



THE ALLIED
INTERVENTION
IN RUSSIA,
1918-1920

The Diplomacy of Chaos

IAN C. D. MOFFAT



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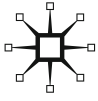
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The Diplomacy of Chaos

Ian C. D. Moffat

Independent Scholar, Canada

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*For my wife, Margaret, without whose support this work
would never have been completed*

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This work has taken over twelve years. I was aware from the outset that it was a vast area of study and that sources were few and far between, especially those that dealt with the Canadian involvement in Russia at the end of the Great War. As I had initially intended that I would focus on Canada's participation I was dismayed to find that so little had been written on the Canadian military in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. Only three monographs had been published when I started the research, *The Allied Intervention in Russia 1918–1919 and the Part Played by Canada* by John Swettenham (1967), *Canadians in Russia 1918–1919* by Roy MacLaren (1976) and *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia 1918–1919*, written and self published by J. E. Skuce (1990). While I was still preparing the text, a fourth was published in 2010, *From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada's Siberian Expedition, 1917–19*, by Benjamin Isitt.

Swettenham and MacLaren give details of Canada's military involvement in all the regions of Russia, while Skuce and Isitt concentrate on Canada's Siberian intervention. Skuce furnishes details of the individual soldiers and the operations they were involved in as well as the living conditions in which they worked; Isitt looks at the social history of Canada's Siberian involvement. I would like to express my gratitude to all these authors for their fine work. However, the above-mentioned books do not provide a detailed investigation of the complicated interplay among all the national and international players involved, nor do they explore the political problems that intervention produced for Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and France. For information on those aspects of the intervention I am deeply grateful to Richard Ullman and his three-volume work *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917–1921*; Michael Kettle and his three-volume (to date) work *Russia and the Allies 1917–1920*; George F. Kennan and his two-volume work *Soviet-American Relations 1917–1920*; Richard K. Debo and his two-volume work, *Revolution and Survival: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1917–18* and *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Russia 1918–1921*; and Michael Carley and his book *Revolution and Intervention: The French Government and the Russian Civil War 1917–1919*.

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This work is the result of extensive research and analysis of primary documents with supporting analysis of secondary sources of both the protagonists and respected academics in the field. Any errors of deduction or fact are, however, entirely mine.

List of Abbreviations

BED	British Empire Delegation
BGen	Brigadier General
Cab	Cabinet
CDQ	Canadian Defence Quarterly
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CSEF	Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force
<i>DBFP</i>	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy</i>
DCER	Documents on Canadian External Relations
DGKKA	Direktivy Glavnogo Kommandovaniia Krasnoi Armii
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO	Director of Military Operations
EC	Eastern Committee
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	<i>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commander-in-Chief
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
IWC	Imperial War Cabinet
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LG	Lloyd George
LGen	Lieutenant General
<i>MCHW</i>	<i>The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson</i>
MGen	Major General
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO(s)	Non-Commissioned Officer(s)
NORAD	North American Air Defence
OMFC	Overseas Military Forces of Canada

PRO	Public Record Office (United Kingdom)
<i>PWW</i>	<i>The Papers of Woodrow Wilson</i>
RAF	Royal Air Force
SR	Social Revolutionary
USS	United States Ship
WC	War Cabinet
WCEC	War Cabinet Eastern Committee
WO	War Office
WPC	War Policy Committee
WSC	Gilbert, <i>Winston Spencer Churchill</i>

1

Introduction

International Relations and National Goals

Chaos has many names: anarchy, pandemonium, tumult, turmoil or, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, utter confusion. There is no better example than in the debacle that was the Allied intervention in Russia during and immediately after the Great War. This chaos was self-inflicted by the Allies themselves. People in positions of power caused this chaos through naiveté, wilful ignorance, egotism and personal aspiration disguised as national policy. Still, the very great challenges could not have been anticipated, as the operations in Russia were the first attempt at joint command among so many nations on such a grand scale. Even on the Western Front in France and Belgium, joint command was not implemented until after Germany's 1918 March offensive, which nearly broke the Allied lines on the Western Front. Only then did the British accept a French Supreme Commander to direct the Allied armies on the Western Front. Even in this life-or-death struggle in the heart of Western Europe, chaos still reigned in both diplomacy and military strategy. This was truer still in Russia.

The Allied strategic objectives in Russia changed over the course of three distinct time periods. From the first Russian Revolution in March 1917 to the November Bolshevik Revolution is the first distinct period and represents the time when the Allies endeavoured to keep Russia in the war as an active ally. From the November 1917 Bolshevik Revolution to the November 1918 armistice on the Western Front, the second period, the Allies tried first to prevent the Bolsheviks from making a separate peace with the Central Powers and, failing that, to re-establish an Eastern Front. The last phase is from after the 1918 armistice to the fall of the last Whites in the Crimea in 1920. This was the time of greatest change in the attitude of individual Allied Powers towards Russia. Before the armistice, there was a concerted effort by all the Allies to win the Great War. Every strategy was directed to that ultimate goal. After the armistice, the Allies had no agreed collective aim and efforts were often directed to national goals rather than to agreed common ends. In all three periods, however, chaos engulfed all the efforts of the Allies, the Central Powers and Russians of all stripes. From 1917 to 1920 Britain remained the driving force for intervention despite both British Prime Minister Lloyd

George's antipathy towards military action and US President Woodrow Wilson's efforts to have the United States become the pre-eminent nation of the Western World. However, the Allied intervention in Russia was an extension of, and had its origins in, the Great War.

Great War Overview

The world conflagration of 1914–18 was fought globally. The Triple Entente – the British Empire, France and Russia (the Allies) – was pitted against the Central Powers led by Germany and included the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Other nations joined either side. The most powerful and influential of these was the United States, which sided with the Entente in 1917.

Initially the Allies had hoped for a quick and decisive victory that they thought lay in the apparent strength of Russia. Both the French and the British expected that, by holding Germany to a standstill in the West, the Russian steamroller would come from the East and overwhelm the Central Powers. However, poor leadership, inadequate logistics and a lack of industrial capacity dissipated the Russian strength, which was based on vast manpower.¹ Political unrest in Russia, advanced and compounded by the war, sapped the Russian potential. After March 1917, the Russian asset was now a liability.² Revolution turned Russia into an inward-looking nation whose ordinary people detested the ongoing war. The March 1917 socialist revolution was superseded by Lenin and his Bolsheviks in November. The Bolsheviks believed in world revolution and were convinced that it would occur if only they could hold on to power. Originally, Lenin expected the revolution to start immediately in Germany and Central Europe and to spread to the western democracies. To ensure that this occurred, Lenin was willing to cede territory and treasure, first to Germany and later to the Allies, if this meant that the Bolsheviks retained power. To Lenin, all that would be given up would be returned with the coming of world revolution. This belief endangered the Allied cause and added to the Allied Powers' concerns resulting from setbacks in France, Belgium and Italy.

Initial Actions

By the end of 1917, with monumental casualties still rising on the Western Front, no victory in sight and Russia faltering, the desperate Allies debated the need to launch a full-scale military intervention in the Russian Empire. In the beginning, individual Allied powers landed their troops at various locations in Russia to achieve limited national goals.³ A few influential and dedicated British officers, for example, initiated small-scale operations to gather intelligence on the obscure developments in the hinterlands of South Russia and the Ottoman Empire.⁴ However, this and other Allied interventions grew beyond their original limited intent.

The major impetus for the grand military intervention came from the stasis that had developed on the Western Front. The failure of the Allies to advance

despite the bloodletting of the Somme and Verdun in 1916, coupled with the continuing failures of the *Chemin des Dames* offensive, the Italian Campaign and Passchendaele, together with the collapse of the Russian Front in 1917, all contributed to the impasse. How to break the stalemate became the strategic question. With France's population fully committed to the fighting in their native land and the United States not yet fully mobilized, it fell to Britain to be the driving force to solve the strategic problem.

In Britain, since the beginning of the war, there had been two factions in the Cabinet, the Western school and the Eastern school.⁵ The Westerners believed the war could only be won by putting all effort into the Western Front. The Easterners, led by Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George, First Lord of the Admiralty and the Chancellor of the Exchequer respectively in Herbert Asquith's Liberal government in 1914–15, believed France should only be a holding position while the major effort was put into fighting on the peripheries “to kick out the props from under Germany”.⁶ Strategy oscillated between the two extremes until the beginning of 1916 when the disasters of Gallipoli and Mesopotamia shattered the hopes of the Eastern school that success might be achieved at less cost than in France.⁷ The Eastern Strategy only re-emerged at the end of 1916 with the appointment of Lloyd George as Prime Minister and after the operational failures of that year on the Western Front. Failing massive and immediate assistance from the United States, it seemed improbable that a decisive Allied victory could be achieved. Though this attitude was not universal, there were growing numbers of British politicians who began to think that victory was not worth the price in blood and treasure, and the strongest of these was David Lloyd George.⁸

Faced with this deteriorating military situation, both Britain and France decided that the Eastern Front had to be re-established to prevent Germany from transferring more troops westward. However, this decision was not universally accepted, nor was it easily implemented. Neither Britain nor France had sufficient reserve manpower to open another Front by themselves, nor was there anywhere in Russia to which Allied troops could easily gain access in order to re-establish that Eastern Front. Lack of manpower dictated the need for diplomacy among the Allies and the United States. It also required that Britain discuss matters with its Imperial partners, especially Canada. All these negotiations delayed the implementation of Allied interventions until 1918. And the largest intervention, the one to Siberia, did not occur until the Great War was nearing its end.

Action was also delayed by Germany's almost successful March 1918 *Michael* offensive on the Western Front. Nevertheless, the interventions did occur and continued for over a year after the November 1918 armistice. Significantly, and a major contributor to chaotic diplomacy, the *raison d'être* for intervention changed after the formal ceasefire. “The Armistice destroyed at a stroke the principal motivation of the Western Governments ... for intervening in the Russian Civil War.”⁹

What had been a strategic military imperative to re-establish the Eastern Front quickly became a battle against Bolshevism for some of the Allies. Others saw it as interference in the birth of an independent nation. Still others saw it as the honourable support of people who had been allies from the start of the War. As

a result, the differing aims of each ally often caused those members to hamper and defeat each other's goals. Without a concerted and unified effort, the Allied intervention was destined to fail.

National Policies

Britain

Allies often have differing goals and motives. The men who made British strategic policy during the Great War had matured in the late nineteenth century when Russia and France were Britain's imperial rivals. Even though allied with these past competitors, Britain remained suspicious of their post-war ambitions and sought a peace settlement that not only weakened Germany, but would also ensure that neither Russia nor France became sufficiently powerful to threaten the British Empire or the European balance of power.¹⁰ This war aim coloured British strategic deliberations, but could not be voiced in Allied councils.

Britain also had difficulty with other members of the British Empire. Canada, which supplied substantial manpower for three of the five Russian operations and actually commanded the British contingent in the Siberian intervention, was critical to British strategy but demanding to deal with. Canada came into the Russian equation near the end as a source of resources such as manpower, but was strategically important politically as the senior Dominion. Without Canada, it is likely that the rest of the Empire would have declined to participate. Australia's feisty Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, hated Bolshevism, but, in Imperial councils, declined to supply troops to British efforts.¹¹ This made Canada vital to Britain in any Russian endeavour.

Canadian political imperatives ruled out the British government demanding Canadian troops and then directing their employment without consultation and agreement. Canada desired to establish itself as a force in international relations and to have an independent foreign policy from Britain.¹² Canada also wanted economic gains in Russia. When the Provisional Russian Government ordered the German-owned trading company Kunst and Albers sold in 1917, Canadian trade delegates saw an economic opportunity for Canadian investment in Russian Siberian intervention.¹³ And so it seemed, like other larger Allies, Canada would exercise its limited power for its own ends.

France

The French desire to keep their pre-war political and economic advantages in Russia was the driving force for France to urge military intervention against the Bolsheviks. This conviction eventually precluded any French compromise with the Bolshevik government.¹⁴ Lenin's repudiation of international loans negotiated by the Tsarist government was of particular concern as the French had invested heavily in Russia before and during the War. Intervention was a means to obtain security on the defaulted French investments.¹⁵ Economics is always important in international relations and never more so than during a war. The French government also worried at the political stability of the nation and feared that Bolshevik Revolution could spread to France if it was not stopped in its birthplace.

US War Policy

For the United States, intervention was a hard sell. President Woodrow Wilson set the attitude of the US government. "Wilson's non-revolutionary anti-imperialism sought to use American moral and material power to create a new international order, safe from related threats of war and revolution, in which America could serve mankind from a position of political and economic pre-eminence."¹⁶ From 1914, Wilson was opposed to the European war. He saw US commerce as a tool to expand his vision, which considered the enlargement of foreign commerce as a service to humanity.¹⁷ Wilson believed that America stood apart in its ideals and should not be drawn into anybody's quarrel.¹⁸ He also publicly stated that America supported the right of every nation to choose its own allegiance and be free.¹⁹ With these principles as the basis of US policy, the idea that the United States should intervene in Russia against the Bolshevik government was anathema to the president. This seemingly self-righteous US attitude was difficult for Britain and France to support.

However, the president and his advisors feared that the image of the United States would be hurt if they did not come to the aid of the beleaguered Czechoslovak legion, a 70,000-strong unit trying to escape revolutionary Russia to join the West. The fate of the Czechs and the reputation of the United States if nothing was done to save the Legion was a worry to Wilson. So, publicly, the United States made the rescue of the Czech Legion the *raison d'être* for intervention while striving to undermine Japan's expansionist ambitions.

Thus the Siberian intervention was Wilson's way of sublimating Japan's imperialistic tendencies in Asia by co-opting Japan into an orderly and rational system of international capitalist cooperation among the great powers interested in commercial expansion in Asia.²⁰ However, the argument can be made that President Wilson was the one who was co-opted into intervention by his fear that Japan would go it alone.

Japan's Russian Policy

US antipathy for Japan was reciprocated. For well before the Great War, the United States considered Japan to be a rival in the Pacific having its own national policy for Asia and the Western Pacific. By the time of the 1918 intervention in Russia, with Japan given command of Allied troops in Siberia, a clash with US policy was inevitable. Japanese policy towards Russia had altered since the 1904–05 Russo–Japanese war. US economic advances in Manchuria after the 1905 Russo–Japanese peace accord had seriously annoyed Japan. This prompted Japan to try to work more closely with Russia. In July 1910, Russia and Japan signed an entente to allow each country to pursue its own special interests in Manchuria without hindrance and to support each other in the face of threats from a third party.²¹ The onset of the First World War allowed Japan to advance its imperialist policies in China.²² When the Russian Revolutions occurred, first in March 1917 with the Socialists, and then in November 1917 with the Bolsheviks, the Japanese were faced with two decisions: first, how to eliminate Russia as a threat to Japan's security; and, second, how to gain control of the Russian natural resources in the Far East for

Japan's own economic growth.²³ The Japanese looked at Siberia as a source of wealth and an adjunct to their wish to control China for their own benefit. There was continuity in Japanese intervention. But there was also an internal policy fight between pacific politicians who feared the anger of the Western democracies and militarists who sought expansion in, and control of, the Russian Maritime provinces and Manchuria, with a docile China as an ally.²⁴ Since the beginning of the war, Japanese naval strategy had been based on the premise that the United States was a major strategic competitor, if not an outright enemy.²⁵ Japan's policies in the Far East were at odds with those of the United States. Therefore, in 1918, the two working as allies in Russia would appear to have been impossible.

In the Russian intervention, the Allies had neither an agreed strategic aim nor an agreed coordinator. In fact, the four Great Powers involved – Britain, France, Japan and the United States – often worked as hard at thwarting each other's activities as they did to stabilize Russia and (at least for two of the four Allies) to defeat Bolshevism. England and France, while in agreement that the re-establishment of the Eastern Front was a necessity, clashed over methods and vied with each other as to which should direct efforts. The two nations also disagreed between themselves and even internally as to how to deal with the Bolshevik government. Japan and the United States also disagreed on how to conduct the intervention. Each had a different national view that prevented the two nations from fully cooperating despite ostensibly having the same goals. Japan and the United States distrusted each other. This increased the possibility of failure. Notwithstanding these political roadblocks, the success or failure rested with the leadership of the nations involved.

Leaders and Their Personalities

One of the great questions about human affairs, past and present, is whether it is noteworthy people or, alternatively, the circumstances that engulf them that shape events and drive historic actions.²⁶ Despite the apparent dichotomy, in reality, those are two sides of the same coin. Major figures shape events by their decisions, which drive the events in one direction at the expense of other options. This certainly was the case in the vast, profound, political, economic and social upheavals of the First World War and the subsequent Russian civil war. The notion that in this fluid tumult, individuals, whether national leaders, mid-level diplomats or military commanders operating in war-torn territories where authority had disintegrated, could wield considerable – even decisive – influence, is frequently overlooked.²⁷ The three people who led Britain, the United States and France at this time were indeed monumental individuals.

Lloyd George was a formidable politician and adversary. He had clawed his way to the top of British politics with a towering ego and unwillingness to lose any battle, uncaring that his personal success often came at a high price to others. His eldest son Richard noted, "My father, once under the spell of the exercise of his own charm ... became completely carried away, without any other idea in his head, without thought of consequences".²⁸ Lloyd George had a sense of service

and purpose and pursued great ends in the course of his political career. However, he was an enigma who never revealed himself fully to any political associate.²⁹ He was fully aware that compromise and conciliation were at least as potent weapons as militancy and confrontation. He was emotional and calculating, persistent and patient, a politician of instinct and judgement. The compulsion to challenge and the will to conciliate became integral parts of his political style.³⁰ And he brought all these qualities and faults with him in his dealings on Russia both in the British Cabinet and the Versailles Peace Conference.

Lloyd George was a man of principle but highly pragmatic, and he wasted no energy on quixotic crusades.³¹ The British leader was also a tough politician convinced of his own ability and assured that he was right. Notwithstanding his ego, Lloyd George knew that his first obligation was to Britain. He had to balance commitments to Allies with domestic concerns at home. He never lost sight of the equation relating capabilities to policy goals, as well as relating aims to popular appeal.³² However, he did have a naïve view of Bolshevism, although he was not as blind as President Wilson. Nonetheless, his views on Bolshevism clashed with those of Churchill and coloured the British approach to any Russian policy. Some British leaders, particularly Churchill, saw Bolshevism as something that needed to be destroyed in its infancy. Some feared a Bolshevik revolution in Britain. Lloyd George, on the other hand, saw Bolshevism as a Russian problem to be contained if possible, but not something that Britain must attack. In many ways, his view towards Russia was similar to US President Woodrow Wilson's views.

President Wilson, a man of deep Presbyterian faith, was driven by his iron Calvinist principles. He held an abiding belief in democracy, but was distrustful and uncomfortable with radical change while preferring conservative order.³³ Wilson firmly believed that US national values were interchangeable with universal liberal values and an exceptionalist United States had a mission to lead mankind towards the future.³⁴ Having unified liberalism, capitalism and missionary-nationalism, Wilson was certain that those who had developed all of the peaceful industries of the United States had been divinely planted in the nation for the service of mankind.³⁵ He also believed his own intellect was superior to all others. On important matters of state, he cared little for the opinions of his cabinet.³⁶ Those who disagreed with him were not only wrong, but morally wrong. At the same time, Wilson thought lying was justified in some instances, particularly where it related to matters of public policy. He altered his views on the advice of Colonel Edward House, his good friend and intimate advisor, who said that maintaining a tight-lipped silence was preferable to active dishonesty.³⁷ Wilson followed this path, and in December 1917 William Phillips, an Assistant Under Secretary of State, noted that "Everything great and small must be referred to the President who receives no one, listens to no one, seems to take no one's advice."³⁸ Yet he was not averse to ignoring the truth for his own ends. At the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson claimed he had never seen the secret Allied agreements when, in fact, Arthur Balfour had shown them to him in 1917. Robert Lansing said of the president, "Even established facts were ignored if they did not fit with this intuitive sense, this semi-divine power to select the right."³⁹ Consequently, when

the United States joined the War, Wilson extended his narrow and dogmatic view to his Allies, and this included the Russia question.

Wilson's ego combined dangerously with his naiveté. He thought that the Bolshevik revolution was like the American; the Russians were getting rid of a tyrant and eventually it would lead to democracy. This vision resulted in a policy of non-interference in Russian internal politics and active opposition to other Allies fighting Bolsheviks. US goals were for an open-door economic relationship with Russia leading to US economic dominance. Although Wilson came to hate Bolshevism, it was only after 1919. Before that, he and his advisors saw the Russian revolution as ideal. Wilson failed to recognize Bolshevism was a danger to the whole civilized world. His intellect clashed not only with the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, but also with French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau.

Clemenceau was the product of a respected but atheistic family in a quintessentially Roman Catholic country.⁴⁰ He was anything but conciliatory and hated compromise. He made clear his political philosophy: "My formula is the same in every respect. Domestic policy? I wage war. Foreign policy? I wage war. I always wage war."⁴¹ He lived for fighting and backed down from no one. Clemenceau had been the bogeyman of French politics for 47 years, alienating Conservatives and Socialists alike. He had defended Dreyfus by publishing Zola's *J'Accuse* and had used troops against striking miners when Minister of the Interior in 1906.⁴² He was the first of the Great Powers' leaders to refuse recognition of the Bolshevik regime.⁴³ Clemenceau was not a man to be bullied or cowed.⁴⁴

It was these three leaders of Britain, the United States and France who had the task of ending the war and negotiating peace. Other people also influenced the course of actions at this time, including Winston Churchill, Arthur Balfour, Lord Curzon, Robert Lansing, Sir Robert Borden, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, White Russian generals turned politicians, and many more on all sides of the conflict. Thus, with clashing personalities of leaders and their national goals at odds with each other, the Allied intervention into Russia was problematic from the outset.

A note concerning dates: before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia used the Julian calendar, which in 1917 was 13 days behind the Gregorian or Western calendar. Only in 1918 did the Bolsheviks change to the Western calendar. Western dates have been used throughout the text, with the Julian date converted to the Gregorian when required. However, where quotes have been taken from Russian documents, the original text is shown with the Gregorian date in square brackets after the Julian date.

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2

Year of Crisis, 1917

The Allies did not decide to intervene in Russia independently of other strategic considerations. The Great War spawned the decision. It grew out of what was considered a “necessity” following a string of strategic reversals experienced in 1917. For the Allies, it was a time of both crisis and pessimism.

There were continuous setbacks throughout the year. Yet, for both the British and the French, 1916 had introduced political change. The British political landscape altered significantly when David Lloyd George became Prime Minister, leading a coalition government that needed the support of the Conservative Party to survive. In France, the politicians finally gained ascendancy over the military following the disaster at Verdun in 1916. This led to the replacement of the French Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) in December that year. In Russia, the chaos in government and the military accelerated when the Tsar made himself C-in-C of Russian forces and finally became full-blown with the eruption of the first Russian revolution in March 1917.

The advent of Lloyd George as British Prime Minister represented a watershed for who would control the strategic direction of the war. As an adherent of the Eastern school, the bloody battles of the Somme in the summer of 1916 convinced Lloyd George that there had to be another course to follow. Similarly, the French believed changes were needed in their military hierarchy after the slaughter at Verdun.

In December 1916, French Premier Aristide Briand won parliamentary support to replace General Joseph Joffre with General Robert Nivelle as C-in-C. Although the generals had controlled strategy from the beginning of the conflict, this finally established the ascendancy of the politicians over the military.¹ The French badly needed a victory, as did all the other war-weary Allies. The need for success elicited another Allied plan for an early spring offensive in 1917. It would necessitate coordinated attacks by the French and British on the Western Front, a spring attack by the Italians against the Austrians at Isonzo on the Adriatic Front and a supporting spring offensive on the Eastern Front by the Russians.² Yet, the Russian offensive was tentative. Their military capability was fragile, but coordination with the French and British was necessary for a strategic victory. Britain hoped for Russian action in the East to alleviate German pressure on the Western Front.

Thus an Allied conference was convened in Petrograd in February 1917 but accomplished little. Russia was angry at the small amount of munitions the other Allies would provide, and refused to coordinate their 1917 offensive with France's early spring operation.³ The conference ended 20 February and on 12 March the first Russian Revolution began that led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the establishment of a weak socialist government.

Soon after, on the Western Front, the *Chemin des Dames* spring offensive stalled. This disaster led to the mutiny of French *poilus* and a real possibility that France would withdraw from the war.⁴ In Paris, both Lord Esher and the British Naval Attaché warned London that France was on the brink of a Russian-style revolution.⁵

While the Allied spring offensive was underway, concern regarding Russia as an effective Ally mounted. In Petrograd, soldiers mutinied, refusing to obey government orders.⁶ Reports from ambassadors, consuls and military attachés to Paris and London remained negative, indicating that the provisional government lacked the authority to pursue the war, and expressed fear that Russia would not continue to fight.⁷ As a result, the provisional government was forced to manoeuvre to avoid direct confrontation over war aims.⁸

British policy-makers were not blind to the chaotic conditions in Russia and hoped for US support in keeping Russia as an ally against the Central Powers.⁹ In a public show of confidence, Washington had been the first nation to officially recognize the new Russian government, at the behest of its ambassador.¹⁰ The United States did agree that Russia must continue its war effort as a necessity.¹¹

Encouraging support for the war in Russia seemed a major, if perhaps futile, task, as reports throughout the spring indicated that the Russian people were exhausted by the war and that soldiers would only fight in defensive operations. Despite Russian Ministers' assurances to Allied diplomats of Russia's continued backing of the war, evidence indicated otherwise.¹² Senior British analysts argued that the provisional government was incapable of governing Russia.¹³

Britain and France desperately needed clear assurance that Russia would continue to fight and hold the Germans on the Eastern Front. Yet, the reports from diplomats remained pessimistic. Moreover, intelligence showed the revolution had spread throughout Russia and had affected important routes to India. In mid-April, Russian troops in Turkestan mutinied, fomented by enemy agents.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the provisional government clashed with the Soviets over war aims.¹⁵ V. I. Lenin urged "peaceful" protests, in the face of which the provisional government threatened to resign. This startled the Soviets, who were not ready to govern, and who also feared the outbreak of civil war.¹⁶ To alleviate the crisis, a compromise was agreed and the Soviet Executive urged the demonstrators to keep the peace.¹⁷ British diplomats and other allied representatives believed that the provisional government had no real authority anywhere, and that an open split with the Soviets would bring its downfall.¹⁸

The crisis was not over, but only delayed. On 13 May, in answer to a manifesto from the Soviets claiming the exclusive right to control the troops in Petrograd, General Lavr G. Kornilov, the governor of the city, resigned, as did the Minister of

War, A. I. Guchkov.¹⁹ The latter's resignation precipitated another political crisis. Fearing a civil war, the Russian prime minister offered ministerial positions to the Soviet Executive.²⁰ As a result, A. F. Kerensky, the only Socialist in the previous government, became the Minister of War. Kerensky was now responsible for remaking the Russian Army into a fighting force.

