of view of an historian in a world in which Lee *had* won both the battle and the entire war he famously lost. Humour, then, has traditionally provided an important facet of the counter-factual.
24. Less diverting – indeed, quite tasteless and potentially open to charges of antisemitism, given the manner of his death and the mercantile occupation to which his Jewish ancestors had often been confined – is one fate-of-the-revolution counterfactual having Trotsky ending up as a chandler of mountaineering equipment in Mexico: Roberts, *What Might Have Been*. Roberts, it might be said, is a proponent of the 'If only' rather than the 'What if ...' school of counterfactuality and his works are as revealing of their author's ideological anxieties as they are of historical contingencies.
25. Almarik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*
26. For an English translation, see: Chaianov, 'The Journey of my Brother Alexei'. In a typically surreal Stalinist twist, the name of an organization imagined by Chaianov seems to have inspired the designation of members of the equally fanciful organization arraigned in Moscow at the Trial of the Labouring Peasant Party in 1930. Among the defendants was Chaianov himself. See: Shanin, 'Chayanov's treble death'.
27. On more recent exponents, see: Dalton-Brown, 'Signposting the Way to the City of Night'.

28. Lesser, more unadulteratedly utopian and po-facedly pro-Soviet science fictions of the immediate post-revolutionary era (one during which the genre mushroomed) are less well-remembered. Self-explanatory examples of such works, which are often crudely derivative of H. G. Wells, include: Iakov Ukenev, *The Coming World* (1923); Inno-kenty Zhukov, *Voyage of the 'Red Star' Detachment to the Land of Marvels* (1924); Viktor Nikolskii, *In a Thousand Years* (1925); and (a riposte to Zamiatin) Jan Larri, *The Land of the Happy* (1931). More substantial, but far from entirely satisfying are the works of Aleksei Tolstoi: *Aelita* (1923); and *Engineer Garin's Death Ray* (1926). Also those of and Aleksandr Belaev: *Battle in Ether* (1928); and *The Air Seller* (1929). On the Soviet science fiction boom see: Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*.
29. According to one authoritative account, Bulgakov could not bring himself – probably in the interest of self-preservation – to publish an earlier draft of the work, in which the giant birds, snakes, etc. that had been unleashed by unwary, production-minded Soviet scientists ultimately lay waste to Moscow and the Soviet dream: 'Rokovye iaitsa'.
30. Although its title was quite widely used in émigré circles in inter-war France and Germany to describe the Soviet Union. On Krasnov's work and its contemporary resonance, see: Aptekman, 'Forward to the Past'; Maguire, 'Spectral Geographies'. On the influence of Krasnov's novel on the contemporary Russian writer, hoaxer and fantasist Eduard Limonov, see: Rogatchevsky, 'Dangerous Liaisons'. On Krasnov's fetishism of modern technology, particularly with regard to the mobilizing potential of communications, see: Krasnov, *Dusha armii*. Krasnov got to experience for himself the no less painful realities of the land 'beyond the thistle' after he was incarcerated by British forces in Austria in May 1945 and then sent back to Russia with other White and Cossack leaders of the civil-wars era. There he was subsequently tried by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, found guilty of treason and other crimes, and executed (on 17 January 1947). For biographical details of individuals mentioned in this text, see the entries in Smele, *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Civil Wars*.
31. Aksyonov, *The Island of Crimea*.
32. Guryanova, 'The Island of Freedom'.
33. It would be tempting here to make comparisons – as Aksenov probably intended – with adherents of the *Smenovekhostvo* ('Change of Signposts') movement among inter-war émigrés, who dreamed of the 'Russification of October', unaware that their noble cause was being covertly financed by Moscow. See: Hardeman, *Coming to Terms with the Soviet Regime*. More likely, though, is that he had in mind his generation's shattered dreams about the possibility of the peaceful coexistence and the potential for convergence of capitalism and socialism, as voiced by such diverse figures as Pitirim Sorokin, Andrei Sakharov, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Herbert Marcuse: Matich, 'Vasilii Aksenov and the Literature of Convergence'.
34. It is uncertain whether this character is intended to evoke the memory of the British intelligence officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Bailey, whose derring-do, anti-Bol-shevik adventures in Central Asia in 1918 involved joining the local Cheka to assist in hunting down 'the British spy Bailey' – Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent* (Chapter 18) – but the comedic potential of that story would surely have appealed to Aksenov.
35. That said, even as I write plans are apparently afoot in Riyadh to dig a canal that will effectively turn Saudi Arabia's regional rival, peninsular Qatar, into an island: *The Guardian*, 1 September 2018. Thoughtfully, the 'Salwa Island Project' will incorporate a

