

A Thesis

Entitled

“Woodrow Wilson’s Diplomatic Policies in the Russian Civil War”

By

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Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Studies

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College of Graduate Studies

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An Abstract of

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With the Russian revolutions of both February and October, the United States was in fear of losing an ally in the war with Germany. Most importantly, to some around Wilson, was the eventual assumption of power by Vladimir Lenin. Wilson did not believe, at first, it was his duty to interfere with the choosing of a government in a revolutionary country, but he continued to get pressure from those around him to join in and crush Bolshevism before it got too large to control. Wilson made several poor attempts at intervention, but could never commit himself to an all out intervention that was necessary to avoid the Bolshevik control of power.

This project will show the ways in which Wilson made poor attempts at intervention and how his mind was swayed by those around him including the Secretary

of State, the Ambassador to Russia and even former presidents. In the end, Bolshevism achieved the power they sought and the U.S. did nothing to interfere with this power struggle.

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## Introduction

On February 28, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson addressed the Democratic National Committee regarding the League of Nations. In this address, he spoke specifically on the subject of Russia and the question of intervention. He did not seem to



believe that intervention was completely in best interest of the United States<sup>1</sup>, but the actions he took over the years before this speech will show a different view.

Wilson<sup>2</sup> (pictured at left) was receiving pressure from many different places in 1917. After all, there was The Great War being waged in Europe, he had just won re-election and, in Russia, another

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. "Address on the League of Nations." Washington, February 28, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Archives*. February 2003. <http://www.archives.gov/calendar/features/2003/02.html> (accessed December 29, 2008).

monarch had succumbed to the twentieth century. Was Wilson to sit by and let Russia handle her own affairs or was the United States to get involved? If the decision were to get the United States involved, then the decision would have to be made as to what manner the involvement would come.

Wilson himself could not come to a solid decision on the intervention of Russia and this led to a handful of mistakes that would take Americans in and out of Russia for the next four years. One problem, to be sure, was that the advice Wilson received from his advisors seemed to change on a daily basis. The men that he had entrusted to make sound decisions often did just the opposite, but eventually the President is the man that is in charge and it fell upon him to make his decisions.

Questions began to come up regarding what to do about the revolution in Russia. Was the United States to step in and help put the Russians back into a war that they were surely to get themselves out of or, when the time came, were the Americans to go to this foreign land and dispose of the rising revolutionaries known as Bolsheviks? These questions Wilson was never able to answer for himself or the country.



His ambiguous attitude towards the revolutions in Russia led to some bad decisions for the Americans sent there and the Russians that it affected.



There were several key figures involved in this intervention, or lack thereof as the case may be. First, and foremost, was David R. Francis<sup>3</sup> (pictured above), who would become the U.S. ambassador to Russia during this tumultuous time. Francis, a former Mayor of St. Louis and Governor of Missouri, was a stable choice by Wilson in Russia. He was a capitalist to be sure, and was very fond of the Provisional Government that had succeeded Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. In fact, Francis was very quick to ask for full recognition of the Provisional Government and its leader Alexander Kerensky.<sup>4</sup> In a letter written on May 11, 1918, which was after the Bolsheviks had already seized power, to President Wilson, Francis said the “defacto” government would side with the Allies in the extension of the war.<sup>5</sup> Even though that Provisional Government had become a



distant memory in most minds, Francis still believed that there was hope in overthrowing the Bolsheviks and drawing Russia back into the war.

Francis had a true love for the Russian people and more of a love for the hope of democracy in Russia. However, Francis knew that he was fighting a battle for democracy that would not be won. In a letter he wrote to Robert Lansing, the United States Secretary of State under President Wilson, he claimed that there was real

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<sup>3</sup> *Embassy of the United States: Moscow, Russia*. December 2008.

<http://moscow.usembassy.gov/ministers-and-ambassadors.html> (accessed December 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Francis, Davis R. *Russia Observed: Russia from the Embassy, 1916-1918*. New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970, 90.

<sup>5</sup> Link, Arthur, ed. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 48. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1985.

struggle between the leading candidates for power. Some leaders wished for a constitutional monarchy, while others, like Kerensky<sup>6</sup> (pictured above), had hoped for a republic. Francis went on to praise Kerensky and how he “conducted himself most admirably.”<sup>7</sup>

This view of Kerensky was not the same in the U.S. though. While there were some that thought he was a valued individual there were some that did not think that he could keep Russia together, much less keep them in the war. One journalist writes, “Although Kerensky has been regarded by all Americans returned from Russia as an able, upright patriot and Russian leader, it has not been felt in diplomatic or financial circles that he had the strong arm necessary to restore law and order in Russia.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, it seemed that perhaps Francis was backing the wrong person to get Russia back into the war and therefore any advice he was going to give to Wilson was going to be biased in Kerensky’s favor.

Francis was also very vague on the issue of intervention. There were times he called for it emphatically and other times he asked for patience. His tone did change permanently in a May 2, letter to Lansing in which he claimed that the Germans were thoroughly dominating the Russians and that the time for intervention was necessary.<sup>9</sup> The problem was that at the time of his request the Germans were almost a non-factor in

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<sup>6</sup> *The Russian Revolution*. [http://www.fresno.k12.ca.us/schools/s090/lloyd/russian\\_revolution.htm](http://www.fresno.k12.ca.us/schools/s090/lloyd/russian_revolution.htm) (accessed December 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Francis, 99.

<sup>8</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "Says Russia Will Support Her Allies." November 9, 1917.

<sup>9</sup> Goldberg, Harold J., ed. *Documents of Soviet-American Relations*. Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1993, 74-76.

Russia. The Bolsheviks were dominating Francis's ally in the newly found Russian Civil War.

Robert Lansing, the Secretary of State, was firmly in favor of American intervention in Russia. He continued to pressure the President about the need for intervention, not only for military reasons, but also because "action by us...would have a great moral influence in Russia."<sup>10</sup> This was in a note to Wilson on March 20, 1917, shortly after the downfall of the Russian monarchy. It was Lansing that eventually asks for the Root Commission, head by Elihu Root, and the Railroad Commission, head by John Stevens, both of which will be discussed in future chapters.

Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War under President Wilson, was an avid opponent to the intervention of the United States in Russia. He protested openly to Wilson both in private and in the press. In fact, he openly questioned Congress on the issue of intervention and wondered aloud why "Congress was holding up appropriations for our Army but was ready to supply Russia with huge loans or anything she wanted to enable her to continue action against Germany."<sup>11</sup>

Wilson once asked the question "When shall we consider the war won?"<sup>12</sup> The fact is that he had no answer for this question. He could not come up with a reason to go into Russia, but at the same time could not come up with a reason not to go either. He utilized the Root Commission, the Railroad Commission, the United States Army and

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<sup>10</sup> Kennan, George F. *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*. Vols. I, Russia Leaves the War. Princeton: Princeton University, 1956, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Palmer, Frederick. *Newton D. Baker, America at War: Based on the Personal Papers of the Secretary of War in the World War; His Correspondance with the President and Important Leaders at Home and Abroad*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1931, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. "State of the Union Address." Washington, December 4, 1917.

Navy, the American Red Cross and even the YMCA<sup>13</sup> all for intervention in Russia affairs, but could never come up with a true reason why the Americans were there.

The American people rejoiced once the monarchy fell, even Wilson himself, but once the Bolsheviks took power pressure began to mount for Wilson to intervene in some way. He was receiving pressure from the American people in the press and from notable names such as Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.<sup>14</sup>

With all the talk of intervention, and what the politicians of the time were doing, it is important to know that the American people thought highly of the Russians at the time of Romanov dynasty coming to an end, but once the Soviets took power from the Provisional Government this mindset changed. John F. Stevens, as mentioned before as the head of the Railroad Commission, charged that the new Russian was lazy and unwilling to work. He is quoted in a *New York Times* article on December 29, 1917 saying:

“[Russians] work, or not, as they please, and everywhere may be seen workmen loafing. Women are doing much of the work in the shops, along the railway tracks, and in the fields, and even acting as brakemen. Where one woman is working 500 men are loafing.”<sup>15</sup>

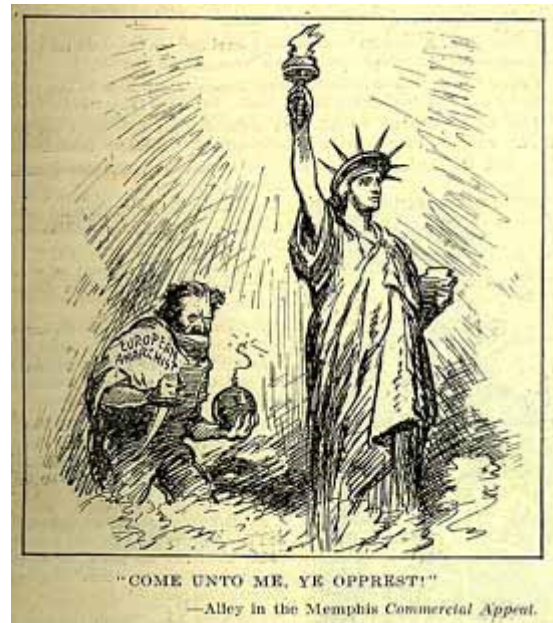
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<sup>13</sup> Davis, Donald E., and Eugene P. Trani. "The American YMCA and the Russian Revolution." *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (September 1974): 469-491.

<sup>14</sup> Goldhurst, Richard. *The Midnight War: The American Intervention in Russia, 1918-1920*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*. "Stevens Has Faith Russia Won't Give Up." December 29, 1917.