The re-establishment of an effective Russian Army was easier said than done. The front-line soldier was only interested in surviving to claim his portion of the land that had been freed by the revolution. With the spring thaw came rumours of a pending offensive. Soldiers then began to desert the trenches and seek the promised rewards of the revolution. A young officer wrote home in the middle of May, "It seems that we have finally lost the war."²¹ This was the situation that Kerensky faced as the new Minister of War. What the current governing elite never accepted was the complete rejection of the war by the majority of the population.

Although the soldiers cheered him wherever he went and he urged them "Forward to the battle for freedom", Kerensky's exhortations could not break the anti-war sentiment. This boded ill for the 1917 summer offensive promised to the Western Allies. It was to be part of the Allied push to defeat the Central Powers in 1917. As far as the Western Allies were concerned, the Russian summer offensive had to go ahead.

On 1 July 1917 the Russians launched their attack just as soldiers in Petrograd were demonstrating against the war's continuation. Christened the Kerensky Offensive, initially it was successful. The Russians appeared to be on the verge of a great victory. However, better German forces were arriving on the Eastern Front and easy victories quickly ended. On 19 July, the Germans halted the Russians and counter-attacked. Russian discipline broke almost immediately. For the rest of July and into August, the Germans rapidly drove the Russians back.²²

At a hurried secret session on 31 July, the British War Cabinet discussed the effects that a Russian military collapse would have on the Western Allies and Allied war aims. A Russian defeat would free 120 Central Power divisions in the east for transfer to the Western Front. This would put the Allies in a position of inferiority. The elimination of Russia from the war would make an Allied victory "problematical", to state the obvious.²³ Despite the crisis, the Cabinet did not come to any firm decision on action other than to seek closer communication with the United States. However, within three weeks the Russian mid-summer offensive foundered completely and they began the long retreat that ended in another revolution in the fall.

The most significant result of the Russian collapse was the creation of a new strategic geography for Britain. During the War, the approaches to India and other Imperial possessions in Asia had been protected through an Anglo-Russian *cordon sanitaire*. By cooperating with the Russians, they had prevented the infiltration of German and Turkish agents into India through Persia and Afghanistan. The desertion of Russian troops threatened this *cordon sanitaire*.²⁴ A new strategy was needed to protect the Empire. However, the immediate concern for Britain was its offensive in Flanders.

Notwithstanding the earlier 1917 offensive failures, Field Marshal Douglas Haig was determined to proceed with his planned attack at Ypres in July.²⁵ Yet, Lloyd

George did not believe that another Flanders offensive would cause a German collapse and was ready to look at other areas, especially Italy and further east, for success.²⁶

The day after the first phase of the Flanders offensive began, Lloyd George created the War Policy Committee (WPC) to review British war policy as a whole.²⁷ At the WPC he presented his plan for enlarged fighting on the Italian Front. This was an alternative to Haig's offensive in Flanders. The prime minister was desperate to find a way to avoid another slaughter on the Western Front. As he told the WPC on 21 June, a large concentration of artillery on the Italian Front could defeat the Austrians.²⁸ However, both General Sir William Robert Robertson, Chief of the British Imperial General Staff, and Haig were against Lloyd George's scheme.²⁹

While argument over the Western Front offensive continued in London, Russia was reeling from the German counter-attacks. This accelerated doubt among the other Allies over Russia's ability to continue the war.³⁰ Moreover, the Russian military retreat put the provisional government into turmoil when it tried to restore discipline.³¹ Added to the Russian administration's problems was the premature revolt by some Bolsheviks at the beginning of July that was only put down by troops loyal to the provisional government.³² The spectre of a disintegrating Russian Army propelled the government to seek desperate measures that would restabilize Russian forces. Urged by General Brusilov, Kerensky reinstated the death penalty at the Front.³³ He also halted the Russian offensive to re-establish discipline and to reconstitute the army.

The British Foreign Office found the Russian political and military situation very discouraging.³⁴ Sceptically, it judged that if Russia made a separate peace, the war would have to be sustained by the British Empire and the United States alone.³⁵ A few days later, Ambassador Sir George Buchanan told London that no assistance could be expected from Russia in 1917.³⁶ The British passed this information to Washington with the suggestion that Allied aid was needed to maintain the Russian Army as an effective fighting force. The problem was to get Kerensky to accept foreign involvement on Russian soil.³⁷ This appears to be the advent of the idea of Allied intervention in Russia.

On 1 August, having failed to restore order at the front, Kerensky formed another government with himself as both Prime Minister and Minister of War. He also replaced Brusilov with Kornilov as C-in-C.³⁸ This was both a bold and dangerous move since the general and the prime minister were at odds on methods to restore discipline in the army.³⁹ Kornilov's appointment began a series of events that tragically ensured the eventual supremacy of the Bolsheviks a few months later.

The Germans were still pushing back the Russians on the Riga Front and were 20 miles beyond their prepared positions. At the same time, the Russian Army in the Caucasus was mutinous.⁴⁰ This was the time that the Kerensky government's crisis came to a head in Petrograd. Kerensky's ego and his reluctance to use force to control the undisciplined troops was the greatest impediment to re-establishing order in Russia. The British military attaché, Colonel Knox, urged Lloyd George to support Kornilov as the only hope to make Russia fight effectively.⁴¹ The War Cabinet proposed a joint Allied note that asked Kerensky to adopt Kornilov's

programme.⁴² The French were also sympathetic to the Russian general and wrote their chargé d'affaires in Petrograd, encouraging him to push for "Kornilov's success".⁴³ However, events in Russia were proceeding without Allied input.

The Kornilov Affair

Kornilov was pessimistic and frustrated with his government's lack of resolution. His view was quickly made more so by the rapidly deteriorating military situation. The German army continued to advance, and occupied Riga on 2 September while three Russian regiments mutinied on the Romanian Front.⁴⁴ Against this background of military instability and disaster, General Headquarters heard that the Bolsheviks were preparing a coup in Petrograd.⁴⁵ Kornilov agreed to send the Third Cavalry Corps, made up primarily of Cossacks, to concentrate around Petrograd to support the government.⁴⁶

While Kornilov was preparing troops to defend Petrograd, Kerensky's fragile government came under a more intense challenge. A previous cabinet member, Vladimir N. Lvov, told Kerensky that he and his government were in danger from powerful right-wing elements and offered to help.⁴⁷ Lvov then went to Kornilov, posing as Kerensky's messenger, and gave the general three choices for a strong Russian government: a new Kerensky-led administration; a three- or four-member *directoire* including the C-in-C; or a C-in-C-led military dictatorship. Kornilov selected the third option. Lvov then returned to Petrograd and presented Kerensky with Kornilov's choice. The prime minister was to declare martial law in the capital and pass all authority to Kornilov.⁴⁸

Kerensky was now convinced that Kornilov was the leader of a right-wing coup set to overturn the revolution. After contacting his C-in-C and confirming that Lvov had indeed seen Kornilov, Kerensky cabled Headquarters relieving the general of his command.⁴⁹ Before the misunderstanding could be explained, Kerensky published an official announcement of Kornilov's dismissal, citing him for treason and mutiny.⁵⁰ The beleaguered prime minister rejected all efforts at mediation, even those proposed by the Allied ambassadors.⁵¹ Lvov had single-handedly changed the course of the Russian Revolution and increased the chaos in 1917 Russia.

With the public announcement of Kornilov's treason, all hope of a mutually agreed settlement passed. The general then ordered his cavalry division to secure the capital. However, the troops refused to proceed when they learned that their commander was branded a traitor and that they were being used to overthrow the government they had sworn to defend. Meanwhile, Kerensky armed the workers in Petrograd for the defence of the city and the Soviets brought sailors from Kronstadt for further support.⁵² By 13 September, Kornilov's chance at removing Kerensky and establishing a strong government had ended, and Kerensky, for the time, retained power, but he had sown the seeds of his own government's collapse. The arming of the Petrograd workers in this crisis allowed the Bolsheviks to resurrect the Red Guard units disbanded by Kerensky the previous July.⁵³ Moreover, the Russian Army was no longer a force to be relied upon to protect the provisional government.⁵⁴

In London, Lloyd George noted that Kornilov's dismissal was "a serious blow to the Allies".⁵⁵ Across the Atlantic, Sir William Wiseman told President Wilson's personal confidant, Colonel Edward House, that the British government "had begun to look upon Russia as a hopeless problem".⁵⁶ All this had an influence on the British War Cabinet and was indicative that "Kerensky's power was on the wane."⁵⁷

Yet, at that moment, Kerensky had emerged victorious over Kornilov with almost dictatorial powers, but he had lost more than he had gained. The Right distrusted him as Kornilov's betrayer, and the Left saw him as a one-time Kornilov ally now moving against them.⁵⁸ At the end of September 1917 the besieged Russian prime minister had retained shaky control in Petrograd, but chaos was widespread throughout the rest of Russia.

Despite Kerensky's seeming triumph, Russia was in disarray. This anarchy greatly disturbed the British War Cabinet, especially since it had intelligence reports that Germany was sending troops to Mesopotamia to help recapture Baghdad. Russian troops in that theatre could no longer be relied upon for help. This also increased the chance of the Turks moving through Persia to advance on India.⁵⁹

In the face of Russia's military collapse, Britain searched for a compensatory strategy, but the Cabinet could not agree on one. Without Russia in the war and with the French in a weakened state, Lloyd George feared that all the fighting would fall to the British, which would decimate the Army in 1918. The collapse of the Russian military was having a direct effect on the Western Front. Germany was now transferring 23 divisions from the East to the West, with plans to send one-third of its entire Eastern Front force.⁶⁰

Across the Channel, the French were also concerned with the Russian situation. In October, the Troisième Bureau forecasted Russia's military and economic collapse; it also predicted that no Russian government was capable of reversing the situation. The ideal solution was an Allied military intervention strong enough to bolster the Russian Army. However, as that was unrealistic, the Allies should initiate a less-extensive intervention that would control Russia's natural resources and the Trans-Siberian Railway. These objectives could be accomplished by a "few Japanese and American troops supplied by the Trans-Siberian Railway".⁶¹ Needing Allied consensus, France approached the United States to find ways to aid the Russians and prevent further disintegration. Robert Lansing, the US Secretary of State, agreed that the situation was critical and recommended that his government send a representative to Paris.⁶²

In London, the British War Cabinet had discussed approaching Japan for military assistance on several fronts, including Russia. Although the Dominion governments had concern over what Japan might demand in exchange for military cooperation, it was agreed that this would have to be addressed at the end of the war. Canada's prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, expressed the apprehensions of most of the Dominions when he warned that Japan should not be allowed any territorial aggrandisement. It was evident that the Western Allies needed Japanese help, but did not trust that Japanese demands for this assistance would

be reasonable or even acceptable to them. Notwithstanding these concerns, the British War Cabinet asked the United States for support in inviting Japanese military cooperation, especially in Russia as the easiest front for the Japanese to reach.⁶³

The request for US backing in approaching the Japanese was problematic. At the root of this was the long-standing aggravation arising from the US "Open Door" policy of years gone by. Now, in 1917, the United States was already in negotiations with the Japanese over that very aid, but it was tied to negotiations on access to China and the trade embargo that the United States had implemented against Japan on iron and steel. On Japan's part, there was concern over US insistence on publicly declaring a re-establishment of the principle of an "Open Door" policy for all countries with respect to trade with China.⁶⁴ While the United States was conducting these China discussions with Japan, the British discovered that the Japanese government had informed the Russian Ambassador that the Japanese would send no troops to Europe in aid of anyone.⁶⁵

Armed with this information, the War Cabinet decided to pressure the United States to consider sending a military force to Russia. Lord Reading, the British Ambassador to Washington, revealed to Lansing the existence of a volunteer cadre in Russia that was an army within the army. It consisted of men who had fore-sworn politics and were dedicated to continuing the war. Reading requested that the United States send troops to Russia to aid this growing army. He also urged US pressure on the Japanese to send troops.⁶⁶

And so, in the final days of autumn 1917, Britain realized that manpower, with massive "wastage" on the Western Front continuing, was critical, and additional troops were desperately needed. France had no reserves and needed time to recoup from the bloodletting of the previous three years. Russia was effectively out of the War. The United States needed time to build and train the massive army expected in the New Year, while volunteer manpower in the Dominions was at an all-time low. Canada, the senior Dominion, was in the midst of a bitter election over conscription that was dividing the country along linguistic lines.⁶⁷ Only Japan had a trained army that could immediately assist the Western Allies and prevent the total collapse of the Eastern Front. There was still the expectation that any military assistance would be used to help stiffen the resolve of the Russian troops and prevent the Russian government from negotiating a separate peace with the Central Powers.

Faced with the strategic setbacks in Flanders and Italy coupled with the weakness of the Kerensky government in Petrograd, the need to reform the Allied effort was obvious to some, especially Lloyd George. He saw the requirement for an Allied war council for the heads of government together in order to make decisions on the basis of the war situation as a whole. All aspects would be taken into account and the views of the main partners pooled if victory was to be achieved.⁶⁸ On 7 November, at Lloyd George's behest, the Supreme War Council was constituted at the Rapallo Conference.⁶⁹ Significantly, it was also the day the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Petrograd. This was the catalyst for a new strategy to re-establish the Russian Front.

Rise of the Bolsheviks

The Bolshevik Revolution and fall of Kerensky was sudden, explosive and yielded unexpected results, not the least of which was the Bolsheviks' unilateral decision to establish a separate peace with the Central Powers. That shocked the Allies. It was a defining moment in the Great War that changed the Allies' perception of Russia. From trying to preserve Russia as an active ally, the Allies now sought to prevent Russia from becoming Germany's vassal and to re-establish the Eastern Front by any means possible. However, the Allies' immediate concern was the resurrection of the Eastern Front to prevent Germany from transferring the bulk of its forces to the West. Yet the decision to intervene was not easily agreed among the Allies; it was neither quick nor a single intervention. In fact, several interventions eventually occurred, some by one Ally, some bilateral and some requiring multiple partners. These all contained the seeds of chaos.

The overthrow of the provisional government should not have been such a surprise to the Allies. The Russian chargé d'affaires in London, Constantine Nabokov, reported that the British War Cabinet believed that the collapse of Kerensky's government was inevitable.⁷⁰ French diplomats noted that disorder and anarchy were increasing.⁷¹ The extremists, whom Kerensky had armed during the Kornilov affair, were opposing the formation of a government.⁷² US diplomats notified Washington that the disintegration of the government was continuing and anarchy was everywhere, while the Russian Ambassador in Washington was predicting that peace with the Central Powers would happen within two months unless US and Japanese troops were sent to support the Russian Army.⁷³ The day before the Bolsheviks seized power, Buchanan advised London that even if the Bolsheviks established their own government, it would not last long.⁷⁴ The resulting Bolshevik *coup d'état* on 7 November did not surprise him, but the outcome did.

The day after the Bolsheviks seized control, they declared the provisional government deposed, endorsed a new regime led by Vladimir Lenin and issued a peace decree.⁷⁵ The announcement abolished secret diplomacy, declared the intention to publish all secret treaties Russia possessed and defined the type of peace that was to be negotiated, one without annexations and without indemnities.⁷⁶

Such a peace decree did not mean that the Bolsheviks had the support of the majority of Russians or that they would retain power for any length of time. Buchanan quickly informed London of the chaotic situation in Petrograd with a split between moderate socialists and the Bolsheviks. However, he predicted that the Bolshevik Government would eventually disintegrate since it would be unable to fulfil its promises.⁷⁷ But the Ambassador did not think the Bolsheviks' collapse would be immediate, as all the soldiers in Petrograd supported them, and it was too early to be sure of the final outcome.⁷⁸ In fact, heavy fighting continued in Moscow between the Bolsheviks and those opposed to them.⁷⁹

The French were also unsure and confused by the situation, hoping that Kerensky would eventually prevail since a new administration had yet to be established.⁸⁰ The French ambassador asked Paris to send eight to ten thousand troops to support Kerensky.⁸¹ However, Captain Jacques Sadoul, part of the French

military mission in Russia, was more sanguine about the Bolsheviks' chances. In a letter to Paris, Sadoul cited Trotsky's confidence in victory:

All revolution contain risks, but the chances of success are enormous. The preparations were meticulous. The organization is understood throughout Russia, where a thousand committees were set up. Almost the whole army has now been acquired. The mass of peasants are going to be seduced by the restoration of land from the big owners. Supported by these two elements the movement must succeed.⁸²

As for the United States, their ambassador dispatched several telegrams to Washington throughout the first few days of the uprising detailing the anarchy.⁸³

However, by 16 November, Ambassador David Francis wired that the Bolsheviks were in control of Petrograd and that fighting had ceased there.⁸⁴ By 19 November the Bolsheviks had seized control in both Petrograd and Moscow, but General A. M. Kaledin, leading a Cossack anti-Bolshevik revolt, controlled the southern part of Russia.⁸⁵

The one thing that all the Allied ambassadors agreed after the Bolsheviks seized power was that none would officially recognize the new Regime.⁸⁶ They came to this view in the absence of direction from their respective governments. The ambassadors were concerned that the Bolsheviks did not control all of Russia and there was an expectation that they would soon be ousted from power.⁸⁷ Elections for a Russian Constituent Assembly had begun and this Assembly was scheduled to meet 29 November, although delays were expected. The Constituent Assembly would have the authority to determine the type of government Russia would have, but it would likely have a "Bolshevik Sentiment".⁸⁸

Meanwhile, in Southern Russia, Generals M. V. Alexeiev and Boris Savinkov had joined General Kaledin and were awaiting General Kornilov before declaring a new Russian government in opposition to the Bolsheviks. They had even sought British funds for the new government. Buchanan said he could not support them, but the Foreign Office advised that he might have to finance Kaledin to save the struggling Romanian Army.⁸⁹ This was the first indication of a counter-revolutionary group in opposition to the Bolsheviks.

However, the Bolsheviks were not waiting to consolidate control. On 20 November, the new regime directed the Russian C-in-C to start truce negotiations with the Germans.⁹⁰ On 21 November, Trotsky told the Allied diplomats that a new Russian government existed and it had sent peace proposals to the Germans.⁹¹ He also announced that all the secret treaties made by the Tsar would be published immediately.⁹² This exposure of all the secret diplomacy clearly upset the Allies.

General N. N. Dukhonin refused to negotiate with the Germans and was replaced by a Bolshevik, Ensign N. V. Krylenko. The Allied military attachés protested the start of the peace talks directly to Dukhonin, bypassing the unrecognized Bolshevik government.⁹³ Trotsky was enraged and publically declared that the Bolsheviks had demanded an armistice on all fronts, not just the Eastern Front.

He added that Russia would neither be bound by dead treaties nor would it allow the foreign bourgeoisie to wield a club over Russia's head.⁹⁴

On a lesser scale, Trotsky also demanded the release of two Russians, Peter Petrov and Georgii Chicherin, imprisoned in England.⁹⁵ Trotsky's demand for the release of the two Russians adversely affected the possibility of British official recognition of the Bolshevik government. Buchanan also considered Trotsky's missive as blackmail, threatening the well-being of all British subjects in Russia.⁹⁶ Yet, it was also a desperate attempt at forcing the Allies to formally recognize Trotsky's government. With the start of Russo–German parleys, the Communists had to be able to negotiate openly with the Allies. This was needed to balance the Soviet approach to the Germans. Without the Allies' official recognition, the Bolsheviks would be at the mercy of the Germans in armistice talks. Moreover, without official relations, the Allies could formulate their policy in Russia without referring to the Soviet government, and this Trotsky and Lenin could not allow.⁹⁷ This need of official recognition was hinted at in Trotsky's boast that "the most hardened European diplomats appreciate that ... They have to reckon with the Soviet Government as a fact, and to establish certain relations with it."⁹⁸ Trotsky threatened Buchanan that strict measures would be taken to prevent the ambassadors from doing harm or from leaving the country if the Allies did not recognize his government.⁹⁹

The British War Cabinet discussed what options were open in dealing with the Bolsheviks, but took a wait-and-see attitude and decided not to officially recognize the new Russian government.¹⁰⁰ The War Cabinet recognized Trotsky's demand as blackmail, and decided to give no answer to him. They feared giving in would lead to more demands of a similar nature.¹⁰¹ This proved to be contentious when no answer came to Trotsky's demands.

On 29 November, the Commissar upped the ante by denying exit visas to British subjects and threatened to intern them unless his demands were met.¹⁰² While awaiting a reply from London, Buchanan told Trotsky that his government viewed the Commissar's actions as a threat of reprisal. This had created a difficult situation. However, if he rescinded the prohibitions against British subjects, consideration would be given to the release of Petrov and Chicherin. Trotsky countered that if a notice was published that Britain was reviewing the cases of Russians interned in Britain, he would free British subjects. Buchanan advised London to accept the compromise and the War Cabinet agreed.¹⁰³ While this diplomatic set-to was developing, the Reds were proceeding with negotiating an armistice with the Germans.

When Ensign Krylenko took over from General Dukhonin, he immediately approached the Germans for a *pourparler* and received a favourable response on 27 November.¹⁰⁴ Krylenko also ordered that all fighting stop unless the Russians were attacked. Meanwhile, Trotsky called on all the other Allies to join in the peace talks. They ignored Trotsky's invitation. The Allies still hoped to keep Russia in the war on their side. Britain and France had not yet grasped that nothing more could induce the Russian Army to continue the war. However, an armistice alone would not allow Germany to overrun Russia or even obtain the Russian resources Germany needed.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the Allied leaders meeting in Paris also discussed attitudes towards Russia. The two strongest Allies were against treating Russia as a belligerent, but neither could officially recognize its new government.¹⁰⁶ However, both Italy and France were adamant that Russia could not be released from its obligations. At that juncture, the question of a major military intervention was discussed.

After acknowledging that Russia was in a state of anarchy and its collapse would lead to the destruction of Romanian forces, Marshal Ferdinand Foch advised that the Allies needed to bolster the Romanians and have them act as a nucleus for pro-Allied Russians. To do this, a secure communications route was needed and only the Trans-Siberian railway qualified. Japan and the United States were ideally suited for this operation, but both nations rejected the idea.¹⁰⁷ Discussion continued, but no consensus could be agreed.

Meanwhile, armistice negotiations between the Soviets and the Central Powers commenced at Brest-Litovsk, but broke off almost immediately when the Reds tried to dictate terms. Major-General Max Hoffmann, the German Commander, told them that nothing previously decreed by the Central Powers would be changed and none of the Russians' Allies would be invited to the talks. The Bolsheviks broke off negotiations in a huff and returned to Petrograd to seek further instructions.¹⁰⁸

Trotsky was incensed by the German attitude. On 6 December he explained that the negotiations had been suspended for a week for further consultations with his government. He challenged the Allied Governments to take part or explain publicly why they would not attend the peace talks.¹⁰⁹ Despite Trotsky's challenge, the Allies ignored the invitation. However, the start of armistice talks with the Russians forced the Romanians to accept similar overtures from the Central Powers.¹¹⁰ The Russian Commander in the Caucasus also requested an armistice.¹¹¹ This had been anticipated when Balfour had suggested using Armenians to defend their own land to prevent the enemy from joining with the Azerbaijan Turks and the Tartars.¹¹² The separate peace talks caused a domino effect on the component parts of the old Russian Empire and the countries that bordered it. The Caucasus, Armenia, Ukraine, Crimea, the Baltic States, Finland as well as Romania, parts of Poland and the Czech and Slovak provinces all now added to the confusion by the addition of a welter of peripheral issues, which substantially increased the chaos. Yet by 15 December 1917 terms for an armistice had been accepted and were to be in effect until 14 January 1918. The two sides agreed not to transfer troops from the Eastern Front during the truce and prisoner exchanges were to start. Peace negotiations were to commence immediately.¹¹³

Allied Concerns and Diplomatic Communications

With the reality of the Russo-German armistice, several matters increased in importance for the Allies, not the least of which was how to maintain contact with the Bolshevik regime without officially recognizing it. Other issues that had lurked in the background now became important, and included the safety of vital military supplies the Allies had sent to Russia. These were now sitting in the ports

of Archangel and Murmansk on the Arctic Ocean and Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast. Vladivostok's US Consul, John Caldwell, reported deteriorating conditions in the city and called for military force, either US or Japanese, for protection.¹¹⁴ The British government reviewed methods for safeguarding these Allied supplies. Suggestions for Vladivostok all centred on US and Japanese involvement and the control of the Trans-Siberian Railway, while those for North Russia centred on British naval control of the ports with a small force ashore.¹¹⁵ Other issues also discussed included the safety of India. Without the help of the Russian Army in the Caucasus, the approaches to India would be open to the Turks. Some form of diplomatic relations between the Bolsheviks and the Allies needed to be established.¹¹⁶ But it was not easily done.

