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**THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICINE OF THE  
WHITE MOVEMENT IN 1918–1920.**

**5.6.1. Russian History**

**Annotation**

**Thesis for the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences.**

**Research supervisor:**

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**Relevance of the research topic.** The history of the Russian Civil War has been extensively covered in historiography; however, many issues remain insufficiently studied. One such research gap is the organization of medicine during the White movement.

During the Civil War, the warring parties faced the pressing issue of effectively organizing surgical care, combating epidemics, and rehabilitating the wounded and sick. They needed to organize a system for evacuating wounded soldiers, establish an effective system for providing first aid, treatment in hospitals and infirmaries, and, ultimately, return soldiers to combat.

It should be noted that the warring parties had different resources (both human and material) and approaches to organizing medical and sanitary services. The course of the war directly depended on the effectiveness of this service, the readiness to quickly return the maximum possible number of wounded and sick to combat, and the ability to prevent the spread of epidemics among army units. Given the high intensity of military operations at certain periods, the issue of replenishing personnel was a key one. An important area of focus during this period was the organization of medical care for the civilian population, which was complicated by the mobilization healthcare workers and a shortage of doctors and paramedics.

Epidemics have been a severe challenge throughout human history. During military operations, infectious diseases plagued armies and rearguard forces. Mass destruction, the displacement of army units, and refugees exacerbated the situation, resulting in the spread of disease and the inability to establish effective treatment. Despite clear progress in epidemic control, World War I saw a surge in disease incidence among the warring armies, requiring additional resources to prevent the consequences. A connection can also be observed between the typhus epidemic in Europe and Russia in 1914–1920.

During the Russian Civil War, the spread of infectious diseases, including typhus, "Spanish flu," cholera, smallpox, plague, and others, was a pressing issue. Amid a shortage of personnel and resources, White Army physicians attempted to prevent and contain outbreaks of infectious disease by imposing quarantines, conducting mass vaccinations, and educating the population. Analysis of the emergence of various infectious diseases and the relationship between epidemics in Europe and Russia are also relevant. During the fighting, diseases spread to various parts of the former Russian Empire.

The Russian Civil War had an epidemiological impact on a number of countries in Europe and Asia. The poor conditions and almost complete lack of medical care for prisoners of

war, along with refugee flows, led to the spread of epidemics in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Finland, leading to the creation of cordons sanitaires on national borders. The movement of Chinese workers and volunteers also contributed to the spread of the disease to China.

The relevance of this issue is also of a practical nature. The COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola, and avian influenza epidemics have demonstrated the importance of effectively organizing anti-epidemic measures at the national level. COVID-19 has become a fundamental challenge for modern society, changing the lives of millions of people worldwide in record time.

Modern military and political conflicts demonstrate the importance of organizing medical services in combat zones, evacuating the wounded from the battlefield, providing surgical care, and rehabilitating military personnel for subsequent return to duty.

Today, public organizations play a significant role in providing assistance to military medics, the sick, the wounded, and refugees. Similar organizations were active during the Russian Civil War, being particularly widespread among the White movement. Given that modern conflicts inevitably involve large refugee flows, medical services are required to deploy new resources to prevent and manage infectious diseases and provide first aid to those in need. Given these factors, it is important to study the historical experience of organizing medical services during the Russian Civil War and analyze the achievements and mistakes made by public organizations during that time.

**The source base of the research** of the dissertation is a collection of documents, statistical materials, periodicals, and personal sources. Both published and unpublished sources are used. The latter are contained in the collections of the State Archives of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the GARF), the Russian State Military Archive (hereinafter referred to as the RGVA), and the State Archives of the Rostov Region (hereinafter referred to as the GARO). Some of these materials are being introduced into scientific circulation for the first time.

The normative sources studied include documents from the collection "The Don during the Revolution and Civil War 1917–1920." This collection includes documents held by the GARO, local history museums of the Rostov Region, and archives of the North Caucasus. Of particular value are the orders of the atamans of the Great Don Army and the memoirs of participants in those events regarding the development of sanitary services and the fight against epidemics.



The archives of the Civil Aviation Administration of the Russian Federation contain meeting minutes of the Special Conference of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in Southern Russia, the Great Military Circle of the Great Don Host, the Civil Chancellery of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces on the Northern Front (Provisional Government of the Northern Region), the Council of Ministers of the Russian Government in Siberia, and the Council of Ministers of the Government of the Northwestern Region of Russia. These archives allowed for consideration of issues related to the organization of sanitary services, the prevention of the spread of epidemics, and the appointment of senior officials to various positions.