- nuclear waste facility. This follows a widely mocked petition to the Ukrainian president in 2017 requesting that the Perekop isthmus be severed by the construction of a canal: *Sputnik News*, 9 January 2017.
36. Bizarrely, following the Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014, the former head of the German foreign intelligence service (BND), August Hanning, is reported to have suggested to the BBC in April 2016 that Crimea might be turned into a 'free economic zone ... like Hong Kong', by agreement of Russia, Ukraine, the USA and the European Union: *Sputnik International*, 29 April 2016.
 37. Górecki, *The Peninsula as an Island*; Petrov, 'Crimea'.
 38. Stove, 'A.J.P. Taylor is History'.
 39. In February 2017, Moscow's independent Levada Centre (its credentials for trustworthiness reinforced every time that the Kremlin labels it as a 'foreign agency') reported that some 46% of respondents to a recent survey viewed Stalin positively, with 32% averring that they regarded him with respect, ten per cent declaring that they held sympathetic views towards him and four per cent pledging their admiration, compared to 21% who said that they hated or feared the former leader and another 22% who viewed him with indifference. This marked a 16-year high in Stalin's popularity, according to the Centre: *The Moscow Times*, 15 February 2017. A Levada poll later in 2017 placed Stalin first in a list of the most 'outstanding' figures in Russian history, ahead of both Putin and Pushkin: *Newsweek*, 26 June 2017.
 40. Nove, 'Was Stalin really Necessary?'. Nove, of course, was an economic historian, and (although their works will not long detain us here) it should be mentioned that some western historians of that breed (unlike Nove himself) have long been and are still attracted to building models of what the Russian economy might or might not have achieved without the revolution and/or Stalin's Five-Year Plans. (They draw upon the broader cliometric and counterfactual tropes in economic history inspired by Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth*.) Recent examples, with good bibliographies, include: Chermukhin, et al., 'Was Stalin Necessary for Russia's Economic Development?'; Chermukhin, et al., 'The Industrialization and Economic Development of Russia'. Also: Korolov, 'Evaluating Russian Economic Growth without the Revolution of 1917'. For the non-econometricist, more intriguing and digestible is an unpublished piece by Geoffrey Swain: 'What would the Soviet Union have been like if Trotsky had defeated Stalin?'. Swain concludes that one-party rule under Trotsky would have been less arbitrary and paranoid but in other key respects (peasant policy, foreign policy) 'would not have been very different' to one one-party rule under Stalin, thereby mostly seconding Nove's aside to the effect that a pock-marked, withered-armed 'Georgian with a long moustache' was not a necessary ingredient in the Stalinist soup – a haughty and tough, lapsed Jewish journalist would, in the circumstances, have served just as well.
 41. Andrew Roberts (*What Might have Been*) compares such overstretch to an attempt to predict what Ball H will do when Ball A is struck by the cue ball in a game of billiards, apparently forgetting that billiards is played with only three balls.
 42. Trotsky, *My Life*, 312.
 43. More ribald versions, substituting the word 'balls' for 'whiskers', are available, in Russian and other languages – and, given the impotency of anti-Bolshevism, might well be regarded as more appropriate.
 44. Hobsbawm, 'The Present as History', in Hobsbawm, *On History*, 307.
 45. Duncan, 'Contemporary Russian Identity', 277.

46. Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is within You*.
47. Most recently: Lieven, *Towards the Flame*.
48. We shall not attempt to estimate how many authors of such efforts were by tempted by the double-bubble impact of marking two centenaries in one volume, but the best of them certainly were not: Engelstein, *Russia in Flames*; Read, *War and Revolution in Russia*; and the volumes contributed to the 'Russia's Great War and Revolution' series (<http://russiasgreatwar.org/index.php>).
49. Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*.
50. See above, n. 17.
51. On Witte, see Harcave, *Count Sergei Witte*. On Rasputin: Radzinsky, *Rasputin*, 326–41.
52. 'The Durnovo Memorandum', in Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*, 491–509. This theme was revived in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Red Wheel*.
53. McMeekin, *The Berlin–Baghdad Express*; Jenkins, 'German Orientalism'; Schwanitz, *Germany and the Middle East*.
54. The promise of which was realized through the inter-Allied Constantinople Agreement of 18 March 1915: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constantinople_Agreement. On the devastating economic consequences for Russia of the Turks' closure of the Straits for just a few weeks during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911–12 and the First Balkan War of 1912–13, see: Spring, 'Russian Foreign Policy'. The precariousness of Russia's position was emphasized by the fact that these closures were not even aimed directly at Russia but, rather, at Italy and Greece respectively.
55. Steinberg, 'Old Knowledge and New Research'.
56. See: Stone, *The Eastern Front*; Jones, 'Imperial Russia's Forces at War'.
57. Jones, 'Nicholas II and the Supreme Command'.
58. Riha, *A Russian European*, 281–90.
59. Gleason, 'Alexander Guchkov', 64–70; Kulikov, 'Tsentral'nyi voenno-promyshlennyi komitet'; Lyandres, *The Fall of Tsarism*, 116–31, 146–51, 187–8, 235–7, 271–85.
60. Riha, *A Russian European*, 266–70.
61. Although, much to the White leadership's embarrassment, renegade officers were apt to force orchestras to perform it at gunpoint. See: Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 82.
62. Filimonov, *Konets belogo Primor'ia*, 55–62; Rudnev, *Pri vechernikh ogniakh*, 448–9.
63. The first task would have been to unravel the Gordian Knot of the line of succession, which has occupied Romanov dynasts to preposterous lengths ever since. See: Meyer, *The Quest for a Tsar*. The contemporary Monarchist Party of Russia (founded in 2012), which seems at times to be a friends-and-family affair of its chairman (the politician and businessman Anton Bakov), currently supports the candidature for the Russian throne (as 'Nicholas III') of the German Prince Karl Emich of Leiningen, the great-great-grandson of Alexander II. Perhaps more realizable than such an investiture are its aims of recovering 'lost' (that is, never claimed) territories of the Russian Empire, such as Suvarrow atoll in the South Pacific, the staging of a public trial of Lenin and Stalin, and the establishment of an independent monarchist city-state (on the Vatican model) near Ekaterinburg to be called 'All-Imperial Russian Throne'.
64. Meynell, 'The Stockholm Conference of 1917'.
65. A marvellous animated map of the changing fronts of the civil wars was among the exhibits at the British Library's 'Russian Revolution: Hope, Tragedy, Myths' exhibition in 2017. It is currently viewable at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpycUBpgWzU>.

66. On the size, composition and activities of the main White forces described below, see: 'Armed Forces of South Russia', 'Northern Army', 'North-West Army', and 'Russian Army', in: Smele, *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Civil Wars*; also Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*, 105–40.
67. The meeting of units of the Northern Army and elements of Kolchak's Siberian Army at an isolated spot near Pechora (700 miles due north of Perm' and a few miles south of the Arctic Circle) on 21 March 1919 could stand as a perfect testament to the insurmountable obstacles to White unity.
68. Following their release, some of Iudenich's more enterprising officers made their way to Poland to join the AFSR units under General N. E. Bredov interned at Pikulice and Denmby, who were then able to journey to Crimea to join General Wrangel's Russian Army in 1920. Subsequently, officers of Wrangel's army journeyed around the world to Vladivostok to unite with the remnants of White forces on the Pacific coast. Such, again, were the lengths – toilsome, wildering, wearying and all but insurmountable – involved in achieving White unity.
69. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 228–38.
70. Brown, *The Groping Giant*, 176.
71. Burovoi, *Kolchakovshchina*, 20–1.
72. Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*, 109–10. To argue, therefore, that a unified and more powerful Allied effort to see the intervention through to victory would have facilitated an anti-Bolshevik triumph is to miss the point spectacularly. Not that this has deterred some commentators, notably: Slonim, *Stillborn Crusade*.
73. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 234. See also: Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, 272–90; Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*, 237–53.
74. As Denikin almost put it at the time: Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, Vol 4, 285.
75. Radkey, 'An Alternative to Bolshevism'; White, *The Socialist Alternative to Bolshevik Russia*; Lee, *The Experiment*. It should be recorded that another recent work is far more guarded in its prognoses: Smith, *Captives of Revolution*.
76. Notably: Swain, 'Before the Fighting Started'; Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War*; Swain, 'The Democratic Counter-Revolution Reconsidered'. On Swain's writings on the SRs, see: Smele, 'Still Searching for the "Third Way"'.
 77. The Bolsheviks won 24% of the vote. The Left-SRs, who had formed a separate party and joined Sovnarkom in coalition with the Bolsheviks in November–December 1917, won just 1% of the vote, but that was a major under-representation of their popularity, as party lists for the election were drawn up in advance of the SR schism and strongly favoured candidates from the party's centre and right wings. On this issue and the election results, see: Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*.
78. Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 518–19.
79. Blok, 'Twelve'. Blok was no Bolshevik, though. In fact he died in August 1921, having long since despaired of the revolution, as the Soviet government debated expelling him.
80. Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*. A recent study has concluded that even in areas where peasants voted *en masse* for the SRs and expressed deep trust in what they routinely referred to as 'the muzhiks' party', they had no substantial interest in the finer points of party policy. See: Badcock, 'We're for the Muzhiks' Party'.
81. Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 124. In the words of one recent commentator on the events of 5–6 January 1918, the SRs 'had won an election only to find that they had lost a state': King, *The Narodniks in the Russian Revolution*, 97.