On 22 December 1917, the French and British both reluctantly conceded that some unofficial form of communication should be established with the Bolsheviks so that a *modus vivendi* could be maintained.¹¹⁷ The British decided to recall their ambassador and appointed Moscow's British Consul, R. H. Bruce Lockhart, as their *chargé d'affaires* and unofficial British representative in Petrograd.¹¹⁸ For the French, Captain Jacques Sadoul became their unofficial contact from the French Embassy.¹¹⁹

Trotsky also coerced US Ambassador Francis into setting up unofficial contact by accusing him of being part of a conspiracy to supply the anti-Bolsheviks.¹²⁰ In denouncing Francis, Trotsky hoped to frighten him into establishing a channel of at least semi-official communication. He succeeded. Francis, against the direct orders of the State Department, employed Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Robins, the new head of the American Red Cross, as his go-between for the next five months.¹²¹ The Bolsheviks now had achieved tacit recognition, albeit semi-official, from the three main Western Allies. However, these Allies were increasingly crippled by lack of agreement on what to do. So the chaos grew, but not only for the Allies. The Reds were now supping with the devil as peace talks with the Central Powers began at Brest-Litovsk. Trotsky, however, was beginning to doubt the peace process.

On the day the armistice began, he told Sadoul that there was an urgent need to reorganize the Russian Army to be ready to prevent the Germans from reneging on any agreement.¹²² Trotsky also discussed the need for a revolutionary war if peace negotiations failed. If the European proletariat failed to coerce their governments into forcing a peace, Germany could attack Russia without restraint. If that were to happen, he predicted, a powerful army strong with revolutionary enthusiasm would wage a holy war against the militarists of all countries.¹²³ The Bolshevik leadership was sceptical enough to realize that failure at the peace talks was a distinct possibility.

Russo–German Peace Talks

When the talks opened just before Christmas, the Soviet delegates presented six points as the basis for negotiations. The demands were: no annexation of territory; full political independence to conquered nations; national groups to decide

their fate by a referendum; minorities to be protected by law; no indemnities; and, colonial questions to be decided in accordance with the first four points.¹²⁴ Although the demands were extreme, the Bolsheviks were the only people to have an agreed policy.

The Central Powers asked for a delay to consider their reply and the Bolsheviks readily complied. Part of the Russian strategy was to prolong the peace talks as long as possible.¹²⁵ Yet on Christmas Day the Central Powers agreed to all the Bolshevik principles. This was all a game to the Germans and, as part of this game, they also recorded specific reservations about these proposals. The Bolsheviks, blinded by apparent success, failed to understand the significance of the reservations. The Red delegates jubilantly reported that the Central Powers had accepted everything and would evacuate all captured Russian territory on ratification of a separate peace treaty.¹²⁶

The Germans quickly disabused the Bolsheviks.¹²⁷ They told the Soviets that they considered Poland, Lithuania and Courland independent already.¹²⁸ In shocked reply, the Russians proposed the evacuation of all territories occupied by foreign armies since the start of the war.¹²⁹ The Germans immediately countered by demanding that the Bolsheviks acknowledge the will of Poland, Lithuania and Courland as well as Estonia and Livonia to separate from Russia, and asked if the Bolsheviks were ready to evacuate the remainder of Estonia and Livonia.¹³⁰ The Germans even raised the ante by enquiring as to the exact status of Finland and Ukraine.¹³¹ Reeling from this unexpected challenge, the Reds asked for a ten-day recess, which was readily granted. Talks would resume on 9 January 1918.¹³² Clearly the Germans had backed the Bolsheviks into a corner, using Lenin's own definitions of annexation and self-determination against them.

Trotsky was livid, and doubly so, since, shortly before, the Commissar had announced to the Central Executive Committee that the Congress of Soviets had "dictated" the terms of peace to the Germans.¹³³ Nevertheless, on 31 December, although knowing that the Germans had rejected the Bolsheviks' proposals, Trotsky issued an ultimatum to the Western Allies to join the peace negotiations or be blamed for the continuation of the war.¹³⁴

Other Bolsheviks vowed to fight to the last and demanded a continuous battle against German Imperialism.¹³⁵ However, Lenin knew that the Bolsheviks did not have the military strength to resist. To maintain his leadership, Lenin had to appear to agree with hard-line revolutionaries, while delaying any decision that required action. He urged the reorganization of the Russian Army, the prolongation of peace talks and that the venue be moved to Stockholm. He then appointed Trotsky to head the Bolshevik peace delegation.¹³⁶

By now Trotsky no longer trusted the Central Powers, if he ever had, and decided to hedge his bets. He queried Robins on what help the United States could give Russia if the Germans renewed the war on the Eastern Front.¹³⁷ Robins immediately requested from Francis that he, Robins, be allowed to say that the Ambassador would recommend "prompt and effective assistance" if the war resumed. Francis promptly agreed and also obtained support from the French and the British.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, Lenin manoeuvred to preserve and enhance Bolshevik power.

Lenin was not in favour of Allied assistance. The Bolsheviks could not mount a successful defence even if the Allies helped. He knew that for the Bolsheviks to survive, peace had to be attained and negotiations must proceed, but be dragged out.¹³⁹ Russia would continue to negotiate on the principles of the Russian Revolution and publicize the negotiations regardless of any censorship by others.¹⁴⁰ Trotsky said that there would be no more concessions in the face of German demands.¹⁴¹ However, the Germans refused to move the venue of the peace talks to Sweden and Trotsky left for Brest-Litovsk on 5 January.

Trotsky had finally realized that the Germans would not modify their punitive demands and therefore the Bolsheviks must form a volunteer army to be ready in May to continue fighting. Negotiations had to be prolonged until the Russians had some force to back their peace principles.¹⁴² Yet the Bolsheviks believed that peace was necessary at any price and that they would be willing to sign anything to retain power.¹⁴³ For the British and the French the idea of helping the Bolshevik volunteer army, provided that army would be used to fight the German Alliance, remained an option.¹⁴⁴ On 5 January Lloyd George predicted that Germany would never surrender any of its gains to Russia. He reiterated Britain's promise to fight alongside Russians to the end, but said that any independent action on the part of the new Russian government would bring disaster as the Allies had no means to intervene to arrest the catastrophe. He concluded, "Russia can only be saved by her own peoples."¹⁴⁵ Lloyd George was stating the obvious, but also establishing his personal view that Allied military intervention in Russia was impossible at this time. Meanwhile, on 8 January 1918, the negotiations reopened at Brest-Litovsk.

While the Soviet–German peace talks proceeded, the British steadily became more worried over the Allied supplies at Archangel and Murmansk. These stockpiles were large, vital and relatively close to the Finnish border, and the local government feared that Germany wished to capture the Northern Region. Although the Germans had demanded that the British at Murmansk be evicted, Buchanan advised London to stay put and to send food supplies to help the population.¹⁴⁶ The local government and British forces remained friendly and the supplies secure. Similarly, in Archangel, the British Consul considered the Allied materiel to be in no danger provided public order was maintained, and that would depend on food supplies, which were becoming scarce.¹⁴⁷

It was feared that the even larger stockpile at Vladivostok was in more danger, in spite of it being over 8000 miles from European Russia. The British War Cabinet, however, considered it premature to send British soldiers to protect these provisions.¹⁴⁸ Yet, asking Japan to guard Vladivostok would only antagonize all Russians, not just Bolsheviks. Rather, the British preferred a mixed US–Japanese force, but were alarmed that Japan would not act with other Allies.¹⁴⁹ Japanese–US relations were not amicable and Japan hoped that the British government would not press for US or even British participation if intervention became necessary in Eastern Siberia.¹⁵⁰ The Japanese wished to act alone, as a matter of national honour and their national agenda.¹⁵¹

The British needed Japan and the United States, but in January 1918 neither was willing to work with the other. Despite the Japanese public reluctance to intervene

as part of a joint Allied force, Japan was concerned about the Bolshevik Revolution and its effect on the Far East.¹⁵² The Bolsheviks would do whatever was necessary to achieve these goals including making peace with Germany.¹⁵³

Despite Lenin's need for peace, Trotsky returned to Brest-Litovsk in early 1918 with every intention of waging revolutionary war, but, realizing that continuing the war might be impossible, he had to stall for time.¹⁵⁴ Sensing this, the Germans hardened their negotiations. They had invited the anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian Rada to join the talks, much to Trotsky's embarrassment.¹⁵⁵ The Central Powers needed to complete the talks quickly so they could turn all their attention to the Western Front.

On 9 January, the Germans refused to move the talks to Sweden, demanded a separate peace be signed and that a commission be created to establish the details. Preaching the revolutionary catechism, Trotsky rejected the ultimatum outright. The situation continued for over a week with neither side moving from their entrenched positions.¹⁵⁶ Trotsky, however, did acknowledge that force and not democracy was the basis for Bolshevism. Finally, on 18 January 1918, Germany presented its final terms. The new Russian frontier would stretch from Brest-Litovsk to the Baltic with Russia renouncing claims to Poland, Lithuania and most of Latvia. The Ukraine and Germany would decide the southern boundary between them.¹⁵⁷ Desperate to gain time, Trotsky secured another ten-day adjournment to consult Moscow, further delaying any decision.¹⁵⁸

This postponement also helped the Bolsheviks deal with the Constituent Assembly and its elected Social Revolutionary (SR) majority.¹⁵⁹ The Constituent Assembly was the last chance for the Russians to establish a democratic government.¹⁶⁰ But Lenin could not allow this possibility to undermine his revolution. It was his need to retain power that drove his actions.

The night before the Constituent Assembly convened, the Soviet Central Committee declared that all power belonged to the Soviets.¹⁶¹ A showdown between the two legislative bodies was now inevitable. The next day, 18 January, the Constituent Assembly formed and declared itself the supreme authority in Russia.¹⁶² The Bolsheviks walked out and dissolved the Constituent Assembly as unrepresentative.¹⁶³ This ended the first popularly elected legislature in Russia and stifled democracy there for over 70 years. The dissolution also ended Allied hopes for the Constituent Assembly to act as the Russian government, leaving them with few options.¹⁶⁴ Either the Allies could ignore the situation or intervene in force. They were, however, divided over what to do. The British were incensed over the destruction of the Constituent Assembly, but the United States remained cautious, continuing to evaluate options.¹⁶⁵ US support for any intervention was slow in coming.¹⁶⁶

While the Allies learned of the destruction of the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks continued to lurch towards a peace agreement with the Central Powers. It was not a road taken unanimously. Although Lenin and Trotsky had different visions for their revolutionary Russia, both were faced with opposition from other Bolsheviks.

At the 21 January Central Committee meeting, both Lenin's plan for an immediate peace with the Germans and Trotsky's plan of "no peace, no war" were

defeated with the majority opting for a revolutionary war.¹⁶⁷ But the ballot was not binding, and Lenin knew the Bolsheviks could not survive renewed fighting. He aligned himself with Trotsky, who was allowed to try his “no peace, no war” policy first. If it failed, Trotsky would not oppose Lenin’s policy of a separate and immediate peace.¹⁶⁸ But Trotsky was as Machiavellian as Lenin, and sought Allied assistance for a renewed war.

Trotsky badgered Robins for official US recognition of the Bolsheviks and aid if fighting resumed.¹⁶⁹ Francis sent the telegram, but specifically told Lansing he did not endorse Robins’s recommendations.¹⁷⁰ On 24 January, Trotsky queried Robins on US recognition, but Robins could tell him nothing positive as Washington seemed indecisive.¹⁷¹ The chaos continued. With no guarantees of Allied help, Trotsky returned to Brest-Litovsk and resumed negotiations on 30 January 1918. With Lenin’s blessing, he was determined to implement his policy, but at the same time to prolong the talks as much as possible.

With Trotsky absent, the All-Russian Congress supported the Soviet peace negotiators, condemned the Central Powers’ actions and ratified laws nationalizing private property and repudiating debts. It declared the Congress of Soviets as the supreme governing body in Russia with the “All Russian Executive Committee” as the supreme authority.¹⁷² In this way, Lenin consolidated his power and legitimized the Reds’ actions at the peace talks.

With this endorsement, Trotsky arrived at Brest-Litovsk with renewed authority, but this time the Germans were far more aggressive. They made a separate peace with the Ukrainians, thus giving them a reason to enter the Ukraine when the Bolsheviks ousted the Rada.¹⁷³ The treaty was signed only hours before the Bolsheviks captured Kiev.¹⁷⁴

The Germans presented this Ukrainian *fait accompli* to Trotsky, and told him that it was useless to drag on negotiations. However, the Germans gave him an out by suggesting that the territorial question be turned over to a subcommittee for resolution.¹⁷⁵ Delay was what Trotsky wanted and he agreed immediately. But this subcommittee could not come to an agreement, and on 10 February the problem came back to the plenary negotiating table.

Trotsky, now faced with the ultimatum he had worked so hard to avoid, raged against the blatant territorial seizures. He then declared that Russia no longer wished to take part in the “Imperialist” war and would order the complete demobilization of all Russian troops.¹⁷⁶ This was what the Central Powers had hoped for, but Trotsky then exploded his strategic bombshell: Russia would not sign any peace treaty.¹⁷⁷ This was Trotsky’s “No Peace, No War” speech and it shocked the Central Powers. They promptly reminded Trotsky that a state of war still existed between themselves and Russia. German military activity would be resumed immediately. Trotsky, however, ignored the warning, and left the next day believing he had achieved a great victory.¹⁷⁸ He had, however, only added to the diplomatic chaos.

War now resumed on the Eastern Front. Yet in Petrograd, the Soviets made an equally serious decision. They repudiated all state loans made with other governments, foreign institutions or individuals.¹⁷⁹ This was a great economic blow

to the Allies. All the ambassadors in Petrograd, including neutrals, declared the decree “without value” and reserved the right to claim for damages at a future time.¹⁸⁰ The loan repudiation particularly incensed France whose citizens for years had invested enormous sums in Russia at the encouragement of the French government.¹⁸¹ This was one of the reasons that France increased its efforts to support the anti-Bolsheviks in Southern Russia. Consequently, intervention once again became more attractive to the Allies. Yet despite having no trust in the Bolsheviks, Bruce Lockhart advised that any foreign intervention without the consent of the Russians would drive Russia into the arms of Germany. Working with the Communists was Britain’s best hope of keeping the Germans occupied on the Eastern Front.¹⁸² At the same time, Trotsky did not think any Bolshevik–German peace would last and he commented that “Now is the big opportunity for the Allied Governments.”¹⁸³ On 16 February 1918, the Germans carried out their promise to continue the conflict and advanced towards Petrograd and Kiev.¹⁸⁴

The Russian defence was almost non-existent. Despite the Germans employing reservist troops almost exclusively, the Russians failed to make any effective resistance.¹⁸⁵ As a result, Lenin sent a telegram of capitulation to the Germans on 19 February.¹⁸⁶ But the Germans were not ready to halt. They had told Trotsky that they would advance into Russia until the peace was actually signed. Trotsky, in turn, believed that the German onslaught would not prevent the Reds from signing the peace treaty.¹⁸⁷ When the Germans finally replied to Lenin’s capitulation, they demanded even more concessions, but Lenin needed peace and convinced the Central Committee to accept the new terms.¹⁸⁸ The Central Powers had forced a punitive peace on the Bolsheviks, but it caused the idea of direct involvement to grow in the minds of the flagging Allies.

North Russia

Meanwhile in North Russia various events had increased Allied concern over the supplies located in Archangel and Murmansk. At Archangel, elections had ousted the city’s anglophile leader and had firmly placed control of the city in Bolshevik hands.¹⁸⁹ The British Foreign Office considered it necessary to recover the Archangel stores as soon as possible.¹⁹⁰

At Murmansk, on 12 February, British Admiral T. W. Kemp and the British Consul, T. Harper Hall, met with the local Russian military commanders to establish an orderly government.¹⁹¹ They agreed that the three main political organizations in Murmansk, the town Soviet, the Railway union and the fleet Soviet, must form a coalition. On 16 February, the People’s Collegium was created and immediately had to deal with the renewed German offensive.¹⁹² The port, the railways and all the Allied supplies piled up in huge amounts at Murmansk were prime targets for the enemy.

Admiral Kemp asked for six thousand troops to defend the Murmansk–Petrograd Railway and for the immediate support of a cruiser with 300 marines to hold Murmansk. The six thousand troops were unavailable, but the cruiser, HMS *Cochrane*, with 300 marines, was despatched. In addition, the British also

approached the United States and France for ships.¹⁹³ Britain also hoped for aid from the United States for a North Russia intervention. The US Naval Commander in Europe, Admiral W. S. Sims, supported this involvement and had asked Washington to send a ship in solidarity with the British and French.¹⁹⁴ While the French sent the cruiser *Admiral Aube*, the United States delayed its support for over a month.¹⁹⁵ After much debate Wilson authorized the dispatch of a ship to Murmansk on 4 April 1918.¹⁹⁶ Even with his explicit wishes known, the president had to personally order the Secretary of the Navy to find a ship.¹⁹⁷ Only then was the USS *Olympia* sent.

Meanwhile, on 1 March 1918, the Murmansk government informed Petrograd that they were setting up a self-defence force for the region and asked whether they should accept the Allied offer to assist in the defence of the city.¹⁹⁸ The telegram arrived at the same time as Trotsky received word from Brest-Litovsk that the peace talks appeared to have broken down.

It is small mistakes that often have huge consequences. The Reds had gone to Brest-Litovsk to capitulate, but the Germans, worried that the Russians would spread propaganda, had isolated them while preparing the paperwork. Lev M. Karakhan of the Bolshevik delegation wrote two telegrams for Petrograd, one in code indicating that the peace agreement was imminent and one in plain language asking for a guarded train for the delegation's return journey. The Germans sent the plain-language telegram immediately, but delayed sending the coded message until they could decipher it. Lenin received the message asking for the train without the coded message explaining the situation. He believed the train request meant that the Germans had refused the peace and would continue the war. This was Lenin's first error. Consequently, he broadcast to his nation that the country must prepare for immediate attack.¹⁹⁹ That was his second mistake.

It was in this atmosphere that Trotsky received the Murmansk Collegium's telegram. Trotsky immediately wired back that peace talks had broken down and the Murmansk officials were to do everything necessary to defend the city and the railway, even accepting Allied help.²⁰⁰

Trotsky had given permission to cooperate with the Allies to defend the city. But adding to the chaos, soon after Trotsky had sent his telegram, Lenin received word that the peace agreement was still in effect. He immediately broadcast this news, but ordered the country to remain on guard against German treachery.²⁰¹ However, it was too late for Murmansk. The Soviets there acted on Trotsky's telegram immediately. On 2 March, the Murman Russians placed regional military authority into the hands of a council controlled by Allied officers. Defence of the port passed to the Allied forces with Russian cooperation. On 6 March, marines from HMS *Glory* landed in Murmansk. This act heralded the start of the Allied military build-up in North Russia.²⁰²

Allied intervention in Russia had long been debated. Now with the Murmansk-Petrograd acceptance of an Allied defence, it was a reality. Ironically it was Bolshevik confusion that actually sparked intervention and, with equal confusion in the Allied camp, it would gain momentum. Intervention had begun more by accident than design. And it would progress in fits and starts as diplomatic and

military chaos prevented a clear understanding of the situation and Allied leaders argued over policy and actions.

Notes

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2. John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 322.
3. Keith Neilson, *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo–Russian Alliance 1914–1917* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 238.
4. King, 172.
5. Millman, 60.
6. W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage through Armageddon: The Russians in War & Revolution 1914–1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 349–50.
7. Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram No. 434, 31 March 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/68075, and Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram No. 473, 6 April 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/71865.
8. Carley, 6.
9. Balfour to Spring-Rice, Telegram No. 1015, 7 April 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/71865.
10. Lansing to Francis, Telegram 1271, 20 March 1917, United States, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1918 Russia Vol. I* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 12 (hereafter referred to as FRUS) and Francis to Lansing, Telegram 1107, 18 March 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 4.
11. Spring-Rice to Balfour, Telegram No. 927, 9 April 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/73701.
12. Lindley to Buchanan, Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram 105, 29 April 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/ 96045; Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram 72, 24 March 1917, PRO FO 371/2998/71230; Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram 489, 8 April 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/73018.
13. Oliphant Minute, 9 April 1917 to Buchanan Telegram 489, 8 April 1917 and Neilson, *Strategy and Supply*, 19.
14. Buchanan to Balfour, Telegram 541, 17 April 1917, PRO FO 371/3010/79676.
15. Lincoln, 361.
16. Lincoln, 366.
17. Buchanan to Cecil, Telegram 621, 4 May 1917, PRO FO 371/3010/ 91224.
18. Lindley to Buchanan, Buchanan to Cecil, Telegram No. 115, 13 May 1917, PRO FO 371/2996/105146; George Buchanan to the British Foreign Office (hereafter FO) as quoted in Lincoln, 368; Winship to Lansing, Telegram No. 300, 8 May 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 46; Paléologue to Quai D’Orsay as quoted in Lincoln, 368.
19. Buchanan to Cecil, Telegram No. 688, 13 May 1917, PRO FO 371/2998/97795; Francis to Lansing Telegram 1286, 13 May 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 52.
20. Buchanan to Cecil, Telegram 693, 14 May 1917, PRO FO 371/2998/98510.
21. Lincoln, 398.
22. War Cabinet (hereafter WC) Minutes, Nos 195, 196, 197 and 198, 25 July 1917, 26 July 1917, 27 July 1917, 30 July 1917, PRO Cab 23/3.
23. WC Minutes, No. 200(a), 31 July 1917, PRO Cab 23/13. Secret minutes always had the meeting number followed by a letter, a, b or sometimes c. Super-secret minutes had a prefix letter X.
24. French, 175.
25. Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Fields: Passchendaele 1917 Campaign* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1959; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1979), 99.
26. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George Abridged Vol. II* (London: Odhams Press, 1938), 1285–6; Lord Maurice Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914–1918*, Vol. I (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), 671.
27. Hankey, 672.
28. Hankey, 674–5.

29. Lloyd George, 1272 and John Terraine, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (London: Hutchinson of London, 1963), 325.
30. WC Minutes, No. 193, 23 July 1917, PRO Cab 23/3; Buchanan to FO, Telegram 1127, 22 July 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/144409.
31. Buchanan to FO, Telegram 1119, 21 July 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/144202.
32. Lincoln, 394–5.
33. Buchanan to FO, Telegram 1128, 23 July 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/145890; Buchanan to FO, Telegram 1135, 24 July 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/145933.
34. FO Minute 27 July 1917 to Buchanan Telegram 1141, 25 July 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/147056.
35. WC Minutes 200(a), 31 July 1917, PRO CAB 23/13.
36. Buchanan to FO, Telegram 1175, 1 August 1917 and FO covering minute dated 3 August 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/152327.
37. Note from British Embassy Washington (no signature but presumably from Sir Cecil Spring-Rice) with Enclosure to President Wilson 5 August, 1917, *PWW* Vol. 43, 369–72.
38. Buchanan to FO, Telegram 196, 28 August 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/176585; Buchanan to FO Telegram 180, 6 August 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/161629; Francis to Lansing Telegram 1570, 30 July, 1917, FRUS 1918, 171; Francis to Lansing Telegram 1584, 1 Aug 1917, FRUS 1918, 171.
39. George Katkov, *The Kornilov Affair: Kerensky and the Break-up of the Russian Army* (New York: Longman, 1980), 57.
40. WC Minutes, No. 230, 10 September 1917 and WC Minutes, No. 232, 13 September 1917, PRO Cab 23/4.
41. WC Minutes 229, 7 September 1917 and WC Minutes 230, 10 September 1917, PRO Cab 23/4.
42. FO to Buchanan, Telegram 1913, 9 September 1917, PRO FO 371/3011/176534.
43. Carley, 14.
44. WC Minutes 229, 7 September 1917, and WC Minutes 234, 17 September 1917, PRO Cab 23/4.
45. Lindley to Buchanan, Buchanan to FO, Enclosure to Telegram 206, 16 September 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/187501.
46. Katkov, 67–8, and 178.
47. Hans Heilbronner, “L’Vov, Vladimir Nikolaevich”, in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History Vol. 50 Supplement* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1989), 7–1, and Katkov, 74–75.
48. Alexander Kerensky, *Russia and History’s Turning Point* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1965), 345.
49. Katkov, 90–1. Kerensky arranged to contact Kornilov using the Hughes Machine, a primitive teletype that transmitted the message by Morse code. Two parties could carry on a conversation but neither correspondent could know who was present at the other end during the transmissions.
50. Katkov, 99.
51. Lindley to Buchanan, Buchanan to FO, enclosure to Telegram 206, 16 September 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/187501; Francis to Lansing, Telegram 1734, 11 September, 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 187–188; Louis de Robien, *The Diary of a Diplomat in Russia 1917–1918*, trans. Camilla Sykes (London: Michael Joseph, 1969), 119; Kerensky, 353.
52. Lindley to Buchanan, Buchanan to FO, Enclosure to Telegram 206, 16 September 1917, PRO FO 371/2997/187501; Francis to Lansing, Telegram 1745, 13 September, 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 190.
53. Lincoln, 423.
54. De Robien, 120–1.
55. Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations 1917–1921 Volume I – Intervention and the War* (Princeton University Press, 1961), 13.
56. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relation Vol. I*, 13.

57. WC Minutes 240, 27 September 1917, PRO Cab 23/4.
58. Lincoln, 424.
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3

Stalled Intervention – North, South, East and West

Intervention was slow to happen and even slower to organize. Trotsky's blessing of Allied military aid in North Russia did not end negotiations with the Bolsheviks. In fact, it only muddied the waters, as it did not have Lenin's backing. There were areas where intervention was happening without Bolshevik concurrence and still other places, such as at Vladivostok, where unilateral action was not supported by all the Allies. Even where no other Ally was involved, such as in Russia's Caucasus and Trans-Caspian provinces, organization and order were difficult to maintain.

While the Allies tried to agree on actions at Vladivostok and negotiations continued with Trotsky over aid for the Northern areas, the British were engaged in the south attempting to protect routes to India and halt the advance of the Turks. The French still hoped to stiffen the anti-Bolsheviks in the South-West and prevent Germany from gaining access to the rich resources in those provinces bordering Romania and the Ukraine. In Petrograd, Allied representatives wished to prevent the consummation of the Russo-German treaty and to obtain Bolshevik support for intervention.