Of great value are the documents of domestic and foreign public organizations held by the State Archives of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Military Archives. These include documents from the Russian Red Cross Society, the All-Russian Zemstvo Union, the Don Society for Front Aid, the American Red Cross, and the Russian White Cross Society. They contain official correspondence between departments and government agencies, accounting, statistical, reference, and reporting documents, hospital bed deployment plans, and more. These materials allow us to determine the scale of assistance provided and its distribution among medical institutions, as well as the level of interaction with government agencies and army command.

The documents held in the Russian State Military Archives have provided a more detailed understanding of the activities of medical trains, stationary, and floating hospitals. They have allowed us to analyze the organizational structure of medical facilities in White Army units in southern and eastern Russia. This archive contained holdings for individual medical institutions, allowing us to assess the extent of their work on the ground. Of particular interest is the collection of White Army orders, some of which concerned the activities of the medical service and contain information on the mobilization plans of medical personnel.

Useful information on the Don Cossacks' sanitary service from 1918 to 1920 is housed in the State Archives of the Russian Federation. A number of documents have made it possible to analyze the structure of the sanitary service, its management system, and its staffing levels during various stages of the war. Of particular value are materials stored in the State Archives of the Rostov Region, which have allowed for a more detailed examination of the state of the Don Cossacks' sanitary service from 1918 to 1920. A separate group of sources includes periodicals from 1918 to 1920. Valuable information on the progress of the fight against epidemics is contained in the newspapers *Donskie Vedomosti*, *Donskaya Volna*, and *Priazovsky Krai*. Correspondents were interested in information on the medical and sanitary activities of public

organizations and government agencies, and announcements were issued regarding quarantines and precautionary measures during the most acute periods of epidemics. These periodicals, of course, passed through military censorship and were unable to fully publish statistical data. The next group of sources consists of personal documents from White movement participants, doctors, paramedics, and nurses. A number of these sources made it possible to trace the state of local medical care and the problems that arose in this area.

**Historiography** of the dissertation can be divided into several groups:

1) Researches of regional healthcare systems: A.V. Posadsky, V.I. Shalamov, V.M. Rynkov, G.N. Shaposhnikov, L.G. Novikova, E.V. Khaldaev, G.N. Boranova, S.O. Vishnevsky, I.V. Narsky, D.R. Timerbulatov, E.V. Myachina. These authors examined the formation, development, and crisis of sanitary services during the White movement;

2) Review articles on the history of medicine during the Civil War by O.M. Morozova, T.I. Troshina, L.A. Yanshina, and N.A. Mironova. In their works, the authors conducted a comparative analysis of certain aspects of the sanitary service;

3) Works on the activities of public organizations during the Civil War. A significant contribution to the study of this topic was made by S.S. Ippolitov.

4) Foreign literature is primarily limited to works devoted to the activities of public organizations and the fight against epidemics. Jennifer Ann Polk, Julia Irwin, and J.-F. Faye examined the activities of the Russian and American Red Cross Societies and the Young Men's Christian Association. David K. Patterson and D. Budkart analyzed the history of the fight against epidemics.

**The goal of the research** is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the development of medical and sanitary support for the armies of the White movement (the Volunteer, Don, Northern, and Northwestern Armies, the Armed Forces of South Russia, the Russian Army of A.V. Kolchak, and the Russian Army of P.N. Wrangel) through the main stages of its development.

**To achieve the goal, the following tasks were set in the dissertation:**

- To study the specific features of the medical and sanitary services in the South, Siberia, North, and Northwest of Russia;



- Analyze the role and place of Russian and foreign public organizations in the development of White Movement medicine in these regions;
- Research the activities of medical and public organizations in combating epidemics of typhus, influenza (the "Spanish flu"), plague, and smallpox;
- Analyze the interactions between White Movement governments and foreign governments regarding the development of medical services;
- Study the projects of the Main Military Sanitary Directorates regarding the organization of evacuation and treatment of the wounded during offensive and defensive operations, and methods for organizing sanatorium treatment.