Once the Bolsheviks took power, as mentioned above, the attitude of the people seemed to change with the Americans as well. There was a Red Scare (cartoon<sup>16</sup> below) in America, signifying a true fear of communism and anarchy. There were people murdered in the U.S. for not standing during the National Anthem.<sup>17</sup> In one story, as told by historian Stanley Coben, a jury only needed a couple of minutes to acquit a man of murdering one that yelled “To Hell with the United States.”<sup>18</sup> Stories like this one were widespread in the U.S., after all, there was a war being waged in which young men were dying for their beloved country. Meanwhile, in Russia, a group of anti-capitalist (Bolsheviks) that despised all that the U.S. had stood for.



The press wrote stories that enraged and incited the people against the new Russian as well. In a *Wall Street Journal*

article on May 29, 1918, a journalist writes of communism in a rather unflattering light. “While it is impossible to make everyone rich, it is possible to make everybody poor. That is what has happened in Russia. The means of production are paralyzed. Life and property are everywhere menaced.”<sup>19</sup> The thought of the American economy going to shambles in light of a new revolution truly terrified the people. This newly enraged

<sup>16</sup> Burnett, Paul. *The Red Scare*. <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/SaccoV/redscare.html> (accessed December 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Coben, Stanley. "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-1920." *Political Science Quarterly* (The Academy of Political Science) 79, no. 1 (March 1964): 52-75.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>19</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "Our Own Bolsheviks." May 29, 1918.

public added to the pressure mounting upon the President to do something to prevent the same from occurring in the United States.

Historians have differed over the years as to what all of this meant. Richard Pipes, a noted historian on the subject of the Russian Revolution, seemed to believe that Wilson backed the Bolsheviks and their behavior. That is was not our place to prevent a certain type of government from taking shape.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, another noted Russian historian, Sheila Fitzpatrick, believed that people in America thought that the Russian people “had been cheated of the liberal democracy for which it had so long and nobly struggled.”<sup>21</sup>

With all of the changing ideologies around the world at the time, it is not without understanding Wilson’s conflict regarding the Russian situation. For sure, he wanted Russia to get back into the war with Germany, but at what cost. The U.S., after all, had fought a similar revolution against a monarchial master not so long before. Was it in the best interest of the United States to interfere with such a revolution?

The Great War was not going well at this point for the United States or its Allies. With the Russians exiting the war, the Allies were left to fight the great German power on just one front. While the Russians were by no means menacing, they did force the Germans to pay some half-hearted attention to the Eastern Front.

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<sup>20</sup> Pipes, Richard. *The Russian Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1991, 601.

<sup>21</sup> Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *The Russian Revolution*. 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford, 1994, 41.



Wilson, and his advisors, led by Lansing, Baker<sup>22</sup> (pictured left) and Francis, did their best to intervene without truly intervening. This type of confusion has led historians to argue about the true meaning of Wilson's policies of the time. This period in history does not truly belong to World War I (The Great War as referenced above), nor does it belong to Russian Revolutionary history, nor does it

belong to Russian Civil War history. American intervention is truly an event that belongs in its own category, but has simply been passed over by so many historians before. It is quite often a simple paragraph in a volume on the Russian Revolution. Therefore, it is the purpose of this writer to outline the intervention policies of Woodrow Wilson and what affects it had, or did not have, on the surrounding events.

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<sup>22</sup> *Loyalty and Democracy of the Negro Praised by the Secretary of War.*

<http://net.lib.byu.edu/estu/wwi/comment/Scott/Spreface.htm> (accessed December 2008).



## Chapter 1: The Root Commission

President Wilson's first act of intervention in Russian affairs was the commissioning of Elihu Root for an expedition to Russia shortly after the overthrow of Nicholas II. Root, a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1912, was a Republican counterpart to Wilson, but his history as a political powerhouse in Washington made him an obvious and wise choice.<sup>23</sup>



Root had always been known as a tough man, but could always be relied upon to get the job done, what this job entailed was still not completely certain to anyone though. For sure, Root was to take a hard line approach towards his discussions with the Provisional Government. Very simply put by George F. Keenan, Root said, “No fight, no loan.”<sup>24</sup>

This approach was not the only reason Root was chosen for such a mission. “The wisdom of Elihu Root<sup>25</sup> (pictured above), who was the head of a mission on the way to

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<sup>23</sup> Palmer, 68.

<sup>24</sup> Kennan, George F. *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961.



Russia, would supply the young Russian republic with statesmanship to steady her leaders and people in their part.”<sup>26</sup> Root, therefore, would have given the Provisional Government political leadership and guidance for their newly found independence from the hands of the monarchical system that has lead Russia since the beginning of the Romanov dynasty in 1613. No one would be better than this elder statesman would, to show the Russian people how democracy should truly work.

The question for Wilson was whom he should send on the mission to accompany Root. It was no secret in Washington that Wilson was not fond of Root personally, so he was not about to allow Root to make a great diplomatic relationship without Wilson having people he trusted close to Root in the meantime. First on this list was General



Hugh Scott, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff. Scott’s role in Russia was purely for military motives. Wilson had hoped that by sending one of his top generals that he could convince the Provisional Government back into the war. Scott soon called for the President to send the YMCA into Russia.

The YMCA, as historians Donald Davis and Eugene Trani write, “was Wilson’s kind of operation, people-to-people, without official interference.”<sup>27</sup> This is exactly what Wilson was looking for in his ideal of intervention. On one hand, he was able to say that he was doing something to aid the new Russians, but then to his detractors he could simply say that no “real”

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<sup>25</sup> *Elihu Root*. <http://www.history.army.mil/books/Sw-SA/Root.htm> (accessed December 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Palmer, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, Donald E., and Eugene P. Trani. "The American YMCA and the Russian Revolution." *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (September 1974): 469-491.

intervention was actually taking place. The YMCA could be sent into Russia, and eventually was under the leadership of John R. Mott<sup>28</sup> (pictured on previous page), take a neutral stance and still assist the Russians in getting herself off the ground.

Charles R. Crane<sup>29</sup> (pictured at right) was another individual sent along with Root to Russia. He would eventually become a U.S. Minister to China, but had been an integral part of President Wilson's campaign and a true lover of all things Slavic. He was a natural choice as well for this mission because of his fondness for the Russian people and the excitement that he exuded when the monarchy was overthrown. He did however, not have great news when referring to the current situation in Russia. He claimed that the U.S. would not be able to do a great deal of good in Russia and that the socialism should be able to simply run its course there. For those opposed to intervention, he also said; in the same *Wall Street Journal* article that:



“It is useless to expect much help from Russia in this war—on the contrary, Russia needs all the help she can get. I do not believe that Germany can accomplish a great deal there...we might well regard Russia as a great human laboratory for social and political experiments.”<sup>30</sup>

What then, according to Crane, is the reason for intervening in an area where the United States will have little or no affect? More than that though, is there a true reason to

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<sup>28</sup> *Nobel Prize*. [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1946/mott-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1946/mott-bio.html) (accessed December 2008).

<sup>29</sup> *Purcell and Elmslie, Architects*. <http://www.organica.org/pegrindstone31.htm> (accessed December 2008).

<sup>30</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "Russians to Emerge a Great Fine Nation." January 23, 1918.

intervene if the Germans stand no hope of being successful there as well? It is obvious that Crane did not believe intervention was necessary and he told the President and the press this same thing.



Perhaps the most vital individual sent on the mission, with the exception of Root of course, was that of James Duncan, the Vice-president of the American Federation of Labor. Duncan was chosen by Samuel Gompers<sup>31</sup> (pictured at left), the President of the AFL, to go in his place<sup>32</sup> as it was he that was chosen by the President to go on the mission.<sup>33</sup> It was thought at the time that Duncan would be able to offset Root's reactionary tendencies and to pay more attention to the labor in Russia instead of just concentrating on the political issues of the time. Duncan, for certain, would be able to connect with the workers in Russia and, hopefully, depending on the ideology of the person one asks, convince them that socialism is not the form of government that would benefit the Russian worker. This, by all definitions, would constitute intervention. Duncan was sent to persuade the people of Russia to try to implement a certain type of government; a type of government that, in all likelihood, would benefit the United States and its war effort.



<sup>31</sup> *American Leaders Speak*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/nfhtml/nfexww1.html> (accessed August 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Link, Arthur, ed. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 42. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1985.

Surely to contrast with Duncan's view, Charles E. Russell<sup>34</sup> (pictured above), a one-time Socialist candidate for president, was sent on the trip as well. An odd choice to be sure, coming from a capitalistic president, Russell was the only one of the commission to meet with the Soviet leaders in Petrograd. The Soviets were a minority party at the time, but the commission would want to hear from all the parties involved in deciding on a new government. Russell met with the Petrograd Soviet to hear their complaints and ideas, but was not to be listened to by Root, who was a capitalist at heart, and would not hear of another ideology proposed that would have his name attached to it.

The Commission arrived on June 3, 1917<sup>35</sup> and its mission, as explained by Francis to the Russian people in November:

“President Wilson appointed a diplomatic mission to Russia under the chairmanship of Honorable Elihu Root, to express the good will of my country, and to extend encouragement to the Russian people in the bold stroke they had made for liberty.”<sup>36</sup>

This is a different story from the one Francis told in May, in which he stated that the purpose of the mission was for the:

“adherence of Russia to the principle of democracy and to confer with the Russian government about the best ways and means to bring about effective cooperation between the two governments in the prosecution of the war.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Charles E. Russell. <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USArussellCE.htm> (accessed August 2008).

<sup>35</sup> *New York Times*. “Root Commission Reaches Russia.” June 4, 1917.

<sup>36</sup> Francis, 174-75.

<sup>37</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 19-20.