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on 3 March 1918 did not finalize it as a peace agreement. The Congress of Soviets still had to ratify the treaty. The three unofficial Allied representatives – Sadoul, Robins and Lockhart – hoped to prevent this from happening. Perhaps naively, they expected to gain Bolshevik support for intervention through promises of Allied aid if the treaty was not ratified. Lenin seemed to encourage these hopes when he told Lockhart, "So long ... as the German danger exists, I am prepared to risk co-operation with the Allies".¹ But this was a ruse. Lenin knew that no military aid could be large enough or arrive soon enough to have any effect. His sole aim was to preserve the revolution at any cost and that the Bolsheviks retain power. If that meant giving up territory, then so be it. Lenin's task was to convince other Bolsheviks to ratify the treaty and isolate Trotsky, keeping power in his own hands.

Sadoul, on behalf of the French, remained close to Trotsky in the hope that he could influence the Russians to accept Allied intervention. The Japanese appeared to be about to land in Vladivostok unilaterally and Sadoul thought that the Bolsheviks could be persuaded to accept this in exchange for Allied help against the Germans.² He knew that Russian acceptance of Japanese intervention would

occur only if the Bolsheviks invited the Japanese themselves. But that would require difficult negotiations.

Lockhart did not completely agree with Sadoul's view. He warned that the Japanese occupation of Vladivostok would throw Russia into the arms of the Germans and urged that Japanese activity be delayed. Lockhart believed that war between the Bolsheviks and the Germans was inevitable.³ However, both Lord Hardinge and Balfour questioned the Bolsheviks' ability to wage war since the Russians had already lost thousands of guns and vast amounts of stores.⁴ Balfour reminded Lockhart that the Germans were against socialism and that Japanese intervention had no ambitions on internal Russian policies. Even if the Allies were willing to wait, Japan was not. Japan saw intervention as protecting its national security.⁵ The British War Cabinet endorsed those views and urged that Russia itself enlist Japanese aid.⁶

Meanwhile Trotsky hinted to Lockhart that ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty would not occur at the 14 March Moscow Conference, but rather that a holy war would be declared. But for that to happen, Allied support was required. However, Lockhart warned that Japanese landings in Siberia would make the whole position hopeless.⁷ Balfour countered that the Japanese would intervene only as friends and Allies to support Russia. Lockhart was not convinced.⁸ In short the three representatives on the spot – Robins, Lockhart and Sadoul – wanted to keep Russia in the war on the Allied side, but prevent intervention except on Russian terms. For that reason two stayed in Petrograd when their official diplomatic missions decamped north to exit Russia while Robins had gone to Vologda with the US mission.⁹ However, Sadoul proceeded to Vologda at the behest of Trotsky and Lenin to tell US Ambassador Francis that Japanese landings would endanger Allied interests in Russia.¹⁰ Sadoul hoped to enlist Francis's help in preventing Japan's intervention.

Francis agreed that the United States should accompany or at least parallel Japan's actions in Siberia.¹¹ However, he made no mention of this to Washington and only said that he had spoken to a French officer sent by Trotsky.¹² He told Lansing that he had assured Trotsky and Lenin that he would recommend Allied assistance if the Bolsheviks resisted the Germans. Robins also went to Petrograd to see Trotsky and promise aid, but without Francis's explicit blessing.¹³

On 5 March 1918, Trotsky asked Robins whether he wished to prevent ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Robins indicated that he did, but realized that Lenin wanted the treaty accepted. Yet Trotsky continued to dangle more optimistic offers to the Allied agents. He promised that Lenin would refuse ratification and fight the Germans if he was assured of Allied support, but Robins demanded a written guarantee. Trotsky prepared the requested statement, which, in an apparent volte-face, Lenin promptly signed. But this act was not what it appeared to be. The document outlined three scenarios leading to the resumption of hostilities, but did not state what Russia would do. Lenin asked what commitments the Allies would make if any of the scenarios occurred and what "support could be furnished in the nearest future and on what conditions ... ?"¹⁴

The actual text committed the Bolsheviks to nothing.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Robins viewed the signed document as an indication that the Reds would continue

resisting the Germans with Allied aid. Robins wired the document to Francis, but the US embassy had no means to decode it. Colonel James Ruggles, the Military Attaché, now on his way to Petrograd, had taken the codebooks with him. Robins also had the document coded for transmission directly to Washington, but it was held up by Ruggles in anticipation of his own report of his meeting with Trotsky. That took three days, but Robins and Francis remained unaware that the Bolshevik queries had not yet been sent to the United States.¹⁶ Once again the actions of a single individual, Ruggles, shaped events. Robins had to have a quick reply so as to assure Lenin of US support. He also expected British agreement and immediately showed his British colleague the Bolshevik inquiry.

Lockhart pleaded with London to trust his judgement. He believed that Trotsky and Lenin could be persuaded to invite the Allies to intervene at Archangel and Vladivostok, but Japan's intervention would turn all Russians towards the Germans.¹⁷ Despite Lockhart's plea, Balfour asked him to press Trotsky to accept "a working agreement" with Japan. The Foreign Office thought Lockhart had misplaced his faith in the Bolsheviks since none of their often contradictory actions had justified any trust.

Hardinge advised that Britain should not be too precipitate so as to allow time for events to develop and to show the necessity for action (presumably Japanese intervention at Vladivostok).¹⁸ The Foreign Office, looking at the greater picture of Russia as a whole, saw the Bolsheviks in Petrograd as only one group, and one not to be trusted. Other areas of the country were under different political control, including anti-Bolsheviks in the South-West and local parties in the Trans-Caucasus. In face of these views, Lockhart defended himself, saying he understood his home government's response and that he held "no brief for Bolsheviks". He had to deal with a difficult situation as it was presented and the terms Germany had imposed on Russia had caused great outrage among the Russians. Nevertheless, no Russian, regardless of class, trusted the Japanese. It would be better if Japan consulted the Bolsheviks before they took any action. Moreover, he went on, if Japan's intervention was delayed it might happen later with the aid of US diplomacy.¹⁹

Balfour argued that the Bolsheviks had not done anything to help themselves and had in fact destroyed the fighting ability of the Russian Army. He agreed that everything the Allies wished to do in Russia they should like to do at Russia's request. If Lockhart could garner Russia's support for Allied actions, he would have performed "the greatest possible service, both to Russia and to her Allies".²⁰ However, Balfour knew that the United States would not condone the Japanese entering Siberia as the sole agent of the Allies. The US government believed that supporting the Japanese in this arrangement would be equivalent to a treaty, which would require Senate approval.²¹ From Washington, Lord Reading advised London that President Wilson did not wish to face opposition in the Senate. However, while there was more than a little opposition in the US Capitol to the proposed Japanese intervention, important and confusing shifts of attitude were becoming apparent.

Robert Lansing had changed his opposition to Japanese action in Siberia after both the French and British Ambassadors said that the Asian Ally intended to

act independently, but would announce publicly its disinterest in retaining any Russian territory. He told President Wilson that Japan was ready to act alone, but it might be better if the United States urged the Allies to make Japan their mandate authority in Siberia. A Japanese declaration of disinterest in Russia might act as a restraint on their actions.²² Wilson accepted Lansing's arguments and changed his own view on Japanese intervention, although not necessarily with any enthusiasm.

Initially, Wilson drafted a note supporting Japan's intention to intervene in Siberia, although it did not endorse the action outright.²³ It was lukewarm support and reflected the president's misgivings about Japanese actions, especially lone actions. Yet before it could be sent, William C. Bullitt, an Undersecretary of State, persuaded Wilson to rescind it. Bullitt argued that Japan was bent on grabbing parts of Russia for itself.²⁴ The president's personal friend and confidante, Colonel House, then pressured Wilson to change his mind and oppose Japan's intervention once again. On 2 March, the president did a volte-face, now saying he would not support the intervention, but gave lack of transport as his reason.²⁵

Wilson withdrew the first note and had a second message sent to Tokyo. It acknowledged that if intervention was required, Japan was best situated to provide it, but it then questioned the very wisdom of intervention at all.²⁶ The change in the president's attitude can be attributed to the pressures from Wilson's advisors, which supported the president's own reticence to get involved directly in Russia. All this diplomatic see-sawing on the part of the United States increased the chaotic interaction among the Allies.

While all this confusion occurred in early March 1918, the Bolsheviks held their fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets at Moscow to ratify the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. Lenin insisted that ratification would buy time to organize resistance to any attack by Germany, but Trotsky did not want ratification, rather he wished an immediate resumption of the war. Nevertheless, Lenin prevailed. In protest, Trotsky refused to attend the Moscow Conference and resigned as Foreign Minister.²⁷

Lockhart reported that Trotsky's resignation "must not be taken seriously". Trotsky had been head of the War Revolutionary Committee and would soon be Minister of War. Lockhart continued to think that the Bolsheviks were committed to war. However, Japan now dominated the policy question. The Englishman had discussed Japanese intervention with a political cross-section of Russians and none could see the military necessity.²⁸ In London, Lord Hardinge acknowledged that there was danger in Japan's action and that the advantages and disadvantages had to be balanced, but contended that no reliance could be placed on the Bolsheviks in either case.²⁹

At the same time as this welter of events, Francis informed Washington of Robins's conference with Trotsky, but failed to include the details of the Russian request for US aid. He reported that the Moscow Conference delegates had been instructed to vote for ratification of the peace treaty, and he believed, falsely, that these instructions were the result of Japan's expected intervention in Siberia.³⁰ Francis then advised that the Japanese action was now "exceedingly unwise" and asked that US influence be used to prevent it.

As a result of both Francis's telegrams and discussions in Washington, on 11 March President Wilson sent a personal message to the Moscow Conference expressing sympathy with the Russian people and regretting US inability to give immediate aid.³¹ Wilson's personal message did nothing to solidify Robins's promise of Allied help. Rather, it reinforced Lenin's need for an early peace with Germany. In fact, the Bolsheviks' aim of garnering support from the Allies was not to restart the war with the Germans, but to halt any intervention by the Japanese. An added benefit would be the continued delivery of Allied supplies to be used to advance the Bolshevik agenda. Nevertheless, Lenin humoured Robins, leading him to believe that a positive answer from the United States and other Allied governments would cause the Bolsheviks to reject the Treaty and continue the war. Lenin wished to keep Robins as a channel of communication, knowing that using him in this way would not commit the Bolshevik government to any binding agreement.³²

At the Moscow Conference, Robins witnessed Lenin repeat both his arguments for ratification and his promise that the Bolsheviks would actually triumph through worldwide proletarian revolution. This rousing speech resulted in a positive vote for the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of more than two to one.³³ Lenin had won his victory over Trotsky and the other Bolsheviks who desired a revolutionary war. Lenin had also planted the idea that the failure to keep Russia in the War was the fault of the Allies and, in particular, the United States; despite the fact that he had never had any intention of continuing the fighting.³⁴ Put simply, Lenin won control of the Bolsheviks in a large part because he was a master at using chaos.

Russia was now officially out of the War. But the fighting did not stop, and the need to prevent the Germans from obtaining Russian resources or even capturing stockpiled supplies remained. Intervention was occurring even as Brest-Litovsk was ratified. Although Japan had not actually landed troops in Vladivostok, confused negotiations continued among the Allies, while British marines and additional Allied warships were appearing in Murmansk. In the South, a British special mission under Major-General L. C. Dunsterville was moving into the Trans-Caucasus to counter the Turkish threat to India.

This threat had become evident nearly a year earlier, in 1917. When the British had captured Baghdad that March, the Turks were faced with an Allied wall of British and Russian forces that prevented them from advancing towards Persia and India. But just as the British consolidated defences in the south, the Russian Revolution began to melt away the Russian forces in the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia, opening a northern route for the Turks and their German allies. By autumn 1917 there was no longer an integrated defence against the Turks. Although the Brest-Litovsk Treaty ceded the Russian districts of Kars, Ardahan and Batum to Turkey, the local Russian governments in the Trans-Caspia and Caucasus declared their independence and repudiated those Brest-Litovsk Treaty provisions.³⁵ As a result, the Turks moved further into the Caucasus intending to absorb all of Armenia and attack India.³⁶

In early December 1917 the British War Cabinet authorized financial assistance for the Armenians to resist the Turks. The Armenians had raised almost ten

million roubles to finance their army. Based on this information, London ordered the British Minister to Persia, Sir Charles Marling, to extend credit to both the Armenians and Georgians to help their resistance.³⁷ Also in December, at the first sign of Russian disintegration along the Mesopotamian–Persian–Russian border, the War Office decided to recruit a small special force from troops on the Western Front. This body, consisting primarily of Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African troops, was to be used in the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia to train local militias and to provide a core of resistance against the advancing Turkish Army.³⁸ On 14 January 1918, the War Office appointed Major General L. C. Dunsterville as the commander of this special group and made him Chief of the British Mission to the Caucasus and British Representative to Tiflis.³⁹

The British government was working on scanty information from the various areas in Russia; however, in early January, Sir George Clerk, a senior analyst in the Foreign Office, prepared a memorandum describing the situation.⁴⁰ His paper was pessimistic; financial aid for the Ukrainians could not prevent the Germans from advancing into the region. Although support to Generals Alexeiev, Kornilov and Kaledin appeared to be helping them maintain control in the South, some Cossacks had Bolshevik views and there was no indication that the Cossacks were united. In fact, the Whites, as they came to be called in opposition to the Reds, were a disparate group in South Russia. They included Mensheviks, Constitutional-Democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries, republicans and liberal-minded Russians opposed to Lenin and his policies.⁴¹ Moreover, in the Caucasus, tribal differences in addition to politics further divided the peoples. The Georgians and Daghestanians had not reconciled with the Armenians, who alone were ready to fight the Turks.

The only way to support the forces in South-West and South Russia was with guaranteed financial help. This action would strengthen the Armenian cordon to hold back the Turks, protect British flanks in Mesopotamia and prevent Turkish penetration into Persia. Clerk's superiors all agreed with this assessment and urged support for the Armenians and cooperation with the French in aid of the Cossacks and the Ukrainians.⁴²

But once again there was no Allied consensus on any action and the "Theatres of Concern" seemed only to be greatly expanded. For instance, General John de Candolle, British representative with the Cossacks at Novo Cherkask, considered efforts to support the South Russian Cossacks as doomed. He felt that such actions would deteriorate into helping isolated islands of resistance in a sea of anarchy. Only heavy financial aid, coupled with French direction and military intervention by the United States and Japan, could assure that the Cossacks could sustain any resistance to the Germans. The only other alternative was for the Southern Cossacks to come to some accommodation with the Bolsheviks for combined resistance to any German advance.⁴³ This latter suggestion came as a complete surprise to the Don Cossacks, since the reason they had established their own government in South Russia was their hostility to the Bolsheviks in Petrograd.⁴⁴ Foreign Office staff downplayed de Candolle's concern, noting that while "support for the Don is naturally displeasing to the Bolsheviks, it should not be incompatible with our continuing relations with the latter".⁴⁵

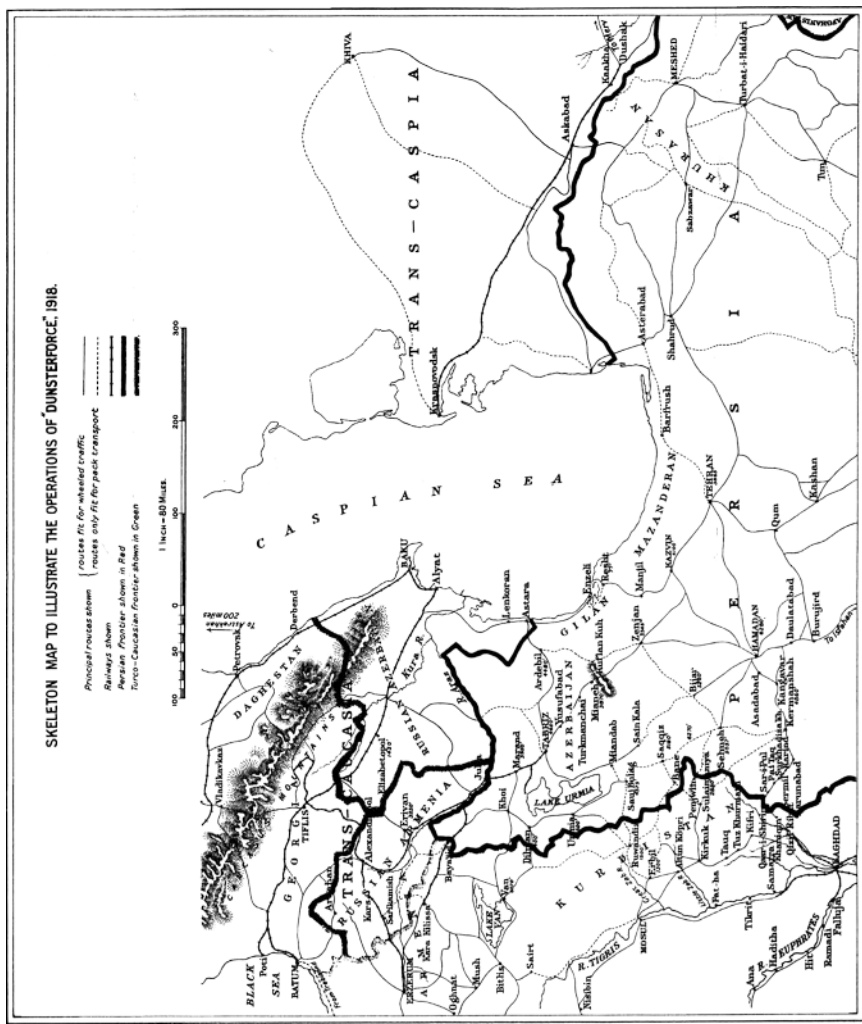
Such comments indicate that the Foreign Office did not understand the Bolsheviks' goals and viewed these revolutionaries as just another faction in Russia to be dealt with in a manner that would best benefit the Allies. Nevertheless, Bolshevism was spreading in South Russia. In early February 1918, Lindley, the British Consul in Petrograd, was very pessimistic. He did not have much faith that Russia could be restored within a reasonable time and thought that the most that could be hoped for in Southern Russia was that the district be kept from descending into anarchy. The only way to shore up the Russians was by armed intervention.⁴⁶

Some 20 Cossack regiments had joined the Bolsheviks and the majority of the Ukraine was also Bolshevik.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the British still wished to support the Cossacks if only to prevent the Germans from having a free hand in obtaining the resources of the southern provinces and to aid the Romanians still fighting. They hoped to back the Volunteer Army that Generals Alexeiev and Kornilov had started to organize. Both the British and French wanted to slow the German steamroller with this anti-Bolshevik force, especially since the hard-pressed Allied commanders on the Western Front were hearing of a possible major German offensive there in the coming spring.⁴⁸

While the British government considered how to give substantial assistance to the Southern Cossacks and support the Romanians, it authorized General Dunsterville to proceed with his mission to the Armenians. Dunsterville's task was to operate in the Russian and Turkish territory south of the Caucasus and to work with the Russian forces under Colonel Lazar Bicherakov, a Russian officer who had refused to recognize the local armistice negotiated in December 1917. The British general's immediate orders that February required that he proceed to Tiflis as soon as possible and do his utmost to prevent the Turkish forces from moving through the Caucasus, thus threatening the routes to India.⁴⁹

However, his specially chosen Imperial contingent did not arrive in theatre until 28 March.⁵⁰ In the meantime, the impatient Dunsterville had tried to break through to Tiflis with the few staff he had. On 17 February 1918 he arrived at Enzeli on the Caspian coast but was refused permission to proceed further by the Bolshevik government in Baku.⁵¹ The Reds were working in conjunction with the Jangalis, a Persian tribe in revolt against the Persian government, to prevent the British from moving into the Caucasus.⁵²

At Enzeli, Dunsterville faced a Bolshevik administration that was determined to prevent him and his party from any further advance. In his meeting with Enzeli leaders, the general tried to bluff his way into obtaining its sanction to carry on to Baku across the Caspian. However, the local Reds were fully aware of Dunsterville's goals and informed him that the Baku Bolsheviks forbade his advancing. If he tried, a gunboat would sink any ship attempting to leave Enzeli.⁵³ In the face of this opposition, Dunsterville retreated to Hamadan where he set up his headquarters and awaited his larger force. His presence disrupted German and Turkish agents in the region and gave him a base from which to return to the Caspian area when conditions improved (see Map 1).⁵⁴



Map 1 Dunsterville's area of operations
 Source: F. J. Moberly, *History of the Great War: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918 Volume IV* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1927), map 41. Open Licence Government of Great Britain: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2>.

For his part, Ambassador Marling feared Dunsterville's retreat from Enzeli was damaging to British prestige in Persia. Unless the British vindicated their actions, they would lose influence with the Persian government.⁵⁵ Lord Hardinge noted that, while Marling continued to advocate that force be employed in the region, Allied troops were few and stretched to the limit. This was why Dunsterville's mission had been to raise local forces and to train them to fight the Turks, securing the Caucasus and Trans-Caspian Russian provinces from the Central Powers. Armenian forces numbered 10,000 but faced a Turkish enemy of 20,000.⁵⁶ Despite the dire need, intervention along the southern border of Russia faced enormous difficulties and lacked anywhere near the sufficient resources required for effective operations – furthermore, pressure was increasing elsewhere for action in both North Russia and Siberia.

North Russia – Murmansk and Archangel

In North Russia the Foreign Office hoped to rescue the war stores at Archangel by bartering them for the necessities the population needed to survive the winter. Foodstuffs and other commodities were to be shipped to Murmansk and held there until a reciprocal amount of Allied war materiel at Archangel was shipped to the Arctic Ocean port. The local government and the Allied representatives in North Russia would carry out these plans without the knowledge of the Petrograd government.⁵⁷ However, Lindley argued that, in light of the Bolsheviks' repudiation of all foreign loans, the war supplies at Archangel remained the property of the Allies. Britain would be within its rights to demand that Russia export goods in exchange for any supplies shipped into the interior of Russia.⁵⁸ This implied that the Allies were in no way obligated to exchange foodstuffs for their own war materiel. Lord Cecil agreed, but noted that the scheme for exchange had been made and it was too late to change it.

The Murmansk government's declaration of independence from Petrograd and its willingness to negotiate with the Allies was encouraging to London, which received the news on 1 March 1918. Major-General F. C. Poole, the head of the British Military Equipment Section in Russia, believed that the talks were only preliminary, but had possibilities.⁵⁹ Yet armed intervention appeared to be the only way to save the vital war materiel there.⁶⁰

However, while the Allies were contemplating the best course of action to preserve the materiel at Archangel, the Petrograd Bolsheviks despatched a special commission to the northern port to transport the Allied stockpile into the interior of Russia. They told the Allies that this action was to protect them from the spring floods, but the British Consul at Archangel recognized that the Reds were simply grabbing the supplies for their own use.⁶¹ The Bolsheviks' action made the need for an Allied armed presence in Archangel more pressing. However, several factors opposed this tactic. Foremost was that the Allies, especially the United States, could not agree on a plan for intervention. Added to this was the lack of forces for what the senior military commanders of the Western Front viewed as mere side shows. The pending Central Powers' peace with the Russians had allowed the

Germans to transfer troops from the East to the West, and Britain especially had no large bodies of troops to spare. Finally, Archangel was ice-bound and no ships could easily get through.

At Murmansk, only a small force of British marines was on hand to protect the city with no forces available for or capable of getting to ice-bound Archangel where Bolshevik forces were sending the Allied stockpile into Russia proper. Allied intervention was needed more than ever, but still no concerted effort could be organized, despite Brest-Litovsk and its provisions that would allow Germany access to Russian resources. At the critical time when the Allies wished to influence the Bolsheviks in the Russians' peace negotiations, attempts at intervention were murky, confused, intermittent and, now, stalled.

Notes

1. Lockhart, 237.
2. Sadoul to Thomas, letter, Petrograd, 2 March 1918 in Sadoul, 252.
3. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 3, Petrograd, 2 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/40028.
4. Hardinge minute 4 March 1918 to Lockhart's Telegram 3 PRO FO 371/3285/40028.
5. Balfour to Lockhart, Telegram 1, London, 4 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/40028.
6. WC Minutes 359, 5 March 1918 PRO Cab 23/5.
7. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 10, Petrograd, 5 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/41335 and Balfour to Lockhart, Telegram 4, London, 6 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/41335.
8. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 13, Petrograd, 8 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/43859.
9. Francis to Lansing, Telegram 1416 [2416?], Petrograd, 26 February 1918, FRUS 1918 Vol. I, 388.
10. Sadoul to Thomas, letter, Petrograd, 2 March 1918 in Sadoul, 251.
11. Sadoul to Thomas, letter, Petrograd, 7 March 1918 in Sadoul, 254.
12. Francis to Lansing, telegram (unnumbered), Vologda, 5 March 1918, FRUS 1918 Vol. I, 392.
13. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 492.
14. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 497–8.
15. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 497.
16. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 499. Ruggles did not send the despatch until two weeks later and Washington did not receive it until 22 March 1918, ten days after the Bolsheviks had ratified the treaty.
17. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 10, Petrograd, 5 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/41335; Hard, 140; Lockhart to FO, Telegram 12, Petrograd, 6 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/43039.
18. FO Minutes to Lockhart Telegram 10, London, 6 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/41335.
19. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 13, Petrograd, 8 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/43859.
20. Balfour to Lockhart, Telegram 12, London, 13 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/43859.
21. Reading to FO, Telegram 859, Washington, 1 March 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 506.
22. Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 27 February 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 474–5.
23. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, Draft Aide-Memoire, Washington, 1 March 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 498–9.
24. Auchinloss to Woodrow Wilson, House to Auchinloss, Bullitt to Polk, Department of State Memorandum, Washington, 2 March 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 512.
25. Lane, memorandum 2 March 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 515.
26. Polk to Morris, telegram, Washington, 5 March 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 67.
27. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 14A, Petrograd, 10 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/44930.
28. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 17, Petrograd, 12 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/46679.

29. Hardinge Minute to Lockhart Telegram 17, 13 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/46679.
30. Francis to Lansing, telegram (unnumbered), Vologda, 10 [9?] March, 1918, FRUS 1918 Vol. I, 394.
31. Polk to Summers, telegram (unnumbered), Washington, 11 March 1918, FRUS 1918 Vol. I, 395–6.
32. Debo, *Revolution and Survival*, 243.
33. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 516.
34. Debo, *Revolution and Survival*, 243.
35. Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk article 4 in Summers to Lansing, Telegram 301, Moscow, 30 March 1918, FRUS 1918 Vol. I, 443.
36. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 303–4.
37. WC Minutes 294 7 December 1917 and WC Minutes 298 14 December 1917 PRO Cab 23/4.
38. Steel to MacDonald, London, letter 0149/4862. M.O. 2, 31 December 1917, Canada, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC), RG 9 III B 1 Series 36 Volume 3094 file M-38-36 Vol. 1 – Special Mission Baghdad.
39. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 305, and F. J. Moberly, *History of the Great War: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914–1918 Volume IV* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1927), 104–5.
40. Clerk, memorandum 4 January 1918 with minutes by Graham, Hardinge and Cecil, 5 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/4022.
41. George Stewart, *The White Armies of Russia: A Chronicle of Counter-Revolution and Allied Intervention* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), 23.
42. Ronald Graham, Assistant Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Hardinge and Lord Robert Cecil, the Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, were Clerk's superiors at the Foreign Office.
43. De Candolle to CIGS, Telegram 17, Rostow, 6 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/5497.
44. Lindley to FO, telegram Private and Confidential (no number), Petrograd, 26 January 1918 (stamped by FO 29 January 1918) PRO FO 371/3283/18119.
45. Lyons, FO minute on Lindley telegram received 26 January 1918, London 30 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/18119.
46. Lindley to FO, Telegram 300, Petrograd, 2 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/21896.
47. Lindley to FO, Telegram 310, Petrograd, 2 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/21844.
48. Hankey, 771.
49. Moberly, 104–5.
50. J. W. Warden, Diary entry 29 January 1918 and diary entry 28 March 1918 LAC MG 30 E192 *LT Col J. W. Warden File – Diary 1918–1919* (hereafter *Warden Diary*).
51. Memorandum from British Military Representative to Supreme War Council Versailles 29 April 1918 enclosed with Secretary of War Office to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, letter 0149/5013 (M.I.O.) 29 April 1918 PRO FO 371/3284/75611.
52. Marling to FO, Telegram 127, Tehran, 20 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/33416 and L. C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1932), 14, 29.
53. Dunsterville, 45–6.
54. Dunsterville, 57.
55. Marling to FO, Telegram 128, Tehran, 20 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/33417.
56. Reading to FO, Telegram 831 (D), Washington, 28 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3283/39257.
57. Cecil to Young, Telegram 7, London, 22 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/34386.
58. Lindley to FO, Telegram 587, Petrograd, 25 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/37015 and Lindley to FO, Telegram 596, Petrograd, 25 February 1918, Lindley to FO, Telegram 587, Petrograd, 25 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/37928.
59. F. C. Poole to Secretary Lord Milner Committee, letter P.B. 1909, Petrograd, 19 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/38414.
60. Lyons's minute to Woolmer letter, London, 5 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/40554.
61. Young to FO, Telegram 24, Archangel, 5 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3305/41197.

4

US–Japanese Rivalry in Siberia

The need for Allied intervention in Russia became urgent within a week of the Bolsheviks ratifying the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on 14 March 1918. A few days later, on 21 March, the Germans launched Operation *Michael* on the Western Front. The devastating attack against the poorly defended lines of the British Fifth and Third Armies sent the British reeling back ten miles on the first day of this two-week epic struggle.¹ On 5 April, when the battle had slowed to a standstill, the Germans had penetrated forty miles into the Fifth Army's front, but had not broken through.²

This reversal for the Allies emphasized the need to re-establish the Eastern Front to prevent the Germans from transferring yet more troops to the West. But the key to an effective defence in the East was manpower, and the Allies were deficient in this resource. In South-West Russia, the Don Cossack Allies were retreating in the face of Red Army pressure. In the Caucasus, General Dunsterville was entrenched at Hamadan awaiting reinforcements before attempting a second operation towards Baku and Tiflis. In North Russia, Admiral Kemp had barely enough men to hold Murmansk against an expected German onslaught. Only Siberia appeared to be a feasible option for intervention in force, provided that Japan and the United States could work together to furnish the necessary soldiery. However, the United States had a long-standing distrust of Japan over that country's ambitions in Asia. Japan had far-reaching aspirations and wished to have a free hand without any Allied witnesses. Yet for any successful Siberian intervention, cooperation had to occur.

The disagreement between these two nations had its origins in the nineteenth century, in the need for trade and the US view that Japan was an imperialist power. The advent of the First World War saw the retreat of the Western Powers' political influence in the Far East, but due to the 1902 Anglo–Japanese Treaty, Japan entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente. It quickly captured the German Empire's Asian colonies, its real goal. This was done with the blessing and concurrence of the Allies, especially Britain, but Japan needed to retain the Allies' good will to keep its conquests. Before 1917 this was not difficult. While the United States remained neutral, Japan continued its drive to dominate China, Korea and, by extension, Siberia.

The United States did not sanction Japan's aggression, but, at the time, would take no overt action to hinder Japanese ambitions in Asia. Only internal conflicts between the two cliques that dominated Japan's government, the Satsuma Clan and the Chōshū Clan, had any influence on moderating its imperialistic actions. The *Gennō*, an extra-constitutional council of retired elder Japanese statesmen, was also a moderating influence.

Nonetheless, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution convinced the Chōshū Clan controlling Japan's government that the Allies would exert further pressure for the Japanese army to help bolster the Eastern Front. Coincidentally, that October, Japan's General Staff warned that while the country could provide for such an appeal, it would come only at tremendous cost and by weakening its military position in the Far East. Any Japanese expedition towards Europe would prevent the army from carrying out its mission to strengthen Japan's stance in Asia. Its aim was to prevent any serious competition from Western powers after the war.³ Nevertheless, in 1918 the Allies, save the United States, looked to Japan to help secure Russia's Asia Pacific region.

In Washington, Lord Reading, the British Ambassador designate, had told his government in October 1917 that the Russian Ambassador to the United States was predicting that Russian forces would stop fighting within two months if Japanese and US troops did not come to his country's aid.⁴ However, the British government did not think that Japan would agree to such a request for military help.⁵ In fact, both Japan and the United States categorically refused to send troops to guard the Siberian Railway when asked in late November 1917.⁶ This refusal was in accord with Japan's military assessment to concentrate efforts on China and preserve its military strength in Asia. For the United States, it stemmed from their desire not to interfere in what they deemed to be Russian internal politics. Yet, the success of the Bolshevik Revolution and its steady progression into Siberia awakened Japan to a different set of concerns in East Asia.

The spread of the revolution east and its deleterious effects on Vladivostok forced the Japanese to shift emphasis from China to Siberia, and specifically to the eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Bolshevik unrest in Vladivostok had also raised the concerns of John K. Caldwell, the US Consul there. On 8 November 1917 he renewed an earlier request for a US naval visit to the city.⁷ Washington concurred and sent the USS *Brooklyn* to Vladivostok later that month.

The US naval visit to Vladivostok and China's response to Bolshevik unrest in Harbin alerted Japan that other nations had concerns in East Asia and would act to protect them. Although Harbin was Chinese territory, it had become, for all intents and purposes, a Russian protectorate, with the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway as the area's administrator. When the Bolsheviks tried to pressure General Dimitri L. Horvat, the Russian governor of Harbin, to share power with them, the Western consuls assured him of their support against the revolutionaries. At the same time, an enterprising Cossack officer and self-styled commander of the Mongol-Buryat Cavalry Regiment, Gregorii Semenov, captured the town of Manchouli and wired Horvat of his readiness to back the governor.⁸ Semenov was to become a major player in the Siberian intervention. However, despite this

diplomatic and military support, Horvat caved-in to pressure and agreed to share power with the Harbin Soviet. This caused the Consuls to ask the Chinese government to send troops to keep the peace.⁹ China responded quickly and by the end of December they had re-established Chinese control of both Harbin and the railway.¹⁰ Such chaos and uncertainty in both Harbin and Vladivostok alarmed Tokyo and it considered the Chinese intervention in Manchuria as only a short-term fix.¹¹

Despite the Chinese actions and the USS *Brooklyn's* visit to Vladivostok, the Bolsheviks still agitated for control in Siberia and particularly in the port. On 3 December, just after the US warship left, the Bolsheviks won both a majority and the presidency on Vladivostok's Soviet.¹² In addition, the warship's departure deprived the Allies of a source of reliable information. For the various Allied governments, accurate information was difficult to glean from the myriad of conflicting reports that were transmitted from Siberia. Poor intelligence and poor communications were to remain a problem throughout the intervention and both were major factors in the chaos of the situation. False intelligence reports citing Bolshevik massacres of French and British citizens at Irkutsk caused the French to plan an immediate reaction force.¹³ The French asked for US participation.¹⁴

After receiving information that Irkutsk was quiet and the foreigners were safe, Lansing said that the United States did not think any action was needed.¹⁵ This was in keeping with the US policy of avoiding military intervention and, at the time, they still naively thought that the Japanese were against intervention as well.¹⁶

Regardless of fractured US opinion, in London, Lord Milner, the British Secretary of State for War, believed it of "urgent importance" that the Japanese and United States land a force at Vladivostok to protect vital military stores.¹⁷ While in Washington, the Japanese Ambassador said that Japan did not wish to intervene in Russia prematurely, but that his nation, in self-defence, was in all likelihood making advance preparations to prevent Germany from controlling Siberia. The Japanese population also feared that the United States might take unilateral action to Japan's detriment.¹⁸ So, despite Japanese assurances to the contrary, President Wilson was aware that Japan would protect its own interests in Siberia when that nation deemed it necessary.

The continued unrest in Vladivostok spurred the Imperial Japanese Navy to ask its government to send ships there. Although the Navy had been watching the rise of Bolshevik power with concern, plans to send a naval force were vetoed when Tokyo learned that Britain expected Japan to act only in concert with its Allies.¹⁹ In Washington, Lansing told the British Ambassador, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, that he feared that any joint action in Siberia by Japan and the United States would elicit a disastrous reaction from the Russians.²⁰ This was the last thing the United States wanted. The United States saw the Russian Revolution as a manifestation of a down-trodden people rebelling against an autocratic regime and striving to emulate 1776 America. This naiveté clouded the US administration's judgement on intervention and added to the chaotic nature of diplomatic negotiations. Nevertheless, the British War Cabinet remained very concerned over the safety of stockpiled materiel in Vladivostok.

With both Japan and the United States deciding not to intervene in Russia, despite the deteriorating situation, Britain decided to act unilaterally and send HMS *Suffolk* with a small military contingent to guard the stores in the eastern Siberian port.²¹ On 1 January 1918, the British Admiralty issued such orders. This stirred the Japanese government to action, since Britain was now doing exactly what they had counselled Japan not to do – acting independently. In response and without consulting the *Genrō* or the Foreign Affairs Committee, Japan's Prime Minister Terauchi also ordered Japanese ships to Vladivostok.²²

Neither the British decision to send a ship nor the Japanese reciprocal action was taken in consultation with the United States. The United States was not even informed until after the fact.²³ When the United States became aware of the despatch of British and Japanese warships to Siberia, they at first considered ordering the USS *Brooklyn* back, but then sent it to Yokohama to await further instructions.²⁴ These independent activities indicated that each ally would operate in its own self-interests regardless of other views. In fact, when the Bolshevik government protested the presence of HMS *Suffolk* at Vladivostok, the British Consul in Petrograd, Lindley, told them that the ship was only there to protect the war supplies and Allied lives in the face of prevailing Siberian anarchy.²⁵ The Japanese also protested against the British actions, saying they were willing to protect the stores and the Siberian Railway on behalf of the Allies.²⁶

In London, Lord Hardinge summarized the Allied choices. The Japanese could act as mandatary for the Allies in Siberia or they could act independently. If Japan represented the Allies as mandatary, the Allies would have some control and could pressure it to withdraw from Russia after the war, but if it worked in isolation, then the Allies could expect that Siberia, or at least part of it, would become a Japanese colony at the end of the conflict.²⁷

Notwithstanding Hardinge's advice, the War Cabinet was divided in its views on Japanese intervention. While some believed Tokyo should do what it saw fit without the Allies interfering, others feared that the Russians would resent any Japanese presence. Nonetheless, the United States had to be won over before any Japanese or joint military intervention could be contemplated.²⁸ Since Japan wished to act alone, this would not be easy.²⁹ President Wilson bluntly told Lansing that it must be made clear that the US government would disapprove of any military action in Vladivostok.³⁰

Only reluctantly and begrudgingly did the Japanese accept Washington's interdiction; none of which boded well for future Japanese–US cooperation.³¹ These stiff and uncomfortable diplomatic discussions occurred simultaneously with actual British and Japanese naval intervention at the Eastern Siberian port.

Japan was the first to intervene officially in Russia, beating the British North Russia intervention by at least a month. However, Japan was faced with the hostility of the Russian people, while the British were welcomed.³² To calm the local population, the Japanese commander, Rear Admiral Katō Kanji, announced that the presence of the Japanese warships "was for no other purpose 'than the natural obligation ... to protect our nationals ... and the empire's strict intention to abstain from any interference in the internal affairs in Russia'".³³ Despite this

public assurance, Katō worked out an arrangement with the British for joint naval patrols to protect their own nationals if unrest spread or intensified.³⁴

While the Imperial Japanese Navy was making the first move in Siberia, the Japanese Army had not been idle in establishing the basis for its own intervention in Manchuria and Russia. The General Staff appointed Major General Nakajima Masatake, a senior intelligence officer and Russian specialist, to lay the groundwork for Russian support for Japan's intervention. In January 1918, he was able to convince the Ussuri Cossacks to remain loyal to the Allies and resist the Bolsheviks in exchange for "considerable aid". The Cossacks then elected Ivan Kalmykov as their leader.³⁵ Later, the Japanese general recruited the Amur Cossacks to the White cause, but was prevented from making contact with Semenov by the presence of Bolshevik-indoctrinated troops at Chita.³⁶

While Nakajima sought an alternate route to Semenov, the Cossack Ataman proposed controlling the Amur portion of the Trans-Siberian railway. In this way he would prevent Bolsheviks from entering the Amur region. His eventual goal was to occupy Chita, but he needed Allied weapons and support. Semenov was opposed to working with the Japanese, as he believed this would alienate the Russian populace from him.³⁷

In late January 1918, Semenov's successful operations along the Trans-Siberian railway earned him Horvat's support and consequently Britain decided to aid him materially and financially.³⁸ Semenov's successful control of the Trans-Siberian junction would preclude any movement of Allied stores in Vladivostok to the Germans in European Russia and removed any need for Japan to occupy the Siberian port.³⁹ Meanwhile, in London, intelligence reported that Japanese agents were in Siberia assessing ways to intervene, but had not yet acted on any plans made.⁴⁰

British assessments concluded that the Japanese were in the best position to supply arms and ammunition to Semenov while Britain should assist with immediate financial aid.⁴¹ In this way, the British unwittingly helped the Japanese in their efforts to obtain Russian allies for Japan's Siberian actions. And Semenov continued his progress by occupying Chita and receiving financial aid from the merchants of Harbin.⁴²

The British provided Semenov the money he needed in mid-February.⁴³ At about the same time he made contact with Japan's agents, who assured the Cossack of Japanese material support and hinted at military aid.⁴⁴ In Japan, the General Staff put planning for a Siberian expedition into high gear, but secretly and without their government's knowledge or sanction.⁴⁵ This was also done independently of Japan's diplomatic efforts to gain Allied backing for its intervention.

While pressuring other Allies to accept an intervention plan, the British also hoped to persuade the United States to join Japan in aiding Semenov.⁴⁶ They asked two things; that the United States urge the Japanese to take control of the Trans-Siberian railway completely, and for the United States to support Semenov.⁴⁷ However, the United States was still not convinced that any intervention was politically advantageous to themselves or the Allies, especially Japanese intervention.⁴⁸ The president told Sir William Wiseman, Britain's Head of Intelligence in

the United States, that his talks with Ambassador Ishii had convinced Wilson that the Japanese were not willing to act.⁴⁹

The United States did not share London's view of the urgency for intervention, but if it was required they preferred a joint operation.⁵⁰ Lansing said that any direct Japanese involvement could prove embarrassing if the Russian populace turned against the Allies⁵¹ – and as yet, Balfour appeared only lukewarm about Siberia. He told Lansing that the British government had not committed itself to any action there and that the only step taken was by a British officer asking the Japanese Army to supply weapons to Semenov.⁵²

Balfour was being disingenuous. The War Office had discussed with the Japanese Military Attaché what the British wanted Japan to do for Semenov and had kept the Foreign Office fully informed of Japan's favourable reaction.⁵³ However, Balfour did not wish the United States to think that Britain was acting without consulting them. Yet, the next day the US Diplomatic Liaison to the Supreme War Council at Versailles, Arthur Hugh Frazier, sent Washington the gist of a British plan submitted for French consideration. This plan saw the Japanese acting alone as the Allied mandatary, taking control of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Both France and Britain had accepted the idea and wanted the United States to agree as well.⁵⁴ This correspondence alerted Washington to expect Allied pressure for action. At the same time, General T. H. Bliss, the US military liaison to the Supreme War Council, noted that the other Allies considered that the occupation of Vladivostok and Harbin with control of the railway in-between had military advantages that outweighed the political disadvantages. He warned that the Japanese were ready to move at any time, and, if they could not have Allied backing, they likely would eventually work with the Germans to dominate Russia. There was "grave danger" in Japanese intervention, he noted, but some chance had to be taken.⁵⁵ Where the general's comments gave a purely military analysis, they also supported the Allied viewpoint. At the same time, the French also leaned on the United States about the political necessity of action.

In Paris, US Ambassador Sharp wired Washington that the French government feared the Germanization of Russia and that intervention was the only way to prevent it. The French were extremely anxious over the German–Russo peace negotiations and imminent acceptance of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty at this time (February 1918). The French believed that Japan intended to enter Siberia only to protect the railway with the support of Russians, and Tokyo might feel compelled to act alone if the German threat increased.⁵⁶

Clearly, resource-stretched Britain was also anxious for Japanese action. With the Bolshevik capitulation to the Germans pending, Britain recognized that two views existed: the French view, which saw Japan's intervention as the only means to counter German influence in Russia, and the US view, which saw Japan as the worst possible agent for the Allies.⁵⁷ And so Britain was caught between these two chaotic and diplomatic extremes. Yet apparently it did not seem to be doing much to help sort it all out.

In late February 1918, Balfour briefed the British War Cabinet that although Japan was eager to seize the Amur Railway junction immediately to safeguard

Vladivostok, he thought that they were less anxious to occupy the whole Trans-Siberian railway to the Urals. So the Cabinet petitioned Japan to take over the Railway up to Cheliabansk just east of the Urals. Then they also decided to pressure the United States to agree to this action.⁵⁸ Britain used dire predictions of a German victory and the US fear of Japanese imperial power to do so. Balfour immediately told Washington that the most important Allied interests in Siberia were the preservation of the materiel at Vladivostok and the denial to the Germans of the vast agricultural resources in the Trans-Baikal region. Japanese occupation would safeguard the stores, but would not protect the Trans-Baikal area. As an Allied mandatar, Japan could be induced to go farther into Siberia to protect the agricultural areas. However, everything depended on the United States. Without US support, no common Allied undertaking could be expected, and independent Japanese action would likely take place without any Allied restraint.⁵⁹

Balfour's arguments, along with General Bliss's evaluation and the French desire for action, altered Lansing's attitude towards Japanese intervention and softened President Wilson's objections.⁶⁰ This was the time – the end of February 1918 – when Wilson first supported Japanese intervention and then unexpectedly backtracked. Now he could be changing again. His original and abrupt volte-face had caused great diplomatic chaos. Wilson's initial support for Japan's intentions to enter Siberia had been the basis of Britain's request for Japan to intervene and was also the basis for Balfour's telegrams to Lockhart urging him to have the Bolsheviks accept direct Japanese activity.⁶¹

Wilson's sudden and disappointing change of mind caused the British to advise their ambassador not to continue with their request for Japanese action.⁶² However, a few days later the War Cabinet decided to proceed with the request for Japan to get involved. London believed that Washington might once again change its position if pressed further.⁶³ Unfortunately, the US attitude had dissuaded the Japanese from going forward with military action.⁶⁴ And so chaos reigned.

In Japan, the *Genrō* advised the government that before any action could be taken Japan required the support of both Britain and the United States.⁶⁵ Thus, without the explicit agreement of the United States, Japan would not go into the area. On 19 March 1918, Tokyo's diplomats sent an official note to the United States and showed copies to Britain, France and Italy, acknowledging the chaos and anarchy in Siberia. However, any successful intervention, they said, required full Allied agreement. The communiqué closed with the flat warning that Japan would do nothing until the United States came to agreement with the other Great Powers of the Entente.⁶⁶

While the latter statement no doubt was meant to assure the Allies that whatever action Japan would take would be done in the interests of the Russians, nonetheless the reply indicated that no intervention could occur without all the Allies agreeing. Japan's note came only days after the Bolsheviks had ratified the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and now the Central Powers would potentially have a reprieve in the war, all of which was very dangerous for the Allies.

Despite the indication that Japan would not get involved, and because of the ratification of Brest-Litovsk, Lockhart and Robins continued to urge the

Bolsheviks to acquiesce willingly to Allied help. Lockhart especially was under pressure to have Trotsky accept Japanese intervention. When he did so, the commissar quickly responded that the Allies wanted Russian consent only to prevent the Japanese from siding with the Germans. It was likely true, but a thought not publicly articulated in Allied circles. Trotsky confided that the Germans had offered the Soviets an alliance with themselves and the Japanese against the Allies. Notwithstanding the German offer, the Bolsheviks, Trotsky told Lockhart, would fight on both fronts against Japan and Germany calling on all oppressed people to support Russia.⁶⁷ Yet talks continued through March 1918. Although Lenin would never accept imperialist help except in the direst of circumstances, the Germans' advance through the Ukraine and their approach to the Southern Russian provinces meant that Trotsky had to appear to be willing to consider Allied military aid.⁶⁸

But this Bolshevik façade became more difficult to maintain when French Consul-General Grénard and Allied military representatives joined Lockhart's talks with Trotsky. Grénard was highly suspicious of Trotsky's sincerity, but he was sure that Russia did not have the means to resist the German advance effectively. He advised the Quai d'Orsay not to take the Bolsheviks' boasts seriously.⁶⁹ But both Robins and Lockhart continued to believe Trotsky and the rest of the Bolshevik government. Four days after the German offensive on the Western Front began that hammered the Allied lines, Foreign Minister Georgi Chicherin told Lockhart that "as soon as war breaks out [with Germany] Russia will be glad to accept not only material help from Allies, but also help in men including the Japanese Corps". Lockhart immediately wired this news to London, and underscored it by saying that all would be well if Japan's intervention was postponed.⁷⁰ But the Cabinet was not as enthused as their man in Petrograd. Lockhart's optimistic view of the Reds' intentions fell on deaf ears. The current German assault no doubt occupied their focus.

At the time, London was also wrestling with two other very different and alarming views. Harbin's British Consul, Henry E. Sly, warned that anarchy reigned in Siberia because most Austro-German prisoners were now free and armed. If the German and Bolshevik movements in Siberia were not soon arrested, the Germans could quickly be masters in that area. Only the Japanese could act effectively, and he believed they were ready to do so.⁷¹ Sly's report, Lord Hardinge thought, had the ring of truth and was a stark contrast to Lockhart's optimism.⁷²

The news of the Austro-German prisoners' release was of concern as the Brest-Litovsk Treaty stipulated that all prisoners were to be freed and exchanged. Further news was passed to Britain that German officers were heading to Siberia to lead a newly formed Corps.⁷³ This later proved to be false but appeared credible at the time. This raised concerns for the safety of the war materiel at Vladivostok, as well as control of the Trans-Siberian Railway. One of the problems in achieving any reasonable agreement on intervention was that many on-scene players were distrusted and contradicted by others, even their own countrymen. The British were no exception. Such was the case with General Knox, Britain's past military attaché in Petrograd newly returned to London. The general questioned Lockhart's

credibility and usefulness. Knox's report to the new CIGS, General Henry Wilson, emphasized that everything Lockhart had predicted to date had proven wrong. Since Lockhart saw only Bolsheviks, the opinions he sent were those of Trotsky, Lenin and Chicherin and not of Russians as a whole. The general warned that "Lockhart's advice has been in a political sense unsound and in a military sense criminally misleading." This agent was causing more damage to the Allied cause than any Japanese intervention could.⁷⁴

Both Sir Ronald Graham and Lord Hardinge agreed with Knox. Lockhart appeared to be hysterical and had so far achieved nothing. Although Cecil was not ready to recall him, his Lordship bluntly told Lockhart that his task was to support British policy. The problem was that Britain still had not as yet come to a definite policy for a whole variety of reasons, most of which came from a battery of contradictory information and the actions or inactions of their Allies. Given this, their agent's missives were often devalued. This may be one reason few believed him when he warned that the existence of armed prisoners in Siberia was a gross exaggeration.⁷⁵ Yet while Lockhart continued to advise that Japanese intervention should be delayed and Japan had indicated that no intervention could proceed without US support, events actually dictated the action that would ultimately be taken. In the last week of March and first week of April, several events occurred that forced the issues.

On 23 March Viscount Motono informed the Allied governments that Japan and China were about to reach an agreement for mutual military cooperation to counter the anarchy developing in Siberia.⁷⁶ Five days later Japan enacted a mobilization bill.⁷⁷ In this same period in Vladivostok, the Bolsheviks took over the telephone and telegraph offices and stopped all outside communication. Seeing that the Allied warships were not doing anything to protect the inhabitants, the Red Guard started to rampage through the city. Desperately, the Captain of HMS *Suffolk* signalled home that the Bolsheviks could take over completely, ending any hope of Allied intervention if they were not stopped now.⁷⁸ Finally, on 4 April, when Red Guards broke into a number of shops and murdered two Japanese clerks, the Japanese admiral ordered his marines ashore to protect his countrymen. The British followed suit.⁷⁹ London later sanctioned this action.⁸⁰ By 6 April the Allies had established control of Vladivostok.⁸¹ In short, two major Allies were now "ashore" in Siberia for reasons similar to what got them "ashore" in North Russia. It was the sort of impromptu incrementalism that finally led to complete Allied intervention in Russia. Now called "mission creep", such impromptu expansion is nearly always present in times of chaos.

As for the United States, the USS *Brooklyn*, which had arrived in harbour on 1 March, did not land any personnel. Lord Reading urged the US government to assist the operation with its own marines to show Allied solidarity, but Lansing believed that nothing should be done to preserve good relations between the Bolsheviks and the United States.⁸² In Moscow, news of the Allied landings stirred the Bolsheviks to diplomatic protests and the issuing of mobilization orders to defend Siberia against the Japanese.⁸³ Trotsky charged that the Vladivostok landings were the beginning of a larger Allied operation, but, according to both Sadoul

and Lockhart, he was willing to negotiate if the Allies agreed to certain conditions: that intervention not be exclusively Japanese; that there be no interference with the internal Russian politics; and that the Allies pay Japan for any expenses.⁸⁴ Balfour replied that Britain was ready to discuss intervention under the conditions proposed, except those dealing with payment, which would be addressed after the war.⁸⁵

Trotsky's proposals appear radical and may have been voiced on his own authority, but since Lenin had previously argued that giving up territory to the Germans to ensure the survival of the Bolsheviks was a legitimate strategy, and the Vladivostok landings coincided with the Germans' military occupations near Kursk, Trotsky's discussions may have had Lenin's blessing. With no objective evidence that Trotsky was negotiating in good faith, it may be assumed that the Bolsheviks were hedging their bets and buying time to see how far both the Germans and Japanese would penetrate into Russia – for despite Lockhart's and Sadoul's views that the Bolsheviks would accept aid when war was re-declared, they did not understand that Lenin would not allow the war to restart.⁸⁶ Resumption of the war would spell the end of the Bolsheviks, as the German war machine would simply roll up any resistance and overthrow the Red government.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, the Allies had grown highly sceptical of Bolshevik promises, although at no time was the view that they would resume the war challenged.⁸⁸ In Washington, Lansing agreed with Ambassador Francis's estimation and approved his decision to be cautious before making any positive recommendations.⁸⁹ And in London, Balfour warned that an agreement on general principles was needed before any military aid could be provided.⁹⁰ Despite these timid posturings, the Allied landings in Vladivostok remained localized. At the time Japan was not prepared to increase its commitment nor was the United States ready to actively support intervention. No one wanted to penetrate into Russia's eastern vastness.

In Tokyo, faced with the crisis caused by the landings in Vladivostok and Foreign Minister Motono's insistence that further intervention was now a necessity, Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi still hesitated; he ordered the navy to withdraw its marines. With the government rejecting his advice, Motono resigned, being replaced by Baron Gotō Shimpei.⁹¹ On 25 April the Japanese marines withdrew to their ships. A week later the Allies seemed to prevaricate, allowing the local Soviet to take over Vladivostok, thus resolving the crisis.⁹² Still, the precedent for "going ashore" was set, and as the chaotic situation would have it, it was another local and unexpected event that spawned another Allied "involvement" crisis: the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion against the Reds.

The Czechoslovak Legion

Originally the Czechoslovak Legion had been formed from small units of ethnic Czechs and Slovaks living in Russia at the outbreak of the war. These units, a part of the Imperial Russian Army, had expanded with Czechoslovak prisoners and deserters who had no love for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and who sought a separate Czechoslovak state. After Tsar Nicholas II was deposed, the

units expanded into a full Corps. When the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, the Czech Corps was in the Ukraine.⁹³ In early 1918, the Allies recognized the “autonomous Czechoslovak army” as a regular Allied force subordinate to French command.⁹⁴ The Czech Corps in Russia was then recognized as an integral part of a new national army that had been formed from Czechs in the West. As Allied manpower problems escalated, it was even more important to have the Czech Corps on the Western Front. The French government agreed to the Legion’s evacuation to France.⁹⁵ Negotiations for this proceeded with the Bolsheviks, but in March 1918 the Germans began their advance into the Ukraine. This forced the Czech Corps to fight its way out towards the East. On 14 March the *Sovnarkom*, the Congress of Soviets, met to ratify the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and, in hasty and hectic deliberations, also decided formally to allow the 70,000-strong Czech Legion to exit Russia through Vladivostok.⁹⁶ The Corps was to give up the majority of its weapons and proceed along the Trans-Siberian railway.⁹⁷ In late March the early success of the German *Michael* Offensive in Flanders made the Allies want to get the Czech force out of Russia even more quickly and onto the Western Front. And so in April 1918 the Legion was travelling across Russia to Vladivostok for evacuation.

However, when the *Michael* Offensive was finally stemmed that spring and with the Legion’s progress across Russia slowed by local Soviets, the British government considered alternate uses for the Czechs. With the Legion strung across Russia heading east, in London both the War Office and the Foreign Office sought to have the Corps diverted to Archangel to help defend the war stores there. Trotsky was in favour of this action, fearing that the Czechs would join with the Japanese or Semenov to control Siberia.⁹⁸ The majority of the Czechs were against the diversion to Archangel as they were determined to get to France.⁹⁹ They considered Archangel an alternative port of embarkation only if the Bolsheviks blocked their passage across Siberia.¹⁰⁰ Yet the Czechs did not trust the Reds. The Bolshevik demand for them to give up their weapons did not sit well with the Legion. On 14 April 1918 the First Czech Division decided that they could not rely on Bolshevik promises and resolved to fight their way to Vladivostok if required.¹⁰¹ Less than two weeks later, indeed the same day that the Japanese marines returned to their ships, 6000 Czech troops arrived in Vladivostok. Their advent certainly added to the confusion and chaos.¹⁰² But this was only the beginning of the Czech odyssey.

On 14 May the pressure came to a head at Chelyabinsk. There, freed Austro-Hungarian prisoners killed a Czech soldier and the Czechs lynched the man responsible. The local Soviet then arrested the Czech soldiers involved. On 17 May the Czechs seized the town’s arsenal, armed themselves and freed their compatriots but settled with local authorities peacefully. However, when news of the incident reached Moscow, Trotsky ordered all the Czechs in Russia to be disarmed completely.¹⁰³ He also ordered the arrest of the Czech National Council in Moscow to force the Legion to comply with his orders.¹⁰⁴

In Britain, the War Cabinet was now doubly concerned over the safety of the Vladivostok stores and how to prevent the Germans from utilizing the resources in Siberia and Southern Russia. Lloyd George feared that any armed force could go

through Russia “like a hot knife through butter”. Since the United States was ill-disposed to intervene in Siberia, the Prime Minister decided to approach Canada to supply a “force of engineers &c to Vladivostok” to work with the Czechoslovaks, Japanese and French as an international force. The Czechs, he thought, could be induced to help in Siberia, but only fighting Austrians or Germans and not in a Russian civil war.¹⁰⁵ Regardless of their aims, this meant that the Czechs, being shunted around dangerous and distant Russia, were hardly likely to avoid the Russian conflict. Trotsky made certain of that.

When the Czech Legion received Trotsky’s order to disarm, they unanimously voted to ignore it and to travel as a united Corps “to Vladivostok, armed and even against the will of the Soviets”.¹⁰⁶ In response, Trotsky ordered that every armed Czech be shot on the spot and that all Czechs be interned as prisoners of war. Fighting ensued along the Trans-Siberian Railway, with the disorganized Reds unable to control the much more disciplined and professional Czech Legion.¹⁰⁷

Although the Allied diplomats had no hand in organizing the Czech revolt, and, in fact the French had tried to get the Czechs to comply with Trotsky’s orders, the ambassadors and other foreign representatives were quick to recognize the significance of the uprising. Noulens thought the mutiny would hasten the fall of the Bolsheviks¹⁰⁸ but Lockhart still thought that the Allies could work with them. Indeed, Chicherin even asked him to intervene “to settle the Czech incident amicably”.¹⁰⁹ However, the Allied diplomats, with US backing, decided to support the Czechs.¹¹⁰ On 5 June they informed Chicherin that any hostile action against the Czechs would be considered hostile action against the Allies. This was but another step in the incrementalism of chaos.

In Moscow, the Bolsheviks took this frightening announcement as an ultimatum. Their Foreign Minister wanted to know if it was a prelude to an Allied declaration of war on his government. Chicherin did not wait for an answer; the next day he informed Litvinov, in London, that the only acceptable solution to the Czech problem was the disarmament of the Legion before they could proceed to the Russian ports of embarkation. The ultimatum was passed to the Allied diplomats on 12 June.¹¹¹ This tough stand meant that Moscow had now to restore order in Siberia.¹¹² The Czechs, however, continued to resist effectively. The British encouraged them to hold firm, as Allied intervention, they thought, was anticipated shortly and “Czech co-operation should be of the utmost importance to the success”.¹¹³

US Agreement to Siberian Intervention

While the Czech crisis was playing out in Russia, the British were still trying to induce President Wilson to accept the larger policy of Allied intervention in Siberia led by Japan. Yet Wilson remained adamant in his opposition to a Japanese-led or Japanese-only Siberian expedition.¹¹⁴ However, the plight of the Czech Legion began to influence US attitudes. US Ambassador to China Paul S. Reinsch told Lansing that he and others believed “it would be a serious mistake to remove the Czechoslovak troops from Siberia”, since, with a little help, the Czechs could

control all of Siberia.¹¹⁵ In reaction, Woodrow Wilson now seemed to soften his position once again. He mused to Lansing “a plan that might be worked, with the Japanese and other assistance”.¹¹⁶ US diplomats still in Russia also urged the president to act. They believed that the time was ripe for intervention and doubted whether the Allies could afford to overlook Lenin’s world revolutionary aims.¹¹⁷

Two days after writing to Lansing, Wilson saw Czech nationalist Professor Thomas Masaryk, who had come to Washington to press for US support for the Czech Legion.¹¹⁸ Wilson told him that he had a “sincere interest” in the Czechoslovaks and the serious problems in Russia. The president explained the Allied plans for Japanese intervention and asked whether the Czechoslovak Legion could help. Masaryk wanted Japan’s intervention but doubted that it could produce a million men, a number he thought necessary for success in Siberia. Wilson then told him that he (Wilson) was bound to the Allies and would follow Marshal Foch’s decision in the matter.¹¹⁹ This was yet another indication that Wilson was again reversing his position. By agreeing to the French plan, the United States would have to accept involvement in North Russia and the presence of Japan in Siberia. Colonel House also appeared to have come to support US intervention in conjunction with other Allies.¹²⁰ But as yet the United States was not informing either the British or French.

While the diplomatic manoeuvring continued, the Czech units forced the Allied hand, by seizing Vladivostok. On 29 June, the Czechs took military and civil control of the city. Czech patrols kept order. The British, Japanese and United States landed a few marines to help the Czechs and to guard their respective consulates. The Soviet civil government there ceased to exist in the face of the Czech presence.¹²¹

Yet no sooner had the Czechs gained control of the city than they were required to move back west to support their comrades. The Czech commander had to send the majority of his troops to prevent the destruction of a railway tunnel 30 miles from Vladivostok. The rest of the Czechs needed that corridor kept safe to reach the Pacific port. He requested that the Allies pledge to land 1000 troops to support his remaining soldiers at Vladivostok in case the Bolsheviks tried to regain control of the port. Faced with this appeal, the British War Cabinet hurriedly approved the request.¹²²

News of the Bolshevik attacks on the valiant Czech allies in far-off Siberia stirred US popular opinion against Moscow’s regime. Public acceptance of the Allies’ need to do something in Russia gained more and more support, and Washington soon followed public opinion.¹²³ Finally the president agreed to act. On 6 July Wilson announced that, for the honour of the United States, intervention in Siberia was now required.¹²⁴ Since the United States could not intervene alone, it would work with Japan and other Allies. Seven thousand US and seven thousand Japanese troops would be assembled to support the Czech Legion. Although consensus was achieved among those present, General Peyton March, the head of the Army, was still worried over Japan limiting itself to only 7000 men and that intervention would abet that nation’s historic territorial ambitions at the expense of Russia. Wilson, now a reluctant convert, made it clear that they had to take that chance.¹²⁵

After resisting the pressure from its Allies for over a year and refusing to allow Japan to act either alone or as part of an Allied force, President Wilson unilaterally decided on intervention with Japan and set the size of the force to be employed. Ostensibly, this decision was to protect the Czech Legion and save the reputation of the United States. Yet, once again neither the president nor the other Cabinet ministers bothered to tell the British, French or Italians about any of the plans' details beforehand. On 8 July, Lansing simply handed a *fait accompli* to Viscount Ishii, who said that he was personally in favour of the US plan and would inform his government immediately.¹²⁶ Worried by the obvious unilateral act and the secrecy, Lansing then queried Wilson whether they should consult with the other Allies on the Siberian intervention before the Japanese did so themselves.¹²⁷ But that same day the president told Lord Reading that they were still studying the situation and that he was not prepared to answer the Allies' questions until further discussions with his advisors and the Japanese were completed.¹²⁸ In fact, on 9 July Lord Reading and the other Allied ambassadors saw Lansing and asked specifically "whether the Allied Governments were not to take part in the initial landings of troops at Vladivostok or whether it was our [the United States'] purpose to confine the enterprise to Japanese and American troops?"¹²⁹

However, what Lansing did not tell the president, but which Reading secretly wrote in his dispatches to London, was that Lansing had told different stories to each of the three Allied ambassadors. Why he did this is not known, but perhaps Lansing did not wish to contradict the president's previous conversation with Reading. Given the rumours that something was happening, the ambassadors consulted each other in private, no doubt comparing notes. They then confronted Lansing together, where he finally told them the real substance of the 6 July White House decision. They all let Lansing know of their discomfort and surprise that the United States had acted alone and had not made provision for participation of the other Allies. This was particularly annoying since they had been pressing President Wilson to intervene with Japan for so long.¹³⁰ The next day, Lansing, as dextrous as ever, told Reading that negotiations with the Japanese were being done alone only to speed the process and to avoid delay in preliminary discussions with the five governments involved.¹³¹ The reality was likely that the United States wanted to keep the other Allies out of Siberia and try and control the Japanese there. If this was so, it would be characteristic of Wilson's arrogance that he thought he could control the operation and limit its scope, especially if no other Allies were present to interfere with his dealings with Japan.

Lloyd George was not happy with the way the United States had proceeded and thought that the number of troops proposed was far too low.¹³² Balfour agreed, and urged that intervention must have Japanese leadership.¹³³ The War Cabinet decided to act independently. The CIGS was told to ask the French for troops. Balfour was to inform the Japanese of the British action and to tell Lord Reading so he could inform President Wilson of Britain's decisions.¹³⁴ Finally, the Canadian government was asked to provide a complete brigade, including the brigade commander and staff.¹³⁵

While the British were organizing their own force, the Japanese were pressuring Wilson on the matter of overall command. On 15 July, Counsellor Frank Polk told the president that Ambassador Ishii had not yet heard from his government on the US proposals. If Japan was given overall military command, Polk said, Tokyo would quickly agree to all.¹³⁶ The next day, Wilson approved this and Ishii was duly informed that Japan could have supreme command of the Siberian intervention.¹³⁷ Yet no one bothered to tell their confrères in the War Department, let alone other Allies.

This bilateral act again spawned dismay and calls for clarification from other supposed partners. As a result of Allied pressure for an explanation and Britain's independent action of organizing its own Siberian force, Wilson drafted an aide-memoire on 16 July 1918 explaining the United States' actions and expectations on intervention. This he wrote alone, without consultation with any of his own advisors.¹³⁸ The document echoed his 6 July decision, but downplayed the military aspect and emphasized the economic and social side of the US action. Clearly Wilson was worried how the average American would take the news, so he put a soft spin on the public statement made the next day.

The original 16 July draft implied that the force would be small and made up equally of US and Japanese troops. The overall tone deprecated the need for intervention.¹³⁹ The tenor of the document epitomized Wilson's reluctance to intervene, but recognized the need to assist the Czechs and to guard the military stores. The President then noted that the United States "can go no further than these modest and experimental plans".¹⁴⁰ He was putting everyone on notice that this minimal US participation was the absolute maximum the Allies could expect from the United States. Nowhere in the draft did the president indicate that other Allies except Japan would participate. Perhaps this was due to Wilson's arrogant disregard for the efforts of the French, British and Italians in trying to broker a combined operation. It also showed his continued naiveté and blindness in regard to the Russians, and the Bolsheviks in particular, in that he trusted that Russia should be left to sort out its own problems even in the face of German pressure and imminent (and in some areas actual) civil war. This reflected Wilson's view that the Russian Revolution was emulating the American Revolution. However, the publicized version of the communication issued the next day specifically acknowledged the other Allies and their pending actions in Russia, all of which appeared to be separate from the high moral stance of the United States on Russia.

On 17 July, Lansing handed each of the Allied ambassadors the official aide-mémoire for transmission to their respective governments. It was different from the original draft and possibly Lansing had advised Wilson to make some additions. An added paragraph acknowledged that, notwithstanding US doubts about any intervention, there was no intention to criticize the Allies and that they were free to take whatever action they deemed necessary. Wilson also added a line that acknowledged that the other Allies could participate. The specific change to the original draft stated,

It [the United States] hopes to carry out the plans for safeguarding the rear of the Czecho-Slovaks operating from Vladivostok in a way that will place it and keep it in close cooperation with a small military force like its own from Japan, and if necessary from the other Allies, and that will assure it of the cordial accord of all the allied powers; ...¹⁴¹

This latter addition was a sop to the British, French and Italians. It ignored the other Allies' agreement for the necessity of armed intervention to control the Trans-Siberian Railway and the real situation in Siberia that had the Bolsheviks fighting the Czechs who were now allied with the White Russians. Yet, as Lloyd George and Balfour thankfully acknowledged, Woodrow Wilson had finally acquiesced to military intervention. Although the British had misgivings about, and took exception to, the tone of the president's *démarche*, they endorsed it for the sake of moving ahead. The Imperial War Cabinet (IWC), after minute discussion of the details of the US proposal, approved the decision to participate.¹⁴² They recognized the danger in the small size of the proposed force, but considered that it was a necessary first step. And the fact that they had asked for Canadian participation four days earlier was clear evidence of an anticipated expansion. Yet intervention still had to be sold to the local Russians.

Sir George Clerk drafted a proclamation explaining that the Allies were there to help the Russians and not to take advantage of the anarchy prevailing in Siberia. Both Hardinge and Cecil considered the notice necessary and thought that Wilson's statement was perverse. Cecil ordered Clerk's draft be sent to the Allies for concurrence.¹⁴³ President Wilson thought the British announcement was "unwise". The President wanted to issue his own pronouncement along the lines of his 17 July aide-mémoire.¹⁴⁴

Back in London, Thomas Lyons, a Foreign Office senior clerk, took issue with the president's attitude, fearing it would only be the Japanese and the United States who could then issue public statements. Britain could not accept that, "especially if we hope to obtain to a certain degree the political control of the operations in Siberia". Cecil asked that discreet inquiries be made to see whether the president would object to the British issuing the proclamation as their own. He also noted that "We cannot continue indefinitely to accept responsibility for the dilatory methods of the White House."¹⁴⁵ One can deduce that even with President Wilson's final agreement to go into Siberia, the British were frustrated with the slow pace and the idea that the United States would be in charge. And the operation was not a foregone conclusion, as Japan had not yet accepted the proposal.

Japanese Reaction to the US Proposal on Siberia

On receipt of the US arrangement, Prime Minister Terauchi, the Foreign Minister and Army General Staff recognized that it did not address Japan's concerns or objectives, but that all other conditions set by the army had been met. Only the "understanding" of the United States with other Allies remained to be achieved.

Washington's offer was the first sign of US support, and the policy-makers decided that it should be accepted. Expansion could come later.¹⁴⁶ On 19 July Ambassador Ishii presented the Japanese reply in Washington, indicating that a full division (12,000 men, rather than the proposed 7000) would be required to be effective. More troops could be dispatched as circumstances required.¹⁴⁷ Hard negotiations between the two countries over the number of troops and the implied Japanese intention of expanding the area of operations beyond Vladivostok ensued. On 2 August, Tokyo agreed to initially limit its contribution to one division with the purpose of helping the Czechs. A public announcement followed immediately with a softer image of aid and limited force projected.¹⁴⁸ The next day Washington issued its own press release that indicated the US national dislike of any military intervention in Russia, but clearly saw a higher purpose of protecting and extricating the beleaguered Czechs. Therefore, it went on, the United States proposed that it and Japan send a few thousand troops and that "the Japanese Government has consented" to act with the United States.¹⁴⁹

Intervention in Siberia was now finally agreed upon. Each Ally had acted in its own interests and not as a cooperative alliance, thus preventing action towards the greater good of achieving effective intervention in a timely manner. In addition, North Russia was equally endangered at the same time and needed Allied forces for its defence while the Turks were advancing in the Caucasus and the Germans were pressing in South-Western Russia. Russia was vast and its needs exceeded the Allies' capacity.

Notes

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10. Jordan to FO, Telegram 618, Peking, 22 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/242044; Jordan to FO, Telegram 593, Peking, 22 December 1917, PRO FO 371/3020/242045; Jordan to FO, Telegram 629, Peking, 29 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/245436.
11. Greene to FO, Telegram 710, Tokyo, 12 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/235691.
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13. Caldwell to Lansing, telegram (unnumbered), Vladivostok, 30 December 1917 FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 16; Jordan to FO, Telegram 629, Peking, 29 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/245436.

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19. Greene to FO, Telegram 729, Tokyo, 15 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/237673.
20. Spring-Rice to FO, Telegram 3991, Washington, 22 December 1917 PRO FO 371/3020/242611.
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22. Morley, 62
23. Tanaka to Lansing, letter, Washington, 14 January 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 27–8.
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25. FO to Lindley, Telegram 110, London, 20 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/11599.
26. Greene to FO, Telegram 31, Tokyo, 14 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/9343.
27. Hardinge minute 19 January 1918 to Greene to FO, Telegram 45, Tokyo, 17 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/11157.
28. Milner to Balfour, letter, London, 20 January 1918; Balfour to Milner, letter, London, 19 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/14494.
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30. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 20 January 1918 PWW Vol. 46, 46.
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32. Lansing to Caldwell, telegram (unnumbered), Washington, 12 December 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 7; Caldwell to Lansing, telegram (unnumbered), Vladivostok, 16 December 1917, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 9; Jordan to FO, Telegram 734, Tokyo via Peking, 17 December 1917, PRO FO 371/3020/238622.
33. Greene to FO, Telegram 48, Tokyo, 18 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/12409.
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36. Morley, 82.
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38. Jordan to FO, Telegram 83, Peking, 30 January 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/19689.
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52. Page to Lansing, Telegram 8723, London, 18 February 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 48–9.
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57. WC Minutes 350 20 February 1918 PRO Cab 23/5.
58. Cecil, Memorandum on Russia, London, 23 February 1918 PRO FO 371/3290/50031 and WC Minutes 353, 25 February 1918 PRO Cab 23/5.
59. Balfour to Reading, Telegram 1080, London, 26 February 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 470–1.
60. Reading to Balfour, Telegram 828, Washington, 27 February 1918 *PWW* Vol. 46, 482.
61. WC Minutes 358 4 March 1918 and WC Minutes 359 5 March 1918 PRO Cab 23/5; FO to Greene, Telegram 198, London, 4 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3289/40682.
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63. Wiseman to Drummond, Telegram 74, New York, 10 March 1918, PRO FO 371/3290/45960.
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67. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 20, Petrograd, 14 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3290/47823.
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70. Lockhart to FO, Telegram 42, Moscow, 25 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3290/55299.
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73. Jordan to FO, Telegram 259, Peking, 18 March 1918 PRO FO 371/3290/50422.
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80. FO to Reading, Telegram 2014, London, 8 April 1918 PRO FO 371/3290/61446.
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85. Balfour to Lockhart, Telegram 64, London, 10 April 1918 PRO FO 371/3285/62282.
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88. Graham minute to Lockhart's Telegram 70, 3 April 1918, PRO FO 371/3285/61467; Graham minute 19 April 1918 to Lockhart Telegram 94, 13 April 1918, PRO FO 371/3285/68677; PRO FO 371/3285/61467.

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92. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 151.
93. Henry Baerlein, *The March of the Seventy Thousand* (London: Leonard Parsons, 1926; reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1971), 94.
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108. Debo, *Revolution and Survival*, 276.
109. Lockhart, 282.
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114. Wiseman to Drummond, telegram, New York, 14 June 1918 PWW Vol. 48, 315–16.
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117. Francis to Lansing, Telegram 140, Vologda, 2 May 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. I, 519–21.
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119. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 19 June 1918, n. 1, PWW Vol. 48, 358.
120. Reading to Balfour, Telegram 2863, Washington, 25 June 1918 PWW Vol. 48, 429–31.
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124. Lansing, Memorandum, Washington, 6 July 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 262–3.
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126. Lansing, Conference with Japanese Ambassador, 8 July 1918 *PWW* Vol. 48, 559–60.
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128. Reading to Balfour, Telegram 3083, Washington, 8 July 1918 *PWW* Vol. 48, 565–6.
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130. Reading to Lloyd-George and Balfour, Telegram 3112, Washington, 9 July 1918 PRO FO 371/3319/121302.
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140. Woodrow Wilson, Draft Aide-Memoire, *PWW* Vol. 48, 626.
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143. FO to Reading, Telegram 4600, London, 25 July 1918 and Minutes by Clerk 19 July 1918, Hardinge and Cecil undated amended to this telegram PRO FO 371/3287/130182.
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145. Lyons's and Cecil's minutes 1 August 1918 to Reading to FO, Telegram 3452, Washington, 30 July 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/133253.
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147. Polk to Woodrow Wilson, letter with enclosure, Washington, 24 July 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 75–6.
148. Ishii to Polk, memorandum, Washington, undated but received by Department of State 2 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 324–5 and Polk to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 3 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 325–6.
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5

The Allies Act – Murmansk and Archangel

Despite the collective need to re-establish an Eastern Front to relieve German pressure on hard-pressed Western Europe in the first half of 1918, the often acrimonious, contradictory, secretive and self-interested interplay among the Allies was the dominant factor in the lead-up to intervention in Siberia. It had taken until August 1918 for some semblance of agreement to occur. However, while these negotiations were happening, other areas of Russia also called for urgent action to stem the Central Powers' advances. There was a pressing requirement for immediate action in North Russia, which came out of Germany's 1918 spring assault on the Western Front. In the Caucasus, the Turks were moving to consolidate their gains and continue their advance towards India.¹ In South-western Russia, the White forces were reeling from the Red Army's assaults, while in the Ukraine, the Germans occupied Odessa and continued their advance into Russia.² A demand for Allied troops in all these areas was apparent, but North Russia seemed to be where the Allies could achieve an immediate positive result. Both Murmansk and Archangel were worrisome for the Allies due to the proximity of the Germans in Finland and the huge stockpile of vital Allied war materiel at both ports.

A small contingent of Royal Marines that had landed in early March was all the force that Britain had immediately available.³ The British War Cabinet hoped to enlist the support of the United States for a Northern intervention, although in early spring 1918 they were aware of Wilson's animosity towards any Allied military operation in Russia. Yet while London was urging the United States to support action, the War Office advised the Foreign Office in March 1918 that it did not think a military expedition to the Kola Peninsula was feasible.⁴ Nevertheless, the small landings that had so far occurred were actually supported by Moscow.

As early as 10 March, Chicherin had told Lockhart that the Bolsheviki were not concerned with Allied actions in North Russia and would not try to expel the Allies from Murmansk. The Soviet Foreign Minister further assured the Englishman that Russia would not send its raw materials to Germany.⁵ Moreover, the Russians were glad of the British help in defending the Murmansk Railway.⁶

Chicherin's attitude may have been only a ruse so as to appear conciliatory to Lockhart. Trotsky and, presumably, Lenin wished to keep all their options for help open, but without any commitment. The immediate problem, however, was the

German disregard for the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The Reds were in no position to oust the Allies from North Russia.

Despite the German depredations against Russia the Bolsheviks had no intention of allowing the Allies free rein in Murmansk. On 28 March, when Chicherin told Lockhart that his government was glad of the Allied help in the North, he also said that they were sending a special commissar there to promote good relations.⁷ In other words, the Reds did not trust the Allies. But they should have been specifically leery of the French.

The day after Chicherin's announcement, French Ambassador Joseph Noulens arrived in Vologda. The French Foreign Minister, Stephen Pichon, had instructed Noulens to safeguard French interests by any means possible, and to help reconstruct a Russian government sympathetic to France.⁸ Noulens personally hated the Bolsheviks, and his reappearance put at risk any Allied attempt to cooperate with the Reds. France was determined to work for what was best for France, regardless of the damage to Allied interests, adding to the chaos.

On 3 April, Noulens called a diplomatic conference in Vologda on how to negotiate Allied intervention. Conspicuously, only the official Allied military attachés were invited with their ambassadors to attend, while Lockhart, Sadoul and Robins were omitted. The diplomats and attachés concluded that they should strive to get a Russian invitation for Allied action, but it placed preconditions on talks with Lenin and Trotsky. These included the Communist acceptance of Japanese military aid and concessions to the Allies equivalent to those given to Germany in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty.⁹ The Reds could never meet these conditions. Since the British did not attend the conference, Lockhart was the only diplomat capable of negotiating with the Bolsheviks who was not tainted by Noulens's prejudice, yet Sadoul continued to meet with Trotsky as well.

On 7 April, Sadoul told Albert Thomas that Trotsky had secretly agreed to accept Allied intervention.¹⁰ Still, the Bolsheviks continued to stall any decision on this matter, and Trotsky would not commit to specific terms. Nonetheless, the leading Bolsheviks recognized the danger to the northern ports and the need for Allied assistance in the region, but they were playing a dangerous game.¹¹ They sought Allied help against German attacks because there was no other, but held off definite commitments out of distrust of the "imperialists".

The Russians had good reason to distrust the British, as they were planning the occupation of the Kola Peninsula.¹² However, the Allies, and especially the British, did not have the manpower to do so. Yet in refuting rumours of British intentions to take over North Russia, Lord Cecil said any denial must be ambiguously worded to allow for future military action.¹³ And he advocated intervention despite a lack of troops.¹⁴ Britain wanted to do what was necessary to preserve the status quo and wished to prevent the enemy from obtaining any resources regardless of Russian wishes. Yet manpower determined the ability to retain control of North Russia, and there simply were not sufficient troops, especially after the German 1918 spring offensive began. So, for intervention to be effective, fighting men were required, but they were not available. Additional Allied help was needed and for that reason the British hoped to press the United States. However, they did not

want to antagonize the United States for fear of slowing US reinforcements being sent to the Western Front. Britain had just secured a US cruiser for Murmansk, but soldiers were needed even more.

Back in England, the 12 April 1918 War Cabinet meeting saw heated debate on what could be done to secure North Russia from the Germans. A second British cruiser was assigned to Murmansk and the USS *Olympia* was soon to sail north.¹⁵ Yet some feared that the White Finns, backed by the Germans, threatened both the Murman Railway (including Kem, a critical railway junction) and the strategically important north coast. Defending Murmansk, it was said, would elicit local support and some urged that General Poole's advice for the ports' defence be accepted.¹⁶ Poole had called for additional ships and 500 troops to guard the railway.¹⁷

But the prime minister disagreed. He argued that the military proposal was more than needed and that it treated the Moscow government as non-existent. The Cabinet compromised by agreeing to leave the troops aboard ship in port, awaiting need.¹⁸ As for Archangel, the Cabinet accepted that the minimum number of men required for its defence, 5000, did not exist at the time. The 15,000 called for were simply impossible to find.¹⁹ Consequently, Britain still pressed the United States to help defend North Russian ports, although to no immediate avail.²⁰

Meanwhile, in the early spring of 1918, the White Finns acted. At the beginning of April, White Finn detachments, armed and supported by Germany, moved towards Kem, since its capture would cut the railway to Murmansk and prevent communications south with the rest of Russia.²¹ In response, on 14 April, a mixed force of British, French and Russians ejected the Finns from the area, preserving communications with the South.²² This was the first encounter with elements of a larger Germano-Finnish force of over a hundred thousand then waiting for better weather to move against the Kola Peninsula. Opposing them was a mixed Allied force of only 2500. More Allied troops were desperately needed to keep their hold in the North.

Although the Murmansk population and government were working with the Allies, the Archangel Reds were antagonistic towards them. On 30 March, the British Consul, Douglas Young, reported that the Bolsheviki were seizing Allied stores.²³ Cecil ordered both Young and Lockhart to tell the local government and Trotsky, respectively, that two ships loaded with food and other necessities en route to Archangel would land their cargo only if conditions agreed between Lockhart and Trotsky were fulfilled.²⁴ These conditions stipulated that Allied materiel at Archangel be put aboard these ships in exchange for the necessities off-loaded and that payment be made for the supplies already taken. Trotsky told Lockhart that the Russians were sending the supplies east of the Urals to keep them safe, but he wished to come to an agreement on the stores and intervention.²⁵ Clearly the Reds were keeping all options open. When Lockhart reported on Trotsky's specific requirements for any Allied incursion, the British were quick to acknowledge their willingness to discuss them.²⁶ Nevertheless, the stores at Archangel continued to be despatched eastwards. Once again, London ordered Lockhart to stop the outflow.²⁷

The Allied agents at Archangel could only note the transfers and follow their course to a central depot north of Vologda. Once the stores were dispersed from there, all trace of them was lost.²⁸ Moreover, it was impossible to send Allied military to guard the materiel since Archangel remained iced-in during April and May. One anomaly of the Bolsheviks' removal of Allied supplies was Trotsky's request for an Allied officer to become part of the Extraordinary Committee overseeing the transfers. Unable to stop the pilfering, Lockhart asked Major R. MacAlpine, Britain's military representative at Archangel, to participate.²⁹ Trotsky likely only made such a conciliatory request to give the impression of cooperation. It had no effect on stopping the stores' removal. Only the railway's poor condition prevented the faster shipping of stores out of the port.³⁰ As for London, all it could do was watch the Archangel situation closely.

At the War Cabinet meeting on 17 April, Balfour explained that the situation at Archangel differed from Murmansk because the former was tied to the larger issue of Siberian intervention and the Czech Legion then moving towards Vladivostok. Balfour wanted the Legion ordered to the North for the region's defence, and that Lockhart should ask Trotsky to support this diversion. Cabinet agreed.³¹ They also authorized a cruiser for Archangel to protect the supplies, although they denied the captain the right to use force against the Bolsheviks if the seizure of materiel persisted.³²

Meanwhile, in Moscow the frustrations for the British continued and affected even Lockhart's usual optimism. On 21 April the exasperated Consul wrote, "The moment has now come when Allied intervention must be invited by the Bolsheviks and, if not, the Allies must impose it."³³ Lockhart was downhearted, obviously dejected by the impending arrival of the German mission to Moscow and its expected influence on the Soviet government. But it was French Ambassador Noulens who dealt a fatal blow to any possible Bolshevik cooperation with the Allies.

On 23 April he issued a press release that praised the Japanese landing at Vladivostok earlier in the month as necessary to protect foreigners from the anarchy that was obviously inspired by the revolutionaries. The Allies, he also said, were consequently forced to intervene unilaterally to defend against any German action that would endanger the Allies and Russia.³⁴ Lockhart was alarmed at his ally's ideas, and he quickly reported Noulens's comments to the Foreign Office. The French blathering, he warned, would cause grave suspicions in the Bolsheviks' minds as to actual Allied intentions in Russia. Any open-ended demand to Trotsky for the intervention without any guarantees would make Moscow think that the Allies were coming to destroy the revolution.³⁵ Sadoul sided with his English colleague, recognizing immediately that Noulens was destroying the chance for a Bolshevik invitation to the Allies.³⁶ In all, it seemed that the French ambassador appeared to be working for the goals of France against England and to the detriment of the greater Allied cause.

This contradictory Allied situation convinced the Bolshevik leadership to be even more wary of Allied intentions. Coupled with their own secretive double-dealing, it made any agreement near impossible. Although the French were

thoroughly committed to overthrowing the Bolsheviks, they recognized that the White forces were incapable of accomplishing this.³⁷ Intervention with Soviet consent would strengthen the revolutionary government. This would make it more difficult to dislodge them or to achieve France's goal of re-establishing French control of influence in Russia. Noulens's hard position was in accord with France's long-held ambitions and was supported, if not overtly, by the Quai d'Orsay. In short, the French were employing chaos to achieve their goals. The Bolshevik Foreign Minister thought this was the case. In an interview with the Russian paper *Izvestia* the day after Noulens's declarations, Chicherin warned of dire consequences if any of the French ambassador's recommendations were attempted.³⁸

Lockhart continued to worry over Noulens's actions. He sent urgent cables to London pointing out that all the Allied military attachés accepted the need for intervention, but still preferred a negotiated accord rather than unilateral action. Lockhart urged his government to come to some form of settlement quickly to counter German pressure on Lenin and Trotsky. It was vital, he warned, that Britain be ready to act immediately, whether unilaterally or by invitation, and be prepared to occupy Archangel in strength.³⁹ The British Cabinet agreed with Lockhart's views, but was in no position to implement them.⁴⁰ Nothing could be done other than again appealing to the United States for help and asking the French to rein in Noulens.

None of these Allied disagreements helped the situation at Archangel. The day after Noulens's interview, the supply ships arrived at port. The local Soviet desperately needed the materiel, especially food, but the Bolsheviks had not agreed to the conditions for landing the goods.⁴¹ The local government said that if they did not get a satisfactory reply from Moscow, they were willing to satisfy British conditions on their own authority.⁴² This was another indication that the Russians in the North were not intimidated by Moscow and were willing to cooperate with the Allies for their own best interests. Although the Archangel officials were willing to meet all the Allied demands, the Extraordinary Commission insisted that the stockpiled supplies had to move inland even if the local populace starved.⁴³ This chaotic situation only increased the Allies' worry over these vital stores.

Regardless of Noulens's attitude, the Moscow Reds continued to play contradictory diplomatic games. At one and the same time they refused to accept any Allied accommodation, but continued saying they were willing to do so, all just to keep their options open. These negotiations seemed to be hypocritical in light of Lenin's speech to the Moscow Soviet on 24 April. There he announced that Russia had two enemies, one at home and one abroad, that Russia was at war with capitalists in all countries and that the Bolsheviks were in danger of losing unless the Western proletariat rose up to support them.⁴⁴ Lenin's animosity towards all capitalists and imperialists, including the Allies, was clear. As far as he was concerned, all were Russia's enemies. Nevertheless, the arrival on 27 April of the German delegation in Petrograd, headed by Count Wilhelm Graf von Mirbach-Harff, increased German influence in Russia.⁴⁵ Both the US Ambassador and his Military Attaché were convinced that the time had come for official Allied involvement.⁴⁶ Francis

contended that Mirbach was soon dominating the Soviet government and, with Lenin controlling the Bolshevik spirit, the Allies could no longer afford to wait or to ignore Lenin's ideological utterances.⁴⁷ Intervention was now a necessity with or without Moscow's endorsement.

In contrast to Francis's call for unilateral action, Lockhart still pressed for an agreement with Trotsky. But on 4 May 1918 he described alternate, if contradictory, policies: one was to make accommodations with Germany at Russia's expense and the other was to intervene on behalf of Russia. He urged the latter, with Allied occupations at Archangel, Murmansk and the Far East immediately and simultaneously.⁴⁸ In London, Sir George Clerk acknowledged the wisdom of this analysis, but stated emphatically that, so far, Britain had failed to get agreement among all the Allies and any such accord was unlikely to occur soon. Lord Hardinge thought the same way.⁴⁹ The official British reply reflected Hardinge's views.⁵⁰ But on 5 May Lockhart suddenly wired that he had an agreement with Trotsky for the Czechs to proceed to Archangel and for the release of Allied supplies stored there.⁵¹ Sadoul reported the same news, but nothing seems to have come of these negotiations since the freighters remained anchored without unloading.⁵² The North was on everyone's mind, not least the German ambassador's.

In Moscow, Mirbach left little time before flexing German muscle. On 8 May he demanded that British and French troops immediately evacuate the Murman Peninsula or the Germans would undertake military operations to occupy more Russian territory towards Murmansk.⁵³ All those concerned were demanding action that was motivated and directed towards each nation's best interests, although the British and French were also aiming at holding North Russia to prevent German troops being transferred to the Western Front.

And so, in the spring of 1918, the need for concentrated Allied involvement, especially in North Russia, was acute, but the problem was US opposition to Japan's military intervention in Siberia. In turn, this impasse prevented any US decision on North Russia. Again, the United States was worried that its international image would suffer in the eyes of the Russian populace. But US attitudes on North Russia seemed to be changing in May 1918.

On 12 May, Lord Reading in Washington seemed more optimistic that US opposition to intervention was shifting. Secretly, Lansing had told him that Northern intervention for the protection of the ports was completely separate from any Siberian operation. Reading had the impression that President Wilson was ready to cooperate in protecting Murmansk and Archangel without the assistance of the Japanese. Given this surprising, if pleasant, change, the British ambassador promised to secure from London some idea of what further troops Britain and the other Allies would be willing to send to Russia's North. He told Lansing that Britain needed the help of US infantry now in France, as British forces were still reeling as a result of the German spring attack. Put simply, there were no more British troops for use in Russia.⁵⁴ Perhaps alarmed or perhaps not, Lansing then counselled Wilson that US involvement at Archangel and Murmansk would be looked on more favourably than in Siberia, as the military advantages in North Russia were obvious.⁵⁵ Furthermore, he no doubt made the reluctant Wilson feel

better by advising “that the proposed intervention in Russia had become divided into two problems, the Siberian and the Murmansk, and that they seemed to me to require separate treatment”.⁵⁶ For the British at least, this softening of the US attitude was welcome, but it still was not a definite promise of aid. Clearly the United States’ international reputation was of more concern to Woodrow Wilson than the collective need of his Allies. This attitude permeated throughout the entire US administration. If change was to occur, further pressure needed to be exerted on the United States.

While all this was transpiring in Washington, in London, on 11 May 1918, the War Cabinet decided that the part of the Czechoslovak Legion not yet at Vladivostok or east of the city of Omsk be sent North for embarkation to France and to send General Poole back to Russia with a cadre of British officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to train a local military force for the defence of the two North Russian ports.⁵⁷ This was to be similar to the operation commanded by General Dunsterville in the Trans-Caucasus. The Admiralty also agreed to provide an additional 200 Royal Marines for the defence of Archangel.⁵⁸ And so, perhaps typically, or perhaps because of the urgency of the situation, without further consultation with their Allies, Britain decided unilaterally to move with its military forces to protect both North Russian ports.

By 16 May, the composition of the British Murmansk force, code-named ELOPE, was set at 500 and included five Canadian officers and eleven Canadian NCOs.⁵⁹ A second force earmarked for Archangel was code-named SYREN. Although not having Moscow’s official invitation, British military occupation would be welcomed by the local government at Murmansk. The immediate urgency justifying the unilateral British decision had arisen due to events along the Murman coast.

On 14 May a German submarine sank two Norwegian sailboats in sight of the coast, and on 16 May a submarine entered Vaida Bay and sank an unarmed Russian steamer.⁶⁰ Chicherin immediately protested to Mirbach and to the Bolshevik representative in Berlin. No immediate reply came, but on 21 May the German ambassador warned that according to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty the Arctic Ocean was still a theatre of war and the attacks would continue.⁶¹ On 17 May, in anticipation of this bellicose German attitude, the Murmansk regional government agreed that the Murman coast had to be defended. The president of the Murmansk sailors’ Soviet (Tsentrromur), Liaudansky, wired the fleet headquarters at Archangel seeking trawlers for coastal defence and permission to arm Murmansk’s own torpedo boats. But he received no answer to his queries. Liaudansky also asked Lenin’s Extraordinary Commissar to the Murmansk Region, S. P. Nazarenus, for the same thing.⁶² Nazarenus arrived on 25 May at Murmansk, and the following day denied permission to arm any vessels.⁶³ These orders were reiterated by Soviet Naval Headquarters in Petrograd and appeared to stem from the Bolsheviks’ fear of antagonizing the Germans. It may also have been a result of the sudden German notification that their military operations were completed and that Germany was anxious to cooperate economically with Moscow.⁶⁴

The Murmansk population was already in desperate straits caused by acute food and other supply shortages. They would hear none of Lenin’s agent’s ideas.

Without armed escorts protecting shipping and the Murmansk fishing fleet, the seizure and sinking of local ships would only get worse. Pressed by necessity, Liaudansky appealed to the Murmansk Regional Soviet, which put greater pressure on Nazarenus. As a result, on 1 June the Commissar changed his orders to allow for the armed convoying of supply ships and for the Murmansk government to cooperate with the Allied naval authorities in the port.⁶⁵ The Moscow government's apparent indifference towards the safety of the people in North Russia strained the loyalty of the Murmansk administration to the Bolshevik national government.

While Murmansk was suffering the violence of German submarine attacks and trying to get Bolshevik permission to defend the region, the British were implementing the decision for Northern intervention. On 17 May, at a long and very sombre War Cabinet meeting, the Royal Navy decided to send an additional 350 marines, with artillery, to reinforce the British in North Russia. The marines already there, the worried Cabinet ministers were told, had just battled a White Finn force south of Petchanga, repelling it and causing heavy losses to the enemy. More momentum for direct action came with the news that General Poole was leaving for North Russia that day to organize the Czech forces expected at Murmansk and Archangel. At the same time, the War Cabinet was extremely concerned that Germany was withdrawing troops from the Russian Front to augment its offensive forces in the West. Lloyd George was convinced that Britain and the other Allies should act by themselves, employing what Czech forces were available, if the United States and Japan could not be persuaded to participate in the operations. After much anguished discussion, the Cabinet instructed Lord Cecil to ascertain if the Czechs were willing to fight Germany in Russia and what diplomatic action was needed to get France to agree. It also ordered the General Staff to determine whether anything useful could be done without the United States, using only Czech forces *in situ* as well as a nucleus of Canadian, British and French forces with or without Japan's aid.⁶⁶

Cecil quickly cabled Clemenceau broaching the subject of using the Czechs in Siberia to fight the Germans. Later he met with the Czech political leader in London, Doctor Eduard Benes, and pressed him to commit the Czech forces to stay and fight in Siberia.⁶⁷ It seems then that, despite an agreement with the French on the evacuation of the Czechs, the British were aiming, *sub rosa*, to have them become the nucleus of a counter-revolutionary movement.⁶⁸ The British would not exert themselves to bring these troops to the Western Front. The impossibility of diverting ships from the transport of US forces to Europe to the Czech evacuation became the official reason not to bring this Legion to France quickly. Notwithstanding a real lack of shipping, the British worked for their own ends, albeit in support of the greater war effort of defeating the Germans decisively.

While the British were organizing their military intervention for the North and the Murmansk government was seeking permission from Moscow to defend against German-Finnish attacks, suddenly there appeared to be tentative support for Allied action in North Russia coming from President Wilson. He had already acknowledged that Siberia and North Russia were two separate problems.⁶⁹ But the

support turned out to be nothing more than his blessing that the British should go ahead in the North. No US troops, he said, could be sent to Murmansk without subtracting an equivalent force from the Western Front, and such subtraction at the time was unwise. Perhaps it was just as gratifying for London to know that the United States now considered the Northern intervention separate from the Siberian. But the disappointed Reading relayed this news back home and the essentially cordial but negative reply likely convinced the British, more or less, to go it alone in North Russia.⁷⁰

On the same day as Reading's despatch, the War Cabinet once again debated what forces were needed for Murmansk. Additional British troops were already en route and there was no point in delaying action to chase after an elusive US brigade. Cabinet approved a policy of using whatever forces in the area that could be assembled for its defence. Major-General Poole was given overall command.⁷¹ This effectively established at least one Allied nation's intervention in North Russia. Nevertheless, as a manifestation of a cooperative Alliance, it was a failure. No partner seemed willing to see the problem or the solution in the same way. However, over the next two months things changed, albeit slowly, torturously and with confusion and chaos.

On 24 May 1918 USS *Olympia* anchored at Murmansk. Coincidentally, it carried General Poole as a passenger.⁷² This same day in London, Major-General C. M. Maynard, the designated Murmansk force commander, was briefed on operations in North Russia. There were to be two forces: the first consisted of 560 military trainers for the Czech Legion expected at Archangel and organizers of local Russian militias aiming for an army of 30,000; the second was 600 British soldiers destined for Murmansk to join with other Allies to protect the region from the Finns and Germans. This second contingent was also to train local units.⁷³ The strategic goal of both forces was to tie down German divisions in Finland and prevent their transfer to the Western Front.

However, the British troops were too few to accomplish this task, and the United States had refused to commit any ground forces to intervention in North Russia. On 28 May Balfour again asked the United States to send a brigade to North Russia. He emphasized that US military aid was essential for the Allies to retain Murmansk and Archangel. Retention of the ports was key to the Allies entering Russia. The small British force despatched to the area, he pointed out, was woefully inadequate for the task. No more British troops were available simply because England was denuded of men, mostly for the hard-pressed Western Front.⁷⁴ Pointedly, Balfour omitted any reference to Siberia. This was to prevent mixing the Siberian intervention, which Washington had not decided upon and as yet did not want, with North Russia.

Hard on the heels of the British request to the United States came one from their own representative to the Supreme War Council at Versailles, General Bliss. The British, French and Italians, he thought, would all agree on the occupation of Murmansk and Archangel. The military force would be drawn from France and England with a possibility of some troops from the United States.⁷⁵ At that moment Woodrow Wilson seemed to have had a North Russia epiphany. General

Peyton March, US Chief of Staff, replied to Bliss that President Wilson would support any military effort for Murmansk and Archangel's defence provided the Russians also agreed.⁷⁶ The political aspect of a Northern intervention now had the consent of all the main Allies. Only the practical aspects of finding enough manpower needed to be addressed. The difficulty of finding troops was illustrated by Lansing when he reported that "this Government was entirely willing to send troops to Murmansk provided General Foch approved the diversion of troops ... from those now going to France".⁷⁷ The United States was now putting the onus to send Americans onto the shoulders of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Foch. The decision was efficacious, since the US Consul at Moscow, Dewitt Poole, had told Washington that Russia was under German pressure to cede the Rybachi Peninsula west of Murmansk to Finland.⁷⁸ This would give the White Finns (and the Germans) control of territory right to the doorstep of Murmansk. The Allies were apprehensive, since this decision would give Petchanga Bay to the Germans and it was thought that a submarine base could be established there.

This was a strategic concern and would endanger the Atlantic sea routes carrying US soldiers to Europe. On 3 June the Supreme War Council endorsed resolutions for the Allied occupation of Murmansk and Archangel.⁷⁹ In addition, Foch sanctioned the diversion of one US regiment and supporting forces to Murmansk.⁸⁰ Lord Milner passed this information to the US president, who remained sceptical of the accuracy of the message. The US Secretary for War, Newton Baker, asked Bliss to confirm Foch's concurrence for the diversion.⁸¹ Bliss did so, pointing out that he had discussed the matter with Marshal Foch who said that the Supreme War Council had agreed to the North Russian ports' occupation and that all that remained was for it to happen.⁸²

These decisions came none too soon. On 7 June news of an enemy force approaching the railway junction at Kem reached Murmansk. The desperate local government pleaded with Moscow for permission to employ Allied forces to repel the White Finns and Germans, but received no answer. The Murmansk government then acted on its own and authorized the Allies to proceed against the enemy. General Poole sent a mixed French, English and Russian force south to protect the railway.⁸³ US marines landed from the USS *Olympia* to defend Murmansk in place of this force, thus committing the United States to the land defence of North Russia. On 23 June over a thousand British troops, commanded by General Maynard, arrived at the port, but as agreed at the 12 April War Cabinet meeting, the men remained aboard ship, for the moment.⁸⁴

The use of Allied aid to defend the Murman region, against the express instructions of Moscow, brought about a catastrophic break between Moscow and the region's Soviet. On 8 June the Murmansk Council told General Poole that Lenin had ordered the local government to warn the Allies to quit Murmansk.⁸⁵ Again, on 16 June, under threat from the Germans, Chicherin wired the Murmansk Soviet, demanding the expulsion of Allied warships and warning that "belligerent action" by Allied forces in support of the Czechoslovaks would soon occur.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the disagreements between

the Northern area's government and Moscow continued to escalate as the local Soviet tried to maintain a defence with any means available. Murmansk President Aleksei M. Yuriev told Lenin and Trotsky that the Allies were too strong to be evicted by local forces and that these Allies were willing to defend North Russia on their own. Moreover, he would do nothing without precise instructions.⁸⁷ Once again Moscow failed to respond. When the US Assistant Military Attaché, Lieutenant Hugh S. Martin, told Yuriev that US military help was assured, the Murmansk president asked Lenin and Trotsky to officially request US aid to counter British influence.⁸⁸ Again, Moscow remained silent, but on 25 June Lenin finally telegraphed that

The Murmansk regional Soviet's duty is to take all measures to resist energetically the penetration into Soviet territory of the hirelings of capitalism. All assistance, direct or indirect, to the intervening violators will be regarded as state treason and will be punished according to military laws.⁸⁹

Yuriev sought further clarification, but only received Lenin's terse comment, "If you still do not understand Soviet policy equally hostile to the English and to the Germans, blame it upon yourself."⁹⁰ This curt ultimatum confirmed that the Bolsheviks were against all capitalist and "Imperialist" countries and that they would not cooperate for any reason. However, the very day Lenin's note arrived, General Poole ordered his troops ashore.

Chicherin quickly protested against the landings, but on 28 June the Murmansk Presidium voted to ignore Moscow's orders and, two days later, officially broke with Moscow.⁹¹ This schism with Moscow would prove to be irrevocable, but the regional government had decided in its own best interests and for what it saw as the only means for survival against the threat of the White Finns and Germans. Although making it easier for the commanders in place, this rupture left the Allied governments facing diplomatic and political stonewalling from the Moscow Soviets over intervention in Siberia. Nevertheless, finding sufficient manpower for intervention remained the most difficult aspect for making the intervention a success. General Poole asked the War Office for an additional British battalion to augment the 1200 British troops already there. A perplexed CIGS told the War Cabinet that he had no troops to spare, but he would try to scrape up a force somewhere.⁹²

It turned out to be from Canada, for on 12 July the War office had asked the senior Dominion for an infantry battalion for North Russia.⁹³ But, like all the other Allies in 1918, Canada, too, suffered from an acute manpower shortage. Moreover, the Western Front was where the Canadian Corps was committed to fight. When the Army Council request was received, the Canadian staff pointed out that no troops, save for those badly needed for reinforcement in France, were available.⁹⁴ Sir A. E. Kemp, the Canadian Minister for Overseas Military Forces, with his prime minister's quick endorsement, promptly said no.⁹⁵ In light of the then-current acrimonious debate on conscription in Canada, one which had already led to a divisive general election on compulsory military service a few months earlier,

Kemp's refusal was the only possible Canadian reply.⁹⁶ This decision illustrated that a junior Ally such as Canada would, like the senior ones, make decisions in its own interests.

The British were desperate to find the resources for the Northern intervention and would not take "no" for an answer. Two weeks later, Britain again came begging for small numbers of specialty troops to act solely as trainers. Such incrementalism is often a hook, but whatever the British motive, the War Office asked for 18 officers and 70 NCOs, all from artillery or machine-gun units. The British wanted the stereotypical Canadian quality of being able to work in arctic conditions.⁹⁷ Perhaps because the letter was flattering and because the numbers were small, the Canadians agreed.⁹⁸ Then, another week later, the War Office made a similar request. By subtle increases, Canada suddenly found that two six-gun batteries and 375 artillerymen were committed to North Russia.⁹⁹

For the British, their part of the North Russia intervention force was set. This coincided with the US president's authorization to commit three infantry battalions, three engineer companies and a field hospital.¹⁰⁰ Forces were now identified and intervention was agreed by all concerned. Although the Bolsheviks had not requested the help or approved of it, the North Russia regional government had independently agreed to whatever assistance the Allies could provide. Intervention was moving forward, but success was hardly assured. Success for intervention still hung in the balance despite a tenuous political agreement among the principal Allies.

Notes

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 91. Strakhovsky, *The Origins*, 62.
 92. WC Minutes 443, 10 July 1918 PRO Cab 23/7.
 93. Cubit to Secretary OMFC, letter 0149/5122. (S.D.2), London, 12 July 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919*.
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96. For a detailed analysis of the conscription problem in Canada see J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977).
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98. Kemp to Borden, letter, London, 1 August 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919* and Borden to Kemp, letter, London, 2 August 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919*.
99. Kemp to Borden, letter, London, 9 August 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919* and Borden to Kemp, letter, London, 9 August 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919*.
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6

Too Few, Too Late – The Caucasus, the North and Siberia, Summer 1918

While intervention in North Russia was progressing to agreement, civil and military chaos rampaged through Russia, with Whites fighting Reds, Germans fighting Russians, Turks fighting the different ethnic groups in the South and Bolsheviks fighting Cossacks in Siberia. Despite the ongoing political machinations over intervention, Allied military involvement was desperately needed during the spring and summer of 1918. Strategically, the goal was to forestall Germany's impending control of Russia. In addition, the British were faced with the danger to India from the Turks in the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia.

In Britain, strategic issues in this area became the purview of the Eastern Committee, a War Cabinet subgroup. Chaired by Lord Curzon, this commission handled the political aspects of the Caucasus operation and was a decisive body coordinating the military, diplomatic and Indian government input.¹ It made strategic decisions and issued direction on issues concerning both South Russia and the Middle Eastern operational theatres. Although strategically necessary and aimed at reducing confusion, an unintended effect was the undermining of General Dunsterville's ability to act independently in the Caucasus. The Committee often second-guessed their operational commander on the ground. Moreover, delays in communications meant that information received in London was often out-of-date and sometimes incorrect, another consequence of poor communication and intelligence analysis. Yet Dunsterville still had command of and responsibility for the mission.

March 1918 saw Dunsterville and his small advance party confined to Hamadan in North Persia by winter weather.² The general made a virtue of necessity. His position disrupted the movement of Turkish agents in the area and his continued presence prevented Turkish advances in the region for fear of a British attack on their flanks.³ Yet the future of Dunsterville's operation remained fragile at best.

Unrest throughout Persia had the British headquarters in Baghdad seeking British troops to shore up the shah's native militias. Dunsterville's reinforcements were considered a prime source of trained men for Persian defences.⁴ British Mesopotamian Headquarters sought to redirect Dunsterforce to South Persia against insurgents rather than allow them to proceed to Hamadan and the Caspian Region.⁵ However, recognizing the critical nature of Dunsterville's

mission, the British ambassador at Tehran, Marling, told London that released German prisoners were helping the Jangalis tribesman in revolt against the shah. He warned that the city of Kasvin, between Enzeli and Hamadan, was in danger of falling to the tribesman unless prompt military action was undertaken. British military force, he urged, should be used to secure the town, thus prompting the retention of Dunsterforce as an entity.⁶ The War Office echoed Marling, telling Tehran and Baghdad to make “every effort” to assist the general.⁷

Nevertheless, bad weather and the Indian Army’s ponderous bureaucracy prevented quick action and delayed the move of the newly arrived troops to Hamadan until the end of May.⁸ Even when enemy action threatened the operational needs of the Allies, continued bureaucratic rivalry between the Imperial and Indian armies prevented timely action. In the case of General Dunsterville, only the loyalty and honour of a single Russian unit prevented the Persian insurgents from gaining a free hand in the area.

This lone unit still loyal to the old regime was a Caucasian Cossack Regiment under the command of Colonel Lazar Bicherakov, an Ossietan Cossack from the North Caucasus. In spring 1918 it was all that prevented Persian insurgents from taking control of the disputed region around the southern end of the Caspian Sea.⁹ On 24 March the Cossacks and British began their march towards Kasvin to prevent the Jangalis from capturing it. The move thwarted the insurgents and brought Dunsterville that much closer to Enzeli, his departure point for Baku.¹⁰ Yet, Dunsterville still had inadequate forces to consolidate any further gains and had to delay his advance for ten weeks.¹¹

At the end of April 1918, it became even more complicated. The Armenians at Baku convinced the city’s Bolshevik leadership that the British could send two armoured cars for the population’s protection. However, the Military Attaché at Tehran, fearful that any aid given to the Armenians would be used against Muslims and have “grave consequences”, strongly advised caution. Consequently, the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) in London caused Dunsterville’s plans to be changed once again. There would be no aid for the Armenians. Moreover, Bicherakov was to advance to Enzeli and gain control of the Caspian fleet, which would then be manned by British sailors.¹² The Eastern Committee fully supported the DMI, but Dunsterville remained seriously short of men to carry out his ever-changing mission.

Competing with Dunsterville was, of course, Marling, who simultaneously complained to London that the paucity of British troops in Northern Persia along the Karmanshah–Hamadan–Kasvin line endangered the British position in general and Allied policy in Persia (see Map 1).¹³ Dunsterville and Marling were each desperate for more British forces, but for different reasons. Dunsterville needed soldiers for his mission to Baku, while Marling needed to hold the Karmanshah–Hamadan–Kasvin line to protect British influence in Persia. Clearly, of all the Allies involved in Russian interventions, the British were suffering more than most from a “welter” of strategic opinions among decision-makers on site and not enough resources to go around. The situation in the Caucasus was made even more chaotic given competition from all of the other British concerns over Russia occurring at the same time, thousands of miles apart.

The Eastern Committee was faced with a conundrum of its own making. It had previously agreed to the holding of the Northern Persian Line while Dunsterville's mission appeared to be stalled. However, if Turkey captured Baku and thereby gained control of the fleet in the port, they could transport troops to the city of Krasnovodsk, directly across the Caspian Sea from Baku. This action would open Central Asia to the Turks and give them access to India through Afghanistan.

The Committee was now surprised that Bicherakov was ready to advance to Enzeli and the Caspian Sea, but that would leave a gap in the Northern Persian line. Only Dunsterville was in a position to fill that gap, but the general wanted to go forward with Bicherakov to achieve his original directive to enter the Caucasus and forestall the Turks by raising local levies.¹⁴ Yet the Committee decided that holding the Karmanshah–Hamadan–Kasvin line was more important.¹⁵ However, just three days later, on 31 May 1918, the Committee once again received contradictory advice from Marling. This time he wanted Dunsterville to proceed with his mission to safeguard the Caspian fleet. Furthermore, he added a possible secondary objective for Dunsterville: the destruction of the Baku oil fields.¹⁶ Consequently, the Committee authorized Dunsterville to proceed with what officers and NCOs he required, but with only the minimal forces that General Sir W. R. Marshall, the General Officer Commander-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Mesopotamia, would allow him.¹⁷ A week later the Committee reversed itself again based on conflicting telegrams from the GOC-in-C, Ambassador Marling and the British Vice-Consul at Baku.¹⁸ The Committee's strategic goal of safeguarding the routes to India eclipsed all others.

Despite the Committee's directions, Dunsterville continued to push operations with the limited means available. Yet he could not advance any faster until his reinforcements caught up with him at Kasvin. These forces were essential before Dunsterville could allow Bicherakov to proceed towards Enzeli to eliminate the danger posed by the Jangalis. And these British reinforcements were making their way slowly on foot from Baghdad with little assistance from the Mesopotamian command.¹⁹ Dunsterforce finally arrived in Kasvin on 20 June 1918, but Dunsterville had not waited.²⁰

Two weeks earlier, on 5 June, the British commander had dispatched a mixed force down the Kasvin–Enzeli road to Menjili. That same day the Eastern Committee approved preparations for this action but caused confusion by adding that they were to be informed before the operation actually commenced.²¹ Time and distance often prevented orders from being followed with much precision, and such was the case here. Despite the Eastern Committee's wishes, on 8 June Dunsterville wired that he had conferred with Armenian leaders in Baku and believed he could take that city with only a small British force as early as 20 June. Dunsterville then said that Bicherakov was proceeding to Enzeli the next day.²²

Meanwhile, the War Office ordered General Marshall to do his utmost to gain control of all shipping on the Caspian Sea, clearly something Dunsterville could accomplish by capturing Enzeli and then going to Baku with his force.²³ Here again is another example of far-removed strategic leadership interfering with tactical decision-makers who had more current and accurate information. Fortunately,

the Committee's decisions did not jeopardize Dunsterville's operations. On 11 June the Committee ordered the War Office to prepare an appreciation of the situation for both the GOC in Mesopotamia and Dunsterville.²⁴ However, this did not have any major effect on Dunsterville's actions. His mixed force quickly overran Menjili on 12 June 1918 and then he pushed on to Enzeli arriving on 27 June.²⁵ Once in Enzeli, Dunsterville conferred with Bolshevik leaders and found that they were now willing to negotiate. Thus, Dunsterville established a firm foothold on the Caspian shores. This was the first step towards British control of that strategically important body of water.²⁶

Surprisingly the general also found that his local ally, Bicherakov, had decided to become a Bolshevik to gain the support of the Caucasian Reds to ease his return to his homeland. Remarkably this decision did not alter his support for the Allied cause. His conversion was widely proclaimed by the Baku Bolsheviks, who offered Bicherakov command of the "Red Army" in the Caucasus, an honour he readily accepted. In light of the Cossack's continued support of the Allied cause, Dunsterville allowed the British liaison officers who had accompanied the Russian, including Canadian Major H. K. Newcombe, to remain with Bicherakov, as well as a squadron of armoured cars.²⁷ Dunsterville was still without sufficient force to secure Baku or even the road from Enzeli back to Kasvin, but, in a bizarre fashion, he was now in general control of the area.

Once again the strategic planners in London endorsed the operation after the fact. On 28 June the War Office told the GOC-in-C that, while permanent occupation of Baku was not envisioned, Dunsterville was to gain control of the Caspian Sea by capturing the fleet at Baku and destroying oil reservoirs, pumping capacity and the pipeline in that city.²⁸ Dunsterville's perseverance began to pay off, but he still lacked sufficient resources to accomplish his aim. However, assistance was at hand.

The general had determined that the situation in Baku was not as dire as previously reported. With the right force he could defend the port, save the oil and control the Caspian fleet.²⁹ All Dunsterville had to do was indicate exactly what he needed. Consequently, if surprisingly, General Marshall found an infantry brigade and artillery brigade to support Dunsterville, but the units would take some time to reach Enzeli.³⁰ The force was what Dunsterville had requested a month earlier, at which time it was not available. However, British strategists determined that they also needed information from Krasnovodsk located on the eastern Caspian shore. To meet this additional task Dunsterville ordered a small party to that city to report on whether a British force would be welcome and whether it could be supported locally.³¹ Other resources were also needed to control the Caspian Sea.

The Eastern Committee determined that British naval personnel were necessary to handle the shipping and obtain mastery of the Caspian.³² The fallback strategy was to hold the Trans-Caspian area if Baku could not be defended. However, the War Office and Eastern Committee were beginning to doubt Dunsterville's ability to carry out his mission. It was thought that he was drifting into "a policy of inactivity" because of a misplaced confidence in Bicherakov. Both organizations urged Dunsterville to take more decisive action against the Reds in Enzeli and to send as large a force to Baku as he saw fit.³³

Obviously surprised if not discomfited by this lack of confidence, Dunsterville defended himself, pointing out curtly that in June these same superiors in London had expressly prohibited him from sending British troops to Baku. Even if permitted at the time, it would have meant attacking the Bolsheviks who were then in control. However, he went on to underscore the fact that the simple presence of Bicherakov in July had given the Allies a foothold in the area. The Caspian fleet was now loyal to the Russian Cossacks and not the Reds. This was an advantage for Dunsterville, but the Bolshevik government at Baku was still against having any British troops in the city, despite the wishes of the majority of the populace.³⁴ With Bicherakov actually engaged with the Baku Bolsheviks, there was some deterrent to the Turkish army's advance on the city.

Yet the greatest safeguard to Baku was the disagreement between the Turkish and German governments over the fate of the port. A Turkish force had advanced towards Baku intending on capturing it, but the Germans wished to preserve the city and have it remain a Russian possession.³⁵ As a Russian city, it would be under the influence of Germany and the oil would be available to the German war machine.³⁶ The Germans forbade the Turks from advancing, resulting in the Turkish general's resignation.³⁷

Consequently, Turkish military action was delayed in the Caucasus allowing Entente forces and local allies vital time to improve their positions vis-à-vis the Turks.³⁸ Finally, General Marshall was able to assemble the military force that Dunsterville had been requesting.³⁹ Even with the approval of sufficient force to defend Baku, Dunsterville was still stymied by the Bolshevik objection to any British troops landing at the city. As a result of seeing no positive action, the War Office queried the GOC-in-C whether a more aggressive officer should replace Dunsterville.⁴⁰ Major-General H. D. Fanshawe, acting for General Marshall, backed Dunsterville.⁴¹ Only then did the Eastern Committee agree to leave Dunsterville in command.⁴²

While this interrupting exchange was occurring, Baku's government suffered a *coup d'état* and the new administration begged for British military aid. No time was wasted and transports were immediately sent to Enzeli to pick up British troops for the defence of the city.⁴³ And so, at the very end of July 1918, the British were only starting intervention in the Caucasus, hoping to stymie further Turkish advances. Simultaneously, all Allied parties were trying to arrange their activities in both North Russia and Siberia. It was a confusing and mutually competitive scenario for diplomats and strategists alike.

Even before the US president finally agreed to participation militarily in Russia, Britain had sought help from others. On 10 July, the War Cabinet had discussed General Poole's request for an additional British battalion for Murmansk as well as a query as to whether forces were available for immediate deployment to Vladivostok.⁴⁴ Two days later, the Ministers dispatched the Middlesex Regiment from Hong Kong. They then asked Canada for troops for both North Russia and Siberia.⁴⁵

The British request for Canadian aid was not a surprise to Sir Robert Borden that July, since the problems of the Eastern Front and the reluctance of Woodrow

Wilson to participate had been items of discussion at the IWC at its session begun the month before. On Borden's arrival in London he had received a copy of General Knox's evaluation of the intervention's necessity.⁴⁶ Asking for Canadian participation was to be expected given the manpower shortage and Knox's assessment, but it could not be considered a foregone conclusion that Canada would agree.

Since the bloody battles of 1917, Borden had been an outspoken critic of the British high command.⁴⁷ Like Lloyd George, he saw the bloodletting on the Western Front as a waste of manpower without strategic gain. On 24 June Sir Robert had expressed to the IWC the need for "allied intervention and not Japanese intervention".⁴⁸ Borden pushed his views even further a couple of days later, saying, "that our real object was to endeavour to induce the anti-German elements in Russia to unite in opposing Germany. It was quite clear that the Whites could not make any headway without Allied involvement."⁴⁹ There is no doubt that Borden supported an Allied intervention and backed Lloyd George against Haig who was insisting that every soldier be sent to the Western Front.

Lloyd George's appeal to Canada for troops for the Siberian operation was a follow-on to a War Office request a few days earlier, and gave substance to his musing in a secret War Cabinet meeting earlier in May. At that meeting, Lloyd George had suggested that since the United States appeared loath to become directly involved in Siberia that perhaps Canadians could substitute for them.⁵⁰ As for the War Office appeal, authorities there had long thought that they would have better luck getting Canadians; they had requested a Canadian contingent in Siberia well before the United States had formerly agreed to participate.⁵¹

On 9 July, the War Office Chief of Staff asked Newton W. Rowell, president of the Canadian Privy Council, to intercede with Borden to obtain Canadian troops for Siberia. The previous week, Major General Thomas Bridges, the British Military Attaché in Washington, had broached the same subject to Canadian Ministers and General Staff in Ottawa.⁵² On 12 July, S. C. (Sydney) Mewburn, the Canadian Minister of Militia, passed Britain's formal request for military aid for Siberia to Borden.⁵³ Britain not only asked for a full brigade, but also wished that Canada would keep the request secret while negotiations with other Allies continued.⁵⁴ The secret appeal to Canada makes it clear that Britain had already decided to intervene in Siberia with or without the help of the United States.⁵⁵ But to do so it needed the senior Dominion's aid.

On the same day as his letter to Borden, Mewburn wired General W. G. Gwatkin, the long-suffering but conscientious Canadian Chief of the General Staff, to have the Militia Council start to organize the contingent and to try to raise the brigade with volunteers. The Minister explained that the British battalion being sent from Hong Kong to Vladivostok would be incorporated into the Canadian contingent and that the overall command would be Canadian. Mewburn also asked for nominations of the brigade commander.⁵⁶ Meanwhile in London, the British government was being its often-insensitive self in dealing with Dominion governments.

Britain and Canada – Request for Troops

In seeking the troops for the Siberian operation, the British administration ignored diplomatic niceties when communicating with the self-governing Dominions and, in particular, with Canada. On 20 July, W. H. Long, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, took an unusual step and communicated directly with the Governor General of Canada, laying out the requirements for the Canadian contingent and stipulating that all save one infantry battalion coming from Hong Kong would be Canadian units. Long then said Canada would be expected to furnish a third battalion to replace the British regiment.⁵⁷

London's communication to Ottawa was sent without consulting Borden or Mewburn, both of whom were in London attending the IWC meetings at the time. One would have thought that this late in the war, Imperial authorities would have learned how to treat the casualty-hardened Dominion's views of its use of its human and material resources. But London evidently still considered the Canadian Governor General as simply one of their agents and Canada as a source of manpower awaiting the call. Borden was sufficiently incensed that he promptly ordered that "no reply shall be sent to the British government's message except through me".⁵⁸ At the 27 July IWC, the British CIGS quickly acknowledged that the Canadian Militia Minister did not like being bypassed and disliked the Siberian project even more, but Borden downplayed the contretemps once he was satisfied he was being properly recognized as the national authority. Indeed, he became quite compliant, perhaps because the British were wise enough to also put a Canadian in command. Whatever the case, Sir Robert did not wish to oppose the matter, and he agreed that Canada would send three battalions and some engineers to Siberia.⁵⁹ Discussion then continued on what transportation was necessary. And once again, Lloyd George was astute enough to suggest that Sir Robert Borden take charge of the transport on behalf of the IWC. He also ordered his War Office and the Ministry of Shipping to cooperate with the Canadian prime minister.⁶⁰ Borden queried whether there would be diplomatic problems if Canadian troops arrived in Vladivostok before US–Japanese discussions were completed. He was assured that at least one British battalion would already be in place regardless, and that it was expected that the Japanese would have published their declaration of disinterestedness in acquiring Russian territory or interfering in Russian internal affairs before any Canadians arrived.⁶¹ All this seemed to satisfy Borden.

Raising Canadian Contingents for Russia

Now that the Canadian effort had grown to this large two-front force involvement, it required two separate planning operations, one to fulfil the promise of instructors and artillery units for North Russia and one to organize and transport a fully self-sustaining brigade for Siberia. The administration of the Canadian North Russia contingent became the responsibility of the Minister of Overseas Forces of Canada in London while the Siberian expedition became the purview of Militia Headquarters in Ottawa. However, it was a complicated process, because much of

the Siberian command staff and the commander himself were first assembled in London under the control of Canadian Headquarters there simply because they were drawn from and had experience of the Western Front.

Brigadier General (BGen) J. H. Elmsley, a Canadian officer with much service in France and Flanders, was selected as the commander of the force. On 16 August he petitioned Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Turner, the Canadian CGS in London, for the stand-up of an independent command for Siberia separate from the Canadian Overseas Forces.⁶² These two actions indicated the intricate administration involved in instituting the Canadian Siberian force. It all took time in a crisis that allowed precious little of it.

Borden further complicated matters when he told his Cabinet that the United States and Britain were sending economic commissions with their military contingents and that he “considered it essential that Canada should take like action”.⁶³ Clearly national self-interest, especially economic self-interest, became an important factor in organizing a military expedition even for a small Ally such as Canada. Borden did not want Canada to be left behind in any possible financial advantage that might be available, especially when he became aware that both Britain and the United States were establishing economic commissions in the Russian territory.⁶⁴

While the Canadians were organizing their contingent that summer, the United States abruptly decided to send troops to Siberia, which led to some uncertainty with respect to the Canadian deliberations. The Canadian Cabinet asked what the Canadian contingent’s relationship would be with the Japanese-US force. Ministers were concerned about Canadians having a combat role, since the United States had said that it was going strictly to assist the Czechs and to guard military stores.⁶⁵ For Canada, the Siberian contingent was also politically risky since it involved the raising of a new brigade for a theatre of war that had not had Canadians fighting in it in any large and organized force. As a new unit, it required that Ottawa pass an Order-in-Council to make the new brigade a legal entity and, on 7 August, Borden had asked that this be expedited.⁶⁶ As in any political move, this would take time.

Meanwhile, the establishment of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Siberia, as it was officially termed, proceeded apace. For the public consumption of war-weary Canadians, the stated aim of the expedition was to relieve Czech forces in Vladivostok to allow them to support their comrades in the Siberian interior. In this way the Dominion force would help the Czechs, along with Japanese troops, re-establish the Eastern Front, while having less