**The object of the research** is the medical and sanitary services of the armies and civilian medical institutions of the White movement, as well as public organizations providing support to the medical system.

**The subject of the research** is the organization of surgical care, the fight against epidemics, and the evacuation and treatment of the wounded and sick.

**The methodology of the dissertation** is the principles of historicism and systematicity. General scientific methods were also used: analysis, synthesis, generalization, deduction, induction, and comparative historical methods, which allowed for comparative analysis, analogy, and comparison across different chronological periods, taking into account quantitative and qualitative characteristics.

The principle of systematicity in historical research assumes that the subject of a specific historical study should be considered in the context of the interrelationships of all its elements and external connections. By using typologies, it was possible to identify departments and departments within the sanitary and medical services of the White movement.

The dissertation utilized approaches from microhistory and everyday history. These approaches were necessitated by the extensive use of journalistic materials and personal sources.

**The research's scientific novelty** lies in its use of archival documents, introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time. It examines the role of sanitary departments and White Movement government projects dedicated to combating epidemics (organizing refugee evacuations, establishing bath and laundry facilities, attempting to conduct mass vaccinations and educational work among army units and civilians, and interacting with the invaders). It

comprehensively examines the provision of surgical care (creating sanitary trains, their personnel, organizing evacuation points and surgical hospitals), as well as establishing the production and procurement of necessary medications, instruments, and materials. The financial policies of White Movement governments in the field of healthcare are examined.

**The theoretical significance of the research** lies in its detailed examination of the organization and development of medicine during the White Movement, which allows for a detailed examination of the development of medical and sanitary services and an analysis of their impact on the front and rear. The work demonstrates the continuity of medical organization between the Russian Imperial and White Armies and the influence of public organizations on the development of medical and sanitary services.

**Practical significance.** The results of this study can serve as a basis for further study of the history of the development of the medical service during the Russian Civil War and can be used in the writing of educational literature on this or related topics.

**The chronological framework of the research** covers the period from 1918 to 1920. The lower boundary is determined by the formation of the White movement's medical service in the South, North, and Northwest of Russia, Siberia, and the Far East, the beginning of interaction with foreign public organizations, and the first outbreaks of major epidemics. The upper boundary is determined by the collapse of most centers of the White movement and the beginning of the activities of their medical organizations in exile. Thus, the main stage of the development of the medical service in the White armies and their interaction with public organizations during the Russian Civil War is examined.

The territorial scope of the study covers the regions of the South, North, and Northwest of Russia, and Siberia.

#### **The provisions:**

1. The conclusion is substantiated that during the years of the Civil War, the governments of the White movement maintained and developed close contacts with the Russian Red Cross Society, the All-Russian Zemstvo Union, the Union of Cities and with a number of foreign Red Cross organizations.

– It has been proven that the White movement's medical staff received the bulk of their medications, instruments, and linens from domestic public organizations. Doctors and nurses from other countries arrived in Russia, which helped reduce the shortage of medical workers.



– It has been proven that domestic organizations, to the best of their ability, were able to reformat (and in some cases create new) the hospital network. New pharmaceutical companies were established, sanitary trains were formed, and refugee accommodation projects were implemented while preventing the spread of epidemics.

2. The study substantiates the conclusion that numerous epidemic outbreaks were one of the key causes of the White movement's medical catastrophe.

– It has been proven that a range of measures were taken to address the problem, including funding for medical institutions, expanding hospital beds, creating bath and laundry units, disinfection chambers, etc. However, due to the lack of sufficient laboratories and pharmaceutical facilities, none of the White Movement governments succeeded in conducting mass vaccination against typhoid fever.

– It has been proven that adequate sanitary and hygienic conditions were not observed due to negligence, insufficient funding, and a lack of disinfection and disinfestation equipment.

– It has been concluded that the shortcoming of the Russian Imperial Army's medical and sanitary service, which involved evacuating the sick deep into the country, was inherited. However, the network of distribution points for evacuation in the White Movement armies was less well developed, leading to a significant deterioration in the epidemiological situation in the rear areas.

– It has been proven that mass educational work was carried out within the White movement, including posters, brochures, and museum train cars used to educate troops and civilians about the need for hygiene and protection against contagious diseases. However, the scale of this work was inferior to the activities of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR.

3. The existence of a sanatorium-resort treatment organization has been identified, demonstrating the quality of measures taken to quickly return soldiers and officers to duty in the White movement.