82. Swain, *Origins of the Russian Civil War*, 53–69; Keep, *The Debate on Soviet Power*, 44–99; *The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution*, 126–53; Bunyan and Fischer, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 199–204.
83. Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October*, 33–5.
84. Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 247.
85. Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 42.
86. Medhurst, *No Less Than Mystic*. The author is a British trade unionist and self-confessed ‘amateur historian’.
87. Shliapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god*, 294.
88. Anin, ‘The February Revolution’; Mosse, ‘The February Regime’.
89. Kochan, ‘Kadet Policy in 1917’.
90. Sviatitskii, who had in early 1919 had allied himself with the Soviet authorities, along with the Narod group of SRs, had to be careful: he had, after all, been a member of Komuch in 1918, so it was natural for him subsequently to dismiss its prospects. His memoirs were published in a leading Soviet journal, *Novyi mir*, but he spent lengthy terms in internal exile before his final arrest and execution in 1937.
91. On North Russia, see: Novikova, *An Anti-Bolshevik Alternative*. On Komuch: Berk, ‘The Democratic Counter-Revolution’. Berk’s article was drawn from the author’s superb but regrettably unpublished dissertation: Berk, ‘The *Coup d’État* of Admiral Kolchak’. On Siberia, see also: Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*: Chapter One (‘The Triumphant March of Reaction’).
92. Swain, ‘The Democratic Counter-Revolution Reconsidered’; Mawdsley, ‘November 1918’.
93. On Boldyrev, see: Hosking, ‘A Democratic White General’.
94. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 320.
95. Millman, ‘The Problem with Generals’.
96. ‘The Disunion for the Degeneration of Russia’ might have been a more apposite appellation: Smele, ‘*Mania Grandiosa*’; Wells, ‘The Union of Regeneration’.
97. See, for example, the fate of Mr W. E. O’Reilly, the British consul at Vladivostok, who was implicated in fomenting the ‘Gajda Putsch’ at Vladivostok on 17–18 November 1919, during which a Provisional People’s Government of Siberia was proclaimed, together with the formation of a new People’s Army: Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 552–70.
98. Sablin, *The Rise and Fall of Russia’s Far Eastern Republic*.
99. Smele, *The ‘Russian’ Civil Wars*, 145–8; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 216–26. A contrast here is worth making to the very significant moral and military support offered by the Allies to nationalist Poland during the Soviet–Polish War of 1920, without which Warsaw (and subsequently Berlin) are likely to have fallen to the Red Army, with potentially critical consequences for Europe and the world. That finely balanced conflict too is not without its re-imaginers: Johnson, ‘The Fire of Revolution’.
100. Although it has to be conceded that the chances of democracy maintaining itself in inter-war Europe might have been greater had not authoritarian and fascist leaders been denied the existence of a spectral Soviet bogeyman looming in the East with which to cow their populations.
101. Collins, ‘The Uses of Counter-Factual History’, 276.
102. ‘There was nothing preordained about the collapse of the tsarist autocracy nor even of the Provisional Government’: Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 375; ‘The events of 1917

- were filled with might-have-beens and missed chances': McMeekin, *The Russian Revolution*, 745. See also: Fitzpatrick, 'What's Left?'
103. Weinryb, 'Historiographic Counterfactuals'.
 104. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, 319–20.
 105. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. 1*, 341. On Trotsky's intentions in this seminal work, see the commentaries on it listed in Smele, *The Russian Revolution and Civil War*, 69.
 106. Deluermoz and Singaravelou, 'Explorer le champ des possibles'.
 107. Talbot, 'Chance and Necessity in History'; Flewers, 'Marxism and Counterfactual History'.
 108. Trotsky, *My Life*, 519.

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Notes on contributor

Jonathan D. Smele is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at Queen Mary, University of London. He has recently published *The 'Russian' Civil Wars, 1916–1926* (London/New York: Hurst/Oxford University Press, 2016) and the *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Civil Wars, 1916–1926*, 2 Vols (Langham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). He also edited *The Russian Revolution and Civil War, 1917–1921: An Annotated Bibliography* (London/New York: Continuum, 2003), wrote 'The Study Group on the Russian Revolution: The First Thirty Years', *Revolutionary Russia* 18, no. 2 (2005), and is the former editor of *Revolutionary Russia*. He is currently joint editor (with Michael Melancon, Auburn University) of *The Bloomsbury History of Modern Russia* and is also on the Advisory Committee of the *Russia's Great War and Revolution* project.

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