Truth be told, this was the true idea of the mission, which was to spur the Russians back into the war and, with the exception of Root's "No fight, no loan" comment mentioned above, the mission was not to interfere with Russia in any way. Root and his commission were sent simply to make good diplomatic relations with all those that might eventually take power in Russia. Root, as it seems, did attempt to make more of his mission than Wilson truly had hoped.<sup>38</sup> After all, Root was opposed to Wilson's ideology at home, why would he want to support him in another country? Root was a proud man of many accomplishments and decided to take what Wilson had granted him permission to do and extended it.



The mission, however, was not there long enough to have a great impact. "The commission remained in Petrograd about six weeks, visiting Moscow in the meantime, and General Scott went to the front, while Admiral Glennon reviewed the Black Sea Fleet."<sup>39</sup> Glennon<sup>40</sup> (picture at left) was commander of the Atlantic Fleet during World War I, and is another good name to have on the mission. After all, the mission seemed to be more for appearances than for impact. Although they were able to broker a nice trade deal involving the United States sending a billion dollars worth of railroad equipment to Russia, which consisted of "2,000 locomotives and 40,000 freight cars."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Keenan, George F. *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*. Vols. II, The Decision to Intervene. Princeton: Princeton University, 1956, 326-27.

<sup>39</sup> Francis, 129.

<sup>40</sup> *Rear Admiral James H. Glennon*. <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-g/j-glenon.htm> (accessed November 2008).

<sup>41</sup> *New York Times*. "Russia Will Build Sixty New Railways." May 14, 1917.

An arms deal was also negotiated during this time in which one hundred million dollars of credit and arms were issued to Vladivostok,<sup>42</sup> and 600,000 rifles and 1,000 machine guns.<sup>43</sup> This is yet another sign of intervention that President Wilson did not want others to know about. The only reason the arms would be needed by the Russians was to defend themselves against the Germans. Also, if Root's comments ("No fight, no loan") are true, than the Russians obviously agreed to continue the war since these loans and trade of arms took place.

Both Root and Wilson disagreed about the reasoning for the mission, but soon agreed that the mission was a failure. They did not agree, however, on who should shoulder the blame for its failure. Root complained that,

"Wilson didn't want to accomplish anything. It was a grandstand play. He wanted to show his sympathy for the Russian Revolution. When we delivered his message and made our speeches, he was satisfied; that's all he wanted."<sup>44</sup>

Wilson had a completely different view than that of Root with respect to the mission's failure. Wilson said, "Mr. Root? I sent him to Russia at the head of an important mission, and its failure was largely due to Russian distrust for Mr. Root."<sup>45</sup> The fact was that all of the ideas that Root had, whether they were good ideas or not, would not have had the backing of the President. Root's assessment of Wilson's policy in Russia was correct in that it was a "grand-stand play." Root had wished for the use of the YMCA in an integral part in Russia in the helping of Russian morale, which was sliding at the time.

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<sup>42</sup> Moorehead, Alan. *The Russian Revolution*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958, 201.

<sup>43</sup> Mawdsley, Evan. *The Russian Civil War*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000, 144.

<sup>44</sup> Jessup, Philip C. *Elihu Root*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938, 358 .

<sup>45</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 22.

Root believed that by getting the YMCA involved that the morale of the Russian Army could also be affected in a positive manner, possibly, making it easier to get the army back into the war with Germany. The YMCA's role, while somewhat confusing to the intervention, was to coordinate good-spirited contests for which the Russians could partake. It may sound simplistic, but to this point, the Russians had seen nothing but sorrow and grief for the past few years and the YMCA could aid them in a positive manner. While these are good ideas, Keenan simply believed "that events were moving too rapidly and time was short; neither of these could be implemented before the Provisional Government fell."<sup>46</sup> The problem with this logic is that in May and June there was no true way of telling that the Provisional Government would not last.

The Root Commission was never truly utilized by Wilson and therefore the failure of the mission at the President's feet. "President Wilson had not in fact consulted with him or any member of the Mission since their return (although the question of the Allied intervention in Russia would have given an occasion for such consultation)."<sup>47</sup> After the November Revolution, there was a perfect opportunity for utilizing the Root Commission. A propaganda plan had been proposed and no other program would have been able to institute this plan the way the Root Commission could have, but the President and Lansing would not hear of allowing Elihu Root anymore access to Russia than he had already achieved. The President, even if he truly wanted intervention at this time, would not use Elihu Root in any capacity to do so.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Jessup, 368.

<sup>48</sup> Keenan, *Decision to Intervene*, 326-27.

## Chapter 2: The Railroad Commission

While the Root Commission was in progress in both Petrograd and Moscow, another mission was on its way to Russia as well. This Railroad Mission was requested by Francis to help the Russian logistical problem that he had noticed since his arrival. The railroad system had been decimated by the war and was in dire need of assistance. Even Leon Trotsky, creator of the Red Army, had noticed:

“Transport was steadily breaking down; the number of disabled locomotives on certain roads had reached 50 per cent. At headquarters learned engineers read reports to the effect that no later than six months the railroad transport would be in a state of complete paralysis.”<sup>49</sup>

Francis said that he was “seeking to have a practical railroad man sent to Vladivostok to relieve the congestion at that point and generally to make the Siberian railroad more efficient.”<sup>50</sup>

Wilson and Lansing wasted no time in approving Francis’s request. With a dismantled railway system, if intervention were necessary for the Americans then the entire process would take that much longer to achieve with a poor transportation system.

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<sup>49</sup> Trotsky, Leon. *The History of the Russian Revolution*. Translated by Max Eastman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967, 411.

<sup>50</sup> Francis, 110.

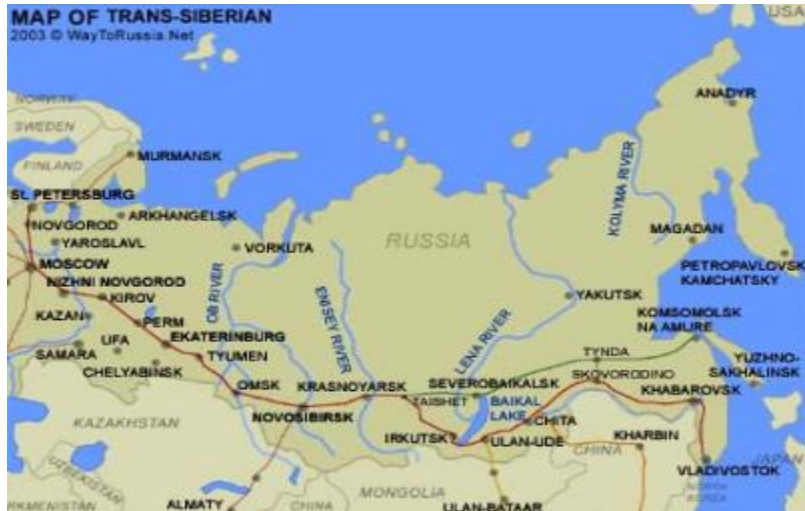


Therefore, the Railroad Commission is yet another way for Wilson to intervene, militarily, all the while making it seem that the intervention was purely for humanitarian aid.

The press took no time to pick this story up, just as Wilson had hoped, and made it seem as if the Americans were doing the Russians a favor:

“American railway experts are on their way to organize [Russian] transport; American financiers to organize [Russian] finances; American newspaper men to carry on propaganda among [Russian] people.”<sup>51</sup>

The transportation resources were sorely needed, especially along the Trans-Siberian Railroad<sup>52</sup> (map at right), but Wilson was pretending that he was not intervening when the press is writing about propoganda for the Russian people.



Francis, in spite of his address in May that was discussed in the last chapter, said that:

“A railway commission of distinguished experts also came from America to Russia to render what assistance they could toward improving your transportation

<sup>51</sup> Palmer, 89.

<sup>52</sup> *Millenial Living*. <http://www.millennialliving.com/Activities/Travel/adventure-train-travel-russia-trans-siberian-railway.htm> (accessed December 2008).

facilities, to the end that your magnificent food productions might be so distributed as to relieve the famine.”

Also from the same address:

“There is no power whose authority is recognized throughout Russia; your industries are neglected and many of your people are crying for food. This need can be supplied if you permit the American railway commission to continue its helpful work.”<sup>53</sup>

Francis’s tone had changed. In May, the Americans were in Russia to help the Russians get back into the war with Germany, and by November, the Americans were there to assist the Russian people in establishing their rightful country.

By November, the Bolsheviks were completing their rise to power and the Americans, mainly Francis, needed to show the Russian people that there was an alternative to the Bolshevik government. By accepting the aid that the Americans were offering, the Russians, it was assumed, would “buy” into the American form of government and rid the government of the Bolsheviks.

George Wheeler, American Charge d’ Affairs, did claim to the American people, in a *New York Times* article,

“The commission is not to discuss any political or diplomatic problem. It will place its knowledge of railroad practices unreservedly at the disposal of the Russian people, to be used or rejected as their judgment dictates.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Francis, 175.

<sup>54</sup> *New York Times*. “Stevens Party Visits Tokio on Way to Russia.” May 27, 1917.



This is another example of showing intervention, but assuring the American people that intervention was not taking place. After all, the Americans did not have any business in Russian affairs, other than getting them back into the war.

The choice to head the Railroad Commission was an easy one. Wilson had picked John F. Stevens<sup>55</sup> (pictured at left), a railroad engineer most famous for his work on the Panama Canal project for which he had constructed the railroad surrounding the project among other things. Stevens was released by Elihu Root and the Root Commission at the request of President Wilson.<sup>56</sup> Stevens was known a reliable individual with a love for the railroad business. It was thought at the time that he would have no reason to interfere in Russian politics and that he would stick to the mission itself.

Along with Stevens was George Emerson, former General Manager of the Great Northern Railway who served, for a time, as Stevens' chief assistant in Russia. George Gibbs, a mechanical engineer, Henry Miller, former president of the Wabash Railroad, and John E. Greiner, a consulting engineer for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad also served on the commission with Stevens.

Once again, confusion ensued on what the true mission of the commission was in Russia. Francis claimed the "mission is to relieve the congestion at Vladivostok (1912

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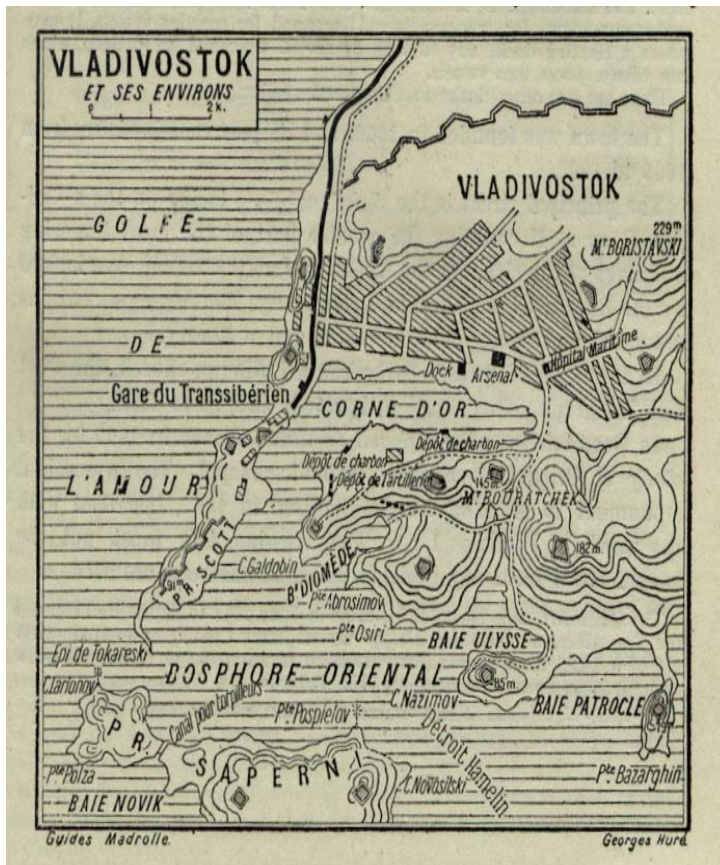
<sup>55</sup> "Balboa Circle Renamed to Honor Canal Engineer." *The Panama Canal Review* (September 7, 1962).

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*. "Engineers for Russia." May 4, 1917.

map below) and to improve generally the transportation facilities of the Siberian railway.”<sup>57</sup> In fact, Stevens, himself, claimed that the:

“Primary object [of the mission] is to help the Allies in the war against Germany. The commission will establish general relations with the Russian Government, and also especially with the Railroad and War Departments.”<sup>58</sup>

On the one hand, Francis claims that the mission is for Vladivostok in eastern Russia, while Stevens claims the mission to be in European Russia and the war effort.



Stevens soon called for 350 railroad men, led by Emerson, to be sent to him and an extensive lot of supplies to assist in the railroad operations in Russia.<sup>59</sup> Once Francis had heard of this request, he also asked railroad men to be sent to him in northern Russia. Stevens notified Lansing of this immediately to which Lansing responded directly to Francis regarding the issue of

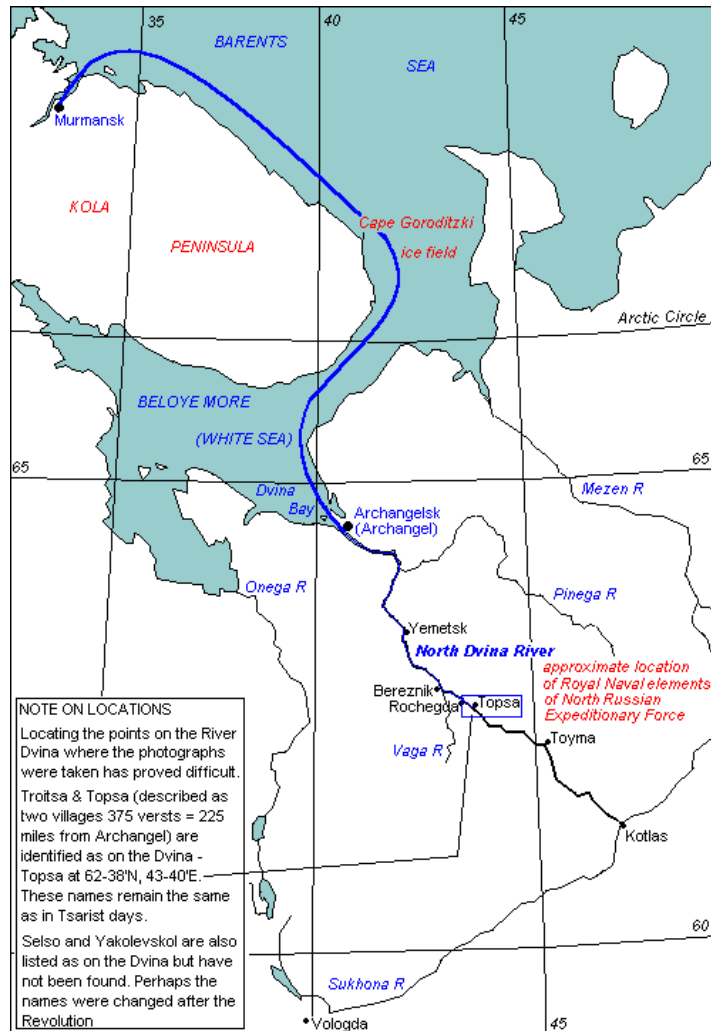
railway men being sent to him. Lansing stated that the railway men were to be used for the assistance with the railroad, period. He also wrote to Francis stating that,

<sup>57</sup> Francis, 130.

<sup>58</sup> *New York Times*. “Root and Stevens Reach Petrograd.” June 14, 1917.

<sup>59</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 286.

“instructions were issued that the work of these engineers should not be diverted to support any movement partaking in the civil war.”<sup>60</sup> Obviously, with the Bolsheviks taking power, or at this time attempting to, Francis believed that the men would be more useful in the north “to improve the transportation facilities of Russia, with a view to assembling all supplies at Archangel and Murmansk to prevent the Germans from capturing them.”<sup>61</sup>



The reason for the railway men to be there seemed to have changed again. In one instance, they are to be used in the war effort in Europe, in another they are to be used for the transportation difficulties in Siberia, and then it was changed to helping keep the Germans away from possible stores of materials being held in Murmansk and Archangel<sup>62</sup> (map above).

<sup>60</sup> Goldberg, 53-4.

<sup>61</sup> Francis, 132.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, George. *North Russian Expeditionary Force, 1918-1919*.

<http://www.worldwar1atsea.net/WW1z05NorthRussia.htm> (accessed August 2008).

Eventually, some of the confusion is broken up when Emerson was ordered to create another branch of the Railway Commission. This, of course, was done without the knowledge of Lansing or Stevens. Stevens had been stuck between Moscow and Omsk when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out. Therefore, he was not aware that Emerson and the 350 engineers Stevens had requested were on their way. Stevens had hoped the men would be diverted, but it proved too late. Emerson's orders, although no historian seems to be quite certain who made these orders, were to create a clear passage for the Czechoslovak Legion, a group that will be discussed in a later chapter, into Siberia.<sup>63</sup>

Once the men had landed in Vladivostok, the Bolsheviks had begun to make ground and Stevens thought it would be best from him and Emerson's men to leave for Japan until the situation had stabilized itself.<sup>64</sup> The Russian Railway Corps, another name for the Railroad Commission was then diverted, as Stevens had requested, to Japan until stability could be ascertained.<sup>65</sup>

Stevens did not want to leave Russia. He had hoped to clear up the transportation system as the President had requested, but the time had come for his departure. He claimed the America and Americans were thought highly of throughout Russia and that "American influence is strong, and possibly stronger than that of the other Allies, and he thinks it should now be exerted to the utmost."<sup>66</sup> He also claimed in this same article that he would eventually return to Russia and his railroad project.

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<sup>63</sup> Goldhurst, 73.

<sup>64</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 196-97.

<sup>65</sup> Feist, Joe Michael. "Theirs Not to Reason Why: The Case of the Russian Railway Service Corps." *Military Affairs* 42, no. 1 (February 1978): 1-6.

<sup>66</sup> *New York Times*. "Stevens has Faith Russia Won't Give Up." December 29, 1917.

Very similar to the Root Commission, the Railroad Commission seemed to get lost in exactly what its mission was supposed to be in Russia. Stevens, it seems, was never certain whether he was supposed to aid the Russians in their transportation or if he was there to help the war effort. This problem was left unanswered by Francis, Lansing, and most importantly, Wilson. With the Bolsheviks looming in Russia, the United States still had no true policy for what Wilson wanted to accomplish there.



### Chapter 3: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

While the Root Commission and the Railroad Commission had been sent to Russia with, what seems to be, no clear plan or mission, the Bolsheviks had taken over the Russian government and the idea of the Bolsheviks in power had most assuredly scared the Americans. The Provisional Government, led by Kerensky, was able to convince the poor Russian Army back into the war with Germany, but that was about to change.

Francis had written in his memoir that at no time was there any likelihood of our recognizing the Bolshevik government.<sup>67</sup> He completely believed that Vladimir Lenin, the head of the Bolshevik party, was a paid agent of the Germans.<sup>68</sup> He had used his contacts and his own imagination to formulate these ideas. He went on to further write, “Lenin on arriving in Petrograd immediately began to disburse money which was supposedly furnished by



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<sup>67</sup> Francis, v.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 113.



Germany.”<sup>69</sup>

Francis disliked what Lenin and Trotsky<sup>70</sup> (pictured on previous page) stood for, their ideology. He also assumed, correctly, that Lenin and Trotsky would try to take Russia out of the war.

“I have a strong suspicion that Lenin and Trotsky are working in the interests of Germany, but whether that suspicion is correct or not, their success will unquestionably result I Germany’s gain.”<sup>71</sup>

There were some, however, that disagreed with Francis’s assessment of Lenin and Trotsky. Raymond Robins, who was, at the time, head of the American Red Cross in Russia, was a defender of the Bolsheviks. W. Bruce Lincoln, a Civil War historian wrote,

“To his superiors’ oft-expressed fears that Trotsky was in the pay of Germany, Robins, who never minced words and thought Trotsky ‘a four kind son of a bitch, but the greatest Jew since Christ,’ bluntly remarked: ‘If the German General Staff bought Trotsky, they bought a lemon’.”<sup>72</sup>

Now, it must be noted that Robins (pictured at right), as one can tell by the quote, was very fond of Trotsky and he was a



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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 135.

<sup>70</sup> *Lenin and Trotsky in Red Square*. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin-Trotsky\\_Red\\_Square.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin-Trotsky_Red_Square.jpg) (accessed December 2008).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 185.

<sup>72</sup> Lincoln, W. Bruce. *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War, 1918-1921*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989, 166.

socialist, but there are obviously two different viewpoints to Lenin and Trotsky. Trotsky was even quoted in March that if “the revolutionist had it in their power, they would not make a separate peace with Germany.”<sup>73</sup> Francis believed they were bought by the Germans, while others were not so sure.

Francis also saw the brutality of the Bolsheviks and the Red Guards. He had once claimed that the Red Guards would be seen killing men, and women, without any warning at all.<sup>74</sup> Because of what he saw from the Red Guard and what he thought of the Bolsheviks he claimed, “we would not, I would not, recognize any Ministry of which Lenin is Premier or Trotsky Minister of Foreign Affairs.”<sup>75</sup>

Francis, in his correspondence with Lansing, again, correctly stated that the Bolsheviks would seek a separate peace with Germany. In the same letter, he said that the Russian people were too proud and that national pride would keep them fighting the war.<sup>76</sup> Besides, he thought, the Russians would simply lose too much in a peace treaty. A *Wall Street Journal* article had listed all of what the Germans were seeking in land transfer from the Germans. It contained most of present-day western Russia, as well as lands in the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>77</sup>

Wilson, meanwhile, was urged to restate his position on Russia, though no one was quite sure what that was at that time. He claimed that the United States and its Allies did not wage war “for the purpose of aggression or indemnity.”<sup>78</sup> There was hope that by

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<sup>73</sup> *New York Times*. "Calls People War Weary." March 16, 1917.

<sup>74</sup> Francis, 184.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 188.

<sup>76</sup> Goldberg, 6-7.

<sup>77</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "Russians and 'The Land'." November 16, 1917.

<sup>78</sup> Goldberg, 16-7.

stating this to the Russian people that they would ally with the U.S. simply because the U.S. was not attempting to take anything from them.

The path Wilson did decide on was to place an embargo on Russia until stability had been achieved there. He would also wait for any Civil War to be completed before any aid was sent to Russia. Both of these are good ideas because the U.S. had already committed 325 million dollars there plus the arms deal that was struck by the Root Commission,<sup>79</sup> these same arms that would be used to fight against each other in the coming Civil War.

Lansing also began to understand that the Bolsheviks would attempt to take Russia out of the war and had written as such to Wilson on December 1, 1917, “the Bolsheviks are determined to prevent Russia from taking any further part in the war.”<sup>80</sup>

The problem for Lansing and Wilson was to whom they should back as leader of the new



Russian government. Obviously, they wish to back the person that would keep the Russians in the war, but it was also becoming obvious that they wished to rid Russia of the Bolsheviks as well.

At this point, there were several groups attempting to seize power in Russia. The Bolsheviks, which has been discussed and seemed to be the group that would eventually seize power, was the first.

Alexi Kaledin<sup>81</sup> (pictured above), was a leader of a Cossack regiment in the Don region,

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<sup>79</sup> *New York Times*. “President Holds up Supplies for Russia.” November 21, 1917.

<sup>80</sup> Goldberg, 27-8.

<sup>81</sup> *Nationmaster*. <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Aleksei-Maksimovich-Kaledin> (accessed December 2008).

and actually had the backing of Lansing. Lansing knew that Kaledin would be able to get the Russians back into the war. Kaledin also had control of Petrograd on November 21, making him a serious contender for control.<sup>82</sup> The other leader to gain serious consideration at this time was Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak<sup>83</sup> (pictured below), who was a Russian naval commander, who found himself in charge of the Siberian region during the Civil War.



However, by December 21, 1917, it was clear that the Bolsheviks would retain power.<sup>84</sup> This would not change allied or U.S. attitude, for the time being, toward the Bolsheviks. England and the U.S. had both said that they would not intervene militarily, nor would they recognize the Bolshevik government.<sup>85</sup> Lansing, on the other hand, wanted to wait and see what happened in the coming months.<sup>86</sup> What he was waiting for cannot be ascertained by his correspondence. Perhaps, he believed that Kolchak or Kaledin would be successful or maybe even that the Bolsheviks would not remove the Russians from the war.

The conference to discuss the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had begun on December 22, 1917, with Trotsky in charge of the Russian faction at the meetings. Trotsky had

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<sup>82</sup> *New York Times*. "President Holds up Supplies for Russia." November 21, 1917.

<sup>83</sup> *Encyclopedia of Marxism*. <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/k/o.htm> (accessed August 2008).

<sup>84</sup> *New York Times*. "Allies May Treat With Bolsheviki." December 17, 1917.

<sup>85</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 45.

<sup>86</sup> Graham, Malbone W. "Russian-American Relations, 1917-1933: An Interpretation." *The American Political Science Review* 28, no. 3 (June 1934): 387-409.

charged that the U.S. was attempting to overthrow the Bolsheviks<sup>87</sup> and this may have been one of the reasons for such a hurried conference on peace. Trotsky soon began to change his mind, with the help of the German contingent at the meeting. The terms presented to Trotsky were much harsher than he expected and he eventually left the conference with no resolution signed.

It is rumored that it was at this point that Trotsky began to seek help from the U.S. concerning the Germans. Keenan wrote that Trotsky and the Soviets would be willing to leave Brest-Litovsk unsigned if there was a guarantee that the Japanese would stay out of Siberia.<sup>88</sup> William Henry Chamberlain, a noted English historian, suggests that a deal was made by the U.S. that if the Germans were to attack the Allies, including the U.S., they would blow bridges and war materials to keep the Germans away.<sup>89</sup>

This is an obvious change in the stance of the U.S. towards the Bolsheviks. Although, Frank L. Polk, Acting Secretary of State, said that he, nor the U.S. government, would support any type of protest or support. This would after all, legitimize the Bolshevik government, something that the U.S. was not willing to do at that point. In fact in a letter written to Wilson, Francis wrote, "Under no circumstances should the United States recognize the Bolsheviks...they obtained what power they have through criminal violence."

He went on to say:

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<sup>87</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "Secretary of State Denies Trotsky's Charge." December 25, 1917.

<sup>88</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 55-6.

<sup>89</sup> Chamberlain, William Henry. *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1918: From the Overthrow of the Czar to the Assumption of Power by the Bolsheviks*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1965, 404.

“We should therefore treat the Bolsheviki either as open enemies who are cooperating with the Germans, or as weak neutrals who are unwilling or unable to prevent the Germans from using the resources of Russia and Siberia against us.”<sup>90</sup>

Trotsky did approach Lansing, through Francis, for aid against the Germans. Francis said that Trotsky had asked for, five officers to inspect the army “being organized for defense.” In the same note, he asked for “railroad operating men and equipment.”<sup>91</sup> Lansing’s only reply was that all of these items would be

available if Russia resumed the war.<sup>92</sup> It seems, therefore, that Lansing wanted to recognize whatever government would get the Russians back into the war, while Wilson and Francis would have refused to recognize the Bolsheviki whether or not they were willing to get back into the war. Wilson and Francis were intervening not for war purposes, but for political reasons.

Trotsky had attempted to get out of Brest-Litovsk without signing an armistice. He took a simple approach by saying “No peace, no fight.” While the thought was a good one, the Germans continued to press on in Russia eventually forcing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to be signed. Under the treaty, the Germans would retreat as soon as the



<sup>90</sup> Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 48, May 26, 1918.

<sup>91</sup> Goldberg, 46-7.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 49.



Russian Army was demobilized. Both sides agreed to withhold any propaganda campaigns against the other. Russia had to give up substantial land claims (see map<sup>93</sup> on previous page), but would not have to pay any compensation for war claims.<sup>94</sup>

By signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks brought the U.S. to the brink of intervention. Baker thought the Germans would now be able to recruit Russians to fight against the U.S. on the western front. General Pershing, U.S. Army Commander, feared the same.<sup>95</sup> The America leaders also claimed that this would give the Germans a free hand in the Middle East once Russia withdrew her armies from that region.<sup>96</sup>



The thing that no one had truly mentioned, to that point, was that the Germans would now have access to the vast amount of weapons, gold and other valuable items that had been sent from the Allies to

<sup>93</sup> Warchat.org. <http://www.warchat.org/history-world/world-war-i-1914-1918.html> (accessed October 2008).

<sup>94</sup> *New York Times*. "Bolsheviki Balk at Teuton Terms; Negotiations said to be Broken Off; Red Guard Sent to Reinforce Front." January 3, 1918.

<sup>95</sup> Palmer, 313.

<sup>96</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "An Abandoned Peace Conference." January 8, 1918.

the Russians in the past few months (cartoon<sup>97</sup> on previous page). This is one of the reasons that Wilson will eventually give into the rising pressure and send intervention units into Russia.

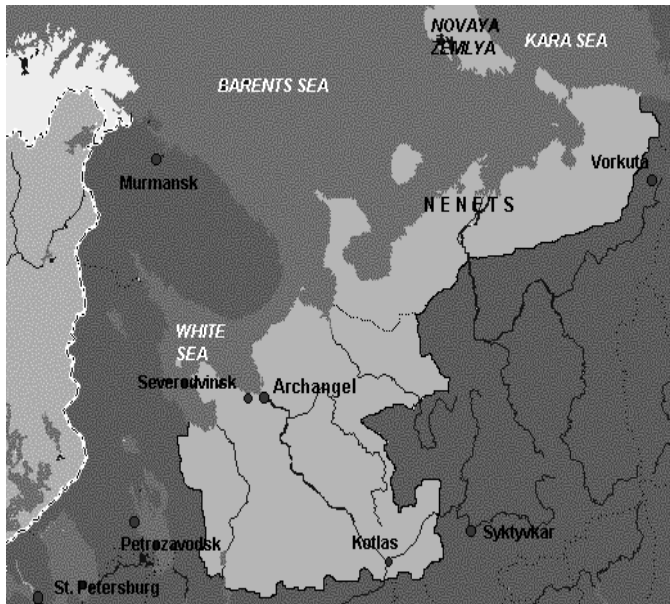
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<sup>97</sup> Berryman, Clifford. *Germany Takes Advantage of the Russian Civil War*. 29 June 1918.



## Chapter 4: Intervention

By the time the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been signed, it was obvious to almost everyone, except possibly Wilson, that intervention in Russia would be necessary. In order to keep the Germans from swarming the western front with troops, an eastern front would need to be reestablished. There were three possible ways of getting troops into



Russia and onto the eastern front. The first was through Archangel<sup>98</sup> (map at left), on the banks of the White Sea. Archangel would give the Americans free reign throughout the northern region of Russia as well as the entire eastern front. The port at Archangel was also considered one of the largest

ports in Europe making it easy to get vast amounts of troops and supplies there when necessary.

<sup>98</sup> *About the Archangel Region.* [http://www.kotlas.org/kotlas/archangel\\_region.html](http://www.kotlas.org/kotlas/archangel_region.html) (accessed January 2009).

The second option was to set up an entry point at Murmansk, which was ice-free year round, but much farther north than that of Archangel. Murmansk was a much smaller port than that of Archangel and, therefore, could not handle the amount of troops



necessary for an invasion force. The location of Murmansk (map below) did allow for easier access, again due to the ice-free nature of the port, but the transportation from the port itself was

substandard.

The third, and perhaps the most farfetched of all the options, was to enter the troops via Vladivostok in the east and transport the troops and materials to the eastern front via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. As noted before, the Trans-Siberian Railroad was not in good shape, so the thought of transporting mass amounts of troops and supplies was just not feasible at that time.

On May 2, 1918, Francis had seen enough of Bolshevism had stood for, and called for intervention to take place immediately. This time though, he wanted to intervene to stop the spread of Bolshevism and not for the war effort. Francis said:

“it is our interest to exterminate it in the land of its birth. I say ‘our interest’ from two points of view. First: If Bolshevism is permitted to thrive in Russia, it will

promote unrest in all countries. Second: It is our duty to the Russian people, who have always been favorable to America, and whose greatest offense is that they favored the Allies against Germany in the world war, to relieve their country of the injury and disgrace inflicted upon it by Soviet rule.”<sup>99</sup>

It is interesting to note here that had Wilson been interested in intervening that the opportunity was upon him. A letter, in fact, had been forwarded to Wilson stating that Lenin would welcome intervention if the Allies agree not to interfere with Soviet takeover.<sup>100</sup> Lenin was practically inviting the troops into the country, but Wilson was still not ready to commit. In his *Aide-Memoire*, written on July 17, 1918, Wilson stated that the intervention would do the Allies no good and “It cannot, therefore take part in such intervention or sanction it in principle.”<sup>101</sup>

This statement did not hold true long though, as Wilson was on the verge of allowing troops into North Russia. In fact, Trotsky had ordered the Murmansk Soviet to accept assistance from the Allies<sup>102</sup> and this allowed the first troops to arrive in Russia since Brest-Litovsk. It was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which would begin to unravel the already fragile relations between the Soviets and the Americans. The Germans saw the landing of Allied troops in Russia, as a violation of the treaty and soon Trotsky would have to insist that the Murmansk Soviet oppose all Allied intervention aid.

Alexei Yuryev was the head of the Murmansk Soviet and had seen nothing but good things from the Allies since their arrival. Yuryev refused to turn back Allied aid to

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<sup>99</sup> Francis, 335.

<sup>100</sup> Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 48, May 16, 1918.

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. *Aide-Memoire*. July 17, 1918.

<sup>102</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 69.

his region that greatly upset the leadership in Moscow and especially that of Foreign Commissar Chicherin. There was much bickering back and forth between the two Soviets until finally Chicherin tried to have Yuryev removed from his post.<sup>103</sup> This was a blessing in disguise to the Allies and Francis. The Allies soon announced that they would recognize the Murmansk Soviet as the official government of the Murmansk region. This is the first recognition of the Soviet government in Russia.<sup>104</sup> These events led Wilson, especially at the urging of Lansing, to be “willing to send troops to Murmansk.”<sup>105</sup> Therefore, in June, shortly after the *Aide-Memoir*, Wilson ordered three battalions of American troops into Murmansk to assist the Allied contingent that was already there.<sup>106</sup>

Francis had resided in numerous places throughout Russia during his stay. As tensions grew in Petrograd he was forced to abandon his post there and take up residence in Archangel for the time being. Here Francis was accused by the Germans of violating Brest-Litovsk by urging the President to intervene in Russia. Archangel, as will be told, was a station of stores of Allied goods, weapons and gold, all of which the Germans would like to have gotten their hands on to help them continue to fight the war.<sup>107</sup> It is ironic to note that all of these stores, especially that of the weapons were bought via credit that was gained from the Americans.<sup>108</sup>

The Americans, even Wilson, would have had to know for quite a while that this was a possibility. That the Germans may very well move on Archangel, and other

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 74-5.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>105</sup> Lincoln, 178.

<sup>106</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 76.

<sup>107</sup> Lincoln, 176.

<sup>108</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 67.

locations, to take the vast stores that were available to them now that Russia was out of the war. In fact, Secretary Baker claimed:

“At Archangel the Bolsheviks were realizing the prolific opportunity in commandeering and selling to the Germans that vast stores of war material the Allies had deposited there for the Kerensky government, material that had never been moved.”<sup>109</sup>

Therefore, the President must have known this as well, but he continued to take an indolent approach to the rising Russian problem that was occurring in the east.

Meanwhile, Francis was having his own problems with the Bolsheviks that he had despised so much. He was forced to leave Petrograd for the Foreign Diplomatic capital of Vologda<sup>110</sup> (map at right). It was Vologda that all of the Allied diplomats were forced to move, both, because of the Germans moving closer and the threat of the Bolsheviks taking them captive as conspirators.



Lansing asked Francis to take a leave and head back to England or the United States, but Francis refused saying, “I did not like to abandon the Russian people, for whom I felt deep sympathy and whom I had assured repeatedly of America’s unselfish interest in her welfare.”<sup>111</sup> Francis, as mentioned

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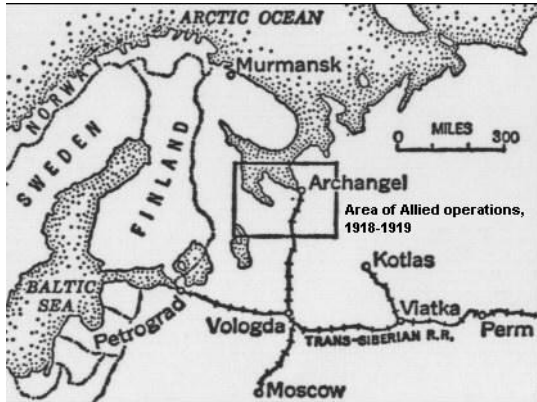
<sup>109</sup> Palmer, 317.

<sup>110</sup> *Russia Trek*. [http://russiatrek.org/r\\_vologda.shtml](http://russiatrek.org/r_vologda.shtml) (accessed January 2009).

<sup>111</sup> Francis, 235.

above, had called for “Prompt and decisive intervention by the Allied Powers” and that such an intervention “might have had far-reaching results.”<sup>112</sup>

The Bolsheviks began to accuse Francis and the other diplomats of plotting with the White forces that opposed the Red Army.<sup>113</sup> Chicherin began to put pressure on Francis to come to Moscow, something that Francis was obviously not going to do. Chicherin told Francis that



his life was in danger and that he could be protected in Moscow (map of region at left), unlike he could be in Vologda. This began a series of almost comical exchange between the two men. Francis wanted to know what danger he and the other diplomats could possibly be in since he and the Russian people had always gotten

along. Chicherin wrote back that danger was imminent and that “tomorrow can be too late.”<sup>114</sup>

Francis and the other diplomats decided that the time had come for them to leave Vologda. Besides, at this point they could not trust the Bolsheviks or the Germans. Francis asked Chicherin for transportation, but refused to tell him where they were going. He ordered a



train be put at Francis’s disposal, but instead of south to Moscow, the train headed north to Archangel after much delay due to the Bolshevik’s protests.

The first two hundred

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 243.

<sup>113</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 81.

<sup>114</sup> Francis, 253.



troops to arrive in (pictured above) Russia were Marines sent by Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was Secretary of the Navy at the time. These troops began to have an immediate impact on the Russians. In Archangel, they took over the rail service to help with the congestion that was plaguing the city.

The Allies also found another possible candidate to replace the Bolsheviks whom Francis despised, even though no one is certain whether President Wilson wanted the Bolsheviks out of power. Nikolai Tchaikovsky, a socialist, was the head of the Sovereign Government of the Northern Region, which seemed to be, at the time, out of the reach of the Bolsheviks. Francis strongly urged the backing of Tchaikovsky since he was “attempting to organize an army with which to fight Germany and it has the sincere motive of attempting to resurrect Russia.”<sup>115</sup> His government vowed to fight off any outside aggressor, and was purely on the side of the Allies.<sup>116</sup> The problem with Tchaikovsky holding onto power is that he was being supplanted by both the Bolsheviks and the Monarchists.



Again, no one was quite sure what the mission in northern Russia was exactly. The troops were there to protect the stores of

weapons, but were soon asked to leave by the Soviets. The Soviets had two reasons to

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 286.

<sup>116</sup> *Wall Street Journal*. "North Russia Welcomes Allies." August 13, 1918.

get rid of the Allies. First, the Allies were causing tensions to rise with the Soviets and the Germans. The Germans blamed the Soviets for the Allied presence in Russia and a violation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Secondly, it had become obvious to almost everyone that Francis was the one calling for the intervention in Russia and he certainly wanted the Bolsheviks overthrown. With Francis and the Allies gone, the Soviets could concentrate on defeating the White Army (picture on previous page) and retaining power.



Historians and politicians alike agree that there was no longer any need for the Allies to be in northern Russia. Pipes claims that there was no real threat of German invasion<sup>117</sup> and even William Bullitt<sup>118</sup> (pictured at right), who was sent by Wilson to negotiate a peace settlement with the Bolsheviks, said that the “12,000 American, British, and French troops at Archangel are no longer serving any useful purpose.”<sup>119</sup>

Siberia was now a different situation entirely than that of northern Russia. The Americans were not just worried about the Bolsheviks in this region, but the Japanese were showing great interest in Siberia as well. There had been, after all, talk that the Japanese would occupy Siberia if the Russians had sought a separate peace.<sup>120</sup> Baker was

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<sup>117</sup> Pipes, 656-57.

<sup>118</sup> *Nationmaster*.

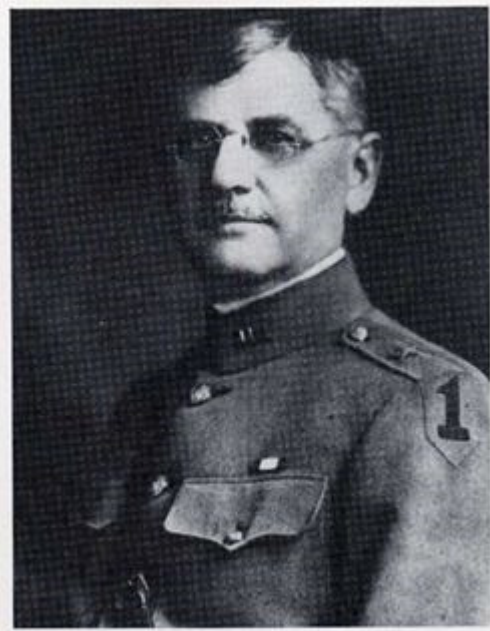
<sup>119</sup> Bullitt, William C. *The Bullitt Mission to Russia, Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate of William C. Bullitt*. New York: Huebsch, 1919.

<sup>120</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 92.



not in favor of sending troops to Siberia after the U.S. had already committed troops to Archangel and Murmansk but he wrote, if Japan went into Siberia, we must go.”<sup>121</sup>

On July 6, Wilson announced that he would send ammunitions, supplies and 7,000 troops to Siberia to aid the Czech Legion<sup>122</sup>, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Christopher Lasch, a political scientist, believed Wilson delayed intervention because he was not certain how the Japanese would react,<sup>123</sup> while others believed that without intervention Wilson knew the Japanese would enter Siberia, which would surely drive the Russians into German hands.<sup>124</sup>



General William Graves (pictured at left) was put in charge of the American Armed Forces in Siberia and was given explicit instructions not to intervene in the Civil War that was ongoing in the area. Graves often complained that the Bolsheviks were preventing food from getting to the people and was upset that he was ordered not to venture more than three miles off the Trans-Siberian Railroad in any location. This caused resentment among the people towards the Allies, the Americans and Admiral Kolchak whom the Allies supported in Siberia. Kolchak was

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<sup>121</sup> Palmer, 319-21.

<sup>122</sup> Lincoln, 184.

<sup>123</sup> Lasch, Christopher. "American Intervention in Siberia: An Interpretation." *Political Science Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (June 1962): 205-223.

<sup>124</sup> Trani, Eugene P. "Woodrow Wilson and the Decision to Intervene in Russia: A Reconsideration." *The Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 3 (September 1976): 440-461.

attempting to utilize the Trans-Siberian for supply purposes and the Civil War was wreaking havoc on the line.<sup>125</sup>

The Civil War was in full swing by this point, but the U.S. had ordered trade to resume in all areas not controlled or compromised by the Germans or the Bolsheviks. This simply meant that supplies could be sent to Vladivostok since Archangel and Murmansk were cut-off by the Bolsheviks and there was still rumor that the Germans could arrive at any time.<sup>126</sup>

Wilson still had not committed to a reason for intervention. In his mind, he was trying to mold the future government in Russia, which he did not believe was his place to do. He needed a true reason to intervene militarily and then, if the Bolsheviks were overthrown he can say that he was not trying to undermine the Russian people. He had failed completely to intervene

in Archangel, Murmansk and Siberia, but the Czech Legion would give him a true reason to intervene in Russia without committing to the ongoing Civil War.



MAP SHOWING APPROXIMATE POSITIONS OF BOLSHEVIST AND ANTI-BOLSHEVIST FORCES ON ALL THE FIGHTING FRONTS IN RUSSIA, (MARCH, 1919)

<sup>125</sup> *New York Times*. "Allies Recognize Kolchak Cabinet." May 27, 1919.

<sup>126</sup> *New York Times*. "Trade with Russia to Reopen at Once." December 25, 1918.

## Chapter 5: The Czech Legion

The Czechoslovak Legion, from here on known as the Czech Legion, was a group of 40,000 to 50,000 (because of sub-standard record keeping this number fluctuates throughout the war) prisoners of war that were released to aid the Allies on the Eastern Front of the war. The Czechs were attempting to be recognized by the Allied Powers, at the Versailles Peace Conference, as their own nation under their own sovereignty. The easiest way for this to happen was to fight on the side of the Allies.



The original agreement, as mapped out by Thomas Masaryk<sup>127</sup> (pictured at left), leader of the Czech Legion and future leader of the Czech nation, was that the Czechs be sent to the Eastern Front to fight the war. After the Eastern Front ceased to exist, the Allies needed to find a way to send them to the Western Front. The only possible way for this to happen was to send them across Russia via the Trans-Siberian Railroad, to Vladivostok. The Legion would then travel onto San Francisco, then to New York and then to France to fight the Germans on the Western Front. While the trip seems illogical, it was the best plan the Allies could come up with at the time.

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<sup>127</sup> *Masaryktown History*. <http://www.masaryktownnews.com/history.html> (accessed November 2008).

The Soviets said that they would allow the Czech Legion free passage across Russia to make this journey, but the Germans, again, had different plans. The Soviets, after all, had no reason to keep the Czechs from the war. These were prisoners-of-war for the old regime and not the new Soviet government. The Germans claimed that this was a violation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and ordered the Legion to be stopped at once. Masaryk made it clear that the Czechs were to remain neutral along the way<sup>128</sup>, but this did not prevent the Germans or the Soviets from changing the deal. Had the deal stayed the same throughout the trip the Civil War may have turned out much differently.<sup>129</sup>

General Graves had many questions about the use of the Czechs as an ally in the war against Germany. For example, he pointed out that the Czechs were to leave Vladivostok via ship, but there were no boats in Vladivostok to take the Czechs to America.<sup>130</sup> Surely, the Czechs (below on train) were just a way for Wilson to finally



intervene in Russia and oust the Bolsheviks from power. He had received pressure from numerous sources to intervene and until this point; he had only done so haphazardly.

While the pressure was coming from some to intervene, Wilson did not take the opportunity when it had presented itself. He would now have to find a way to intervene

<sup>128</sup> Bradley, John. *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia*. New York: Columbia University, 1991.

<sup>129</sup> Figes, Orlando. *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*. New York: Penguin, 1996.

<sup>130</sup> Goldberg, 182.

without upsetting the American people. After all, they were in the midst of the war in Europe winding down; there is no reason for our troops to die at this point.

The Czechs were nothing more than mercenaries hired by Wilson to fight the intervention; an intervention that the U.S. had failed to fight in for the last two years. There is absolutely no way he could have imagined that the Czechs could travel all the way across Russia without getting into a conflict with the Red Army.

Wilson would now have to assist the Czechs in getting out of Russia as he had proposed. Chicherin, on the other hand, had a different take on the issue and said that Czechs were participating in an antirevolutionary movement and that the Allies should not send troops to assist them in any way.<sup>131</sup> Lansing answered Chicherin in a letter to



Wilson saying that the “Czechs number approximately 50,000, are by agreement part of the Allied Army as the American troops are.”

Francis then informed the Bolsheviks that any move against the Czechs would be seen by the Americans

as a move by Moscow towards an Ally.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 81.



The Czechs did eventually run into conflict with the Bolsheviks on their way to Vladivostok where they assumed the boats would be waiting to take them to America. Once some of the men got there they figured out that the bulk of the Legion was strung out all along the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

As the Czechs began to regroup, there was one huge problem as the Bolsheviks saw it. The Tsar and his family (pictured on previous page) were being kept in a small town along the Trans-Siberian called Yekaterinburg. The Bolsheviks assumed that if the Czechs were successful in capturing Yekaterinburg, that the Tsar is someone around which the White forces could rally.<sup>133</sup> Most believed the Tsar would eventually be released and go to England to live<sup>134</sup>, but this could no longer happen with the Bolsheviks in charge.

As the Czechs approached Yekaterinburg (pictured at right), the Soviets had the Tsar and his family executed. They were killed on July 16, 1918 and the Czechs arrived some eight days later. If the Czechs had arrived in time the Tsar very well could have gotten the Whites to work together and defeat the Red Army.



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<sup>133</sup> Goldhurst, 69.

<sup>134</sup> *New York Times*. "Russia Will Build Sixty New Railways." May 14, 1917.

Wilson, meanwhile, was beginning to understand that the Czechs were separated from the rest of their Legion and said that along with Japanese assistance the Allies would assist the Czechs in getting to Vladivostok.<sup>135</sup> The mission to get the Czechs to Vladivostok, again, got lost as Lansing said that the intervention was to aid the Allies in the fight against Germany.



By August 17, 1918, the Americans had landed in Vladivostok and implemented martial law in the city. Lansing soon realized that intervention would do no good in Russia but insisted that since the U.S. had agreed to aid the Czechs<sup>136</sup> (two legionnaires at left) they would fulfill their obligation. In addition, by this point, Chicherin had wished for all intervention to cease and called for an immediate peace

conference. Lansing refused this request because it would recognize the Soviet government.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Keenan, *Russia and the West*, 103.

<sup>136</sup> *The Czechoslovak Legion, 1914-1919*. <http://www.cslegie.wz.cz/AJ/ruskoAJ.htm> (access August 2008).

<sup>137</sup> Goldberg, 94-5.

The Czechs gave Wilson and the other diplomats a true reason for intervention, but could not afford to send troops anymore to assist them. There were men there to help the Czechs with their lines of communication, but they were not to get involved in the ongoing Civil War. Had Wilson committed earlier to the intervention, perhaps the Bolshevik government could have been toppled. The Czechs were the only true Allied force in Russia and their chances of success, by themselves, were slim.



## Conclusion

It is obvious that American intervention in Russia was a failure on the part of the leadership at that time. There was never an agreed upon plan, and the plans were made seemed to change, depending on who was making a speech on any particular day.

Wilson had admitted to Francis that the removal of troops “from Russia would mean the deplorable slaughter of Russian friends.”<sup>138</sup> However, it was too late for intervention to play a vital role in Russia. The President had missed his chance to make a true difference there simply because he was not certain if he had the right to intervene merely because he did not like the type of government they were establishing. Bullitt also said the time for intervention was over. “Blockade and intervention have caused the chief opposition parties, the right social revolutionaries and the Menshevik[s], to give temporary support to the communist.”<sup>139</sup>

Murmansk and Archangel were surrendered to the Soviets in 1920, as was Vladivostok. This was three years after the Root Commission and the Railroad Commission had left the country. The YMCA held on and stayed in Russia until 1923,

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<sup>138</sup> Francis, 311.

<sup>139</sup> Bullitt, 51.

although some stayed after that to teach physical education to the citizens even though the Soviets did not wish for them to stay.<sup>140</sup>

Even after the armistice, Francis pushed for more intervention on the part of the U.S. He believed that he could come up with 50,000 troops that were upset that they did not see any action to participate in the overthrow of the Bolsheviks. Wilson thought, “that sending American soldiers to Russia after the armistice had been signed would be very unpopular in America.”<sup>141</sup> Francis disagreed and claimed, “I think that if the recommendation had been carried out it would have saved Europe from Bolshevism.”<sup>142</sup>

Baker finally agreed with Wilson on the prospect of sending troops to Russia. It was one thing to send troops there to aid in the war, but it was not the place of Americans to choose the type of government that the Russians were to have:

“So much of it [Bolshevism] as I do understand I do not like, but I have the feeling that if the Russians do like it, they are entitled to have it and that it does not lie with us to say that only ten per cent of the Russian people are Bolsheviks and that therefore we will assist the other ninety per cent in resisting it.”<sup>143</sup>

Even with Baker and Wilson standing in his way, Francis believed until the end of 1920 that the Bolsheviks would fail.

Wilson did have other ideas besides that of a military intervention. He had called for a peace



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<sup>140</sup> Davis & Trani, 490.

<sup>141</sup> Francis, 310.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 311.

<sup>143</sup> Palmer, 394-95.

conference to be held at Prinkipo Island (see picture below) off the coast of Turkey. He had invited all of the Allies as well as members of each Russian Civil War faction. This included Kolchak, Tchaikovsky and General Anton Denikin (pictured above), who together, formed the Omsk Government in Russia, which was recognized by the United States, albeit too late. They also invited representatives from the Bolshevik government.



The French balked at the idea of these talks because it would “include the Russians in the parleys”<sup>144</sup> that were going on with the Versailles Peace Conference. Tchaikovsky, of course, agreed to the conference, but the Bolsheviks

refused. Without the Bolsheviks at the conference then there would be no point in sitting down at one. The Bolsheviks refused, says Bullitt, because the Allies had not yet removed their troops from Archangel by the time the peace conference was to be held.<sup>145</sup>

Bullitt’s role in the intervention was that he was sent by Wilson to determine what the Bolsheviks wished to achieve if an armistice was signed to end the Civil War. While there Bullitt became a communist sympathizer, or perhaps he was realistic in his views of the situation there. In his testimony to the United States Senate, Committee on Foreign

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<sup>144</sup> Peake, Thomas R. "Jacques Sadoul and the Russian Intervention Question, 1919." *Russian Review* 32, no. 1 (January 1973): 54-63.

<sup>145</sup> Bullitt, 16.

Relations, Bullitt claimed that the Bolsheviks wanted true relations with the U.S.<sup>146</sup> He also claimed that the idea of “crushing Bolshevism by military force is pure madness.”<sup>147</sup>

Bullitt went on to claim that the “Soviet government seems to have done more for the education of the Russian people in a year and a half than Czardom did in fifty years.”<sup>148</sup> To show that Bullitt was somewhat of a sympathizer for the Soviet regime, he claimed that the Red Terror (picture of victims below) did happen but it was not as terrible as it may have seemed. Richard Pipes attributes this comment to a good misinformation campaign waged by the Bolsheviks.<sup>149</sup>



There is no certain way to ascertain what could have been accomplished had Wilson acted sooner to intervene in Russia. One thing is certain, the intervention, or lack thereof, had a profound impact

on Soviet-American relations for the years to come. Although David Footman disagrees<sup>150</sup>, George Keenan claims that it was this period that began the Cold War with Russia, and not the aftermath of World War II, which so many claim.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Goldberg, 153.

<sup>147</sup> Bullitt, 8.

<sup>148</sup> von Mohrenschildt, Dmitri. "The Early Observers of the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921." *Russian Review* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1943): 64-74.

<sup>149</sup> Pipes, 840.

<sup>150</sup> Footman, 234.

<sup>151</sup> Keenan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 345.

### Timeline of Events

28 July 1914-	World War I begins
5 September 1915-	Nicholas II takes control of Russian Army
6 February 1916-	The Czech Legion begins to form in Russia
7 November 1916-	Woodrow Wilson is re-elected as President
12 March 1917-	Nicholas II abdicates the throne
22 March 1917-	United States recognizes the Provisional Government
6 April 1917-	Wilson asks for a declaration of war against Germany
30 April 1917-	Provisional Government promises to stay in the war
3 June 1917-	Root Commission arrives in Russia
30 June 1917-	150,000 Russians killed in a failed offensive
20 July 1917-	Provisional Government orders the arrest of Vladimir Lenin
20 July 1917-	Kerensky names himself president of the Provisional Government
21 July 1917-	Elihu Root leaves Russia
30 July 1917-	General Kornilov takes control of Russian Army
13 September 1917-	Kornilov defeated by the soviets attempting to take Petrograd
7 November 1917-	Lenin and Bolsheviks take control of Russia
3 December 1917-	Leon Trotsky signs the an armistice at Brest-Litovsk
8 January 1918-	Wilson announces his Fourteen Points
18 February 1918-	Talks break down and Germany begins an all-out assault on Russia

6 March 1918-	The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is signed ending the war for Russia
2 May 1918-	David Francis calls upon the President to intervene in Russia
6 May 1918-	Czech revolt begins against Bolsheviks
6 July 1918-	Wilson vows to send aid to the
16 July 1918-	Nicholas II and his family murdered in Yekaterinburg
3 August 1918-	Wilson agrees to send “volunteer” troops to Russia
17 August 1918-	American troops land in Vladivostok
11 November 1918-	Armistice agreed upon
November 1919-	American troops began to retreat from northern Russia
April 1920-	Final Czechoslovak troops leave Siberia
June 1920-	Allied troops evacuate Vladivostok and Siberia
25 October 1922-	Vladivostok falls to Red Army
April 1923-	YMCA leaves Russia

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