– It has been proven that in the south of Russia, with the assistance of the Armed Forces of South Russia command, resorts in the Caucasus and the Black Sea coast were utilized in the spring of 1919. Cossack medical services, with the assistance of the Great Military Circle, organized their own sanatoriums in the Terek region and on the Don.



- The conclusion is substantiated that sanatorium treatment was organized in Siberia at the resorts of Darasun, Shivanda, and Yamarovka, and that there was a sanatorium in Harbin.

- It is proven that in 1919, at least 10 sanatoriums operated in the territories controlled by the White movement, which was twice as many as in Soviet Russia during the same period.

- It is proven that, despite the measures taken, these measures were insufficient to form a full-fledged network of sanatorium institutions due to their short-term operation and limited resources.

4. The assertion is substantiated that, despite the difficult conditions, medical workers of the White movement conducted scientific work during the Civil War. At the conferences convened, issues of organizing an effective fight against epidemics, evacuating the wounded, and their subsequent treatment were discussed.

- It is proven that, thanks to the work of microbiologist V.A. Barykin developed a new method for diagnosing typhus fever in southern Russia, even before the rash appeared on patients' bodies.

- It was established that White movement doctors experimented with creating new drugs, conducted research in cardiology and antiseptics, and developed methods for providing primary healthcare.

- It was determined that in Transbaikali, Doctors I.I. Alekseev and A.L. Vasilevsky held scientific conferences dedicated to combating epidemics.

It was proven that, due to the short timeframe and severe resource shortages, scientific activity was rather sporadic and could not significantly influence the development of the healthcare system.

5. It has been proven that the state of the White Army's medical service and its ability to perform assigned tasks had a significant impact on the outcome of the Civil War.

- It has been revealed that hospitals in Siberia were overcrowded with typhus patients as early as February–March 1919. Three weeks after the start of A.V. Kolchak's spring offensive, the phased evacuation system was disrupted, placing additional strain on the logistics of the advancing White forces.

- It has been proven that the hospital network in southern Russia from May–August 1919 was able to cope with the influx of wounded and sick patients, allowing them to be discharged

and returned to duty in a timely manner, allowing the advance on Moscow to continue. However, the autumn crisis in the medical service, caused by the dire logistical situation and the extended rear areas of the advancing troops, prevented the wounded from receiving adequate treatment.

– The conclusion is substantiated that the grave state of the Northwestern Army's medical and sanitary service in November 1919 prevented the typhus epidemic from being contained, leading to a large number of cases and a sharp decline in the units' combat effectiveness. The redistribution of medical personnel resulted in additional strain on surgical hospitals, leading to an increase in mortality. Subsequently, the weakness of the Northwestern Army's medical and sanitary service played a significant role in its eventual demise.

**Approbation of the research results.** The main provisions of the study were published in four scientific articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation for publication of research results for the degree of Candidate of Sciences. Some of the research results have been incorporated into the teaching of the "History of Russia" course at the Russian University of Transport.

The content of the work is reflected in the following main publications:

1) Zubarev, P.A. "The Fight Against Epidemics in the Armies of the White Movement During the Civil War in Russia" // *The Power of History – History of Power*. 2023. Vol. 9. Part 1. No. 43. pp. 109–119.

2) Zubarev, P.A. "Organization of Military Medicine of the White Movement in Southern Russia in January 1918 – May 1919" // *Modern Science: Current Problems of Theory and Practice. Humanities*. 2023. No. 2-2. pp. 7–10.

3) Zubarev P.A. "Combating Epidemics in the White Army and the Red Army During the Russian Civil War" // *Issues of National and Federal Relations*. 2023. Vol. 2 (95). Vol. 13. Pp. 504–511.

4) Zubarev P.A. "Military Sanitary Trains of the White Movement in Southern Russia and Siberia in 1918–1920" // *Modern Science: Current Problems of Theory and Practice. Humanities*. 2025. No. 6. pp. 38–40.

**Dissertation Structure.** The work consists of an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The first chapter examines the history of the organization and



development of the medical system of the White movement in 1918–1920 in the South and North of Russia.

The second chapter examines the history of the White Movement's fight against epidemics in its medical institutions in the South, North, and Northwest of Russia, as well as Siberia. Epidemic control projects, the progress of anti-epidemic work, and statistical data are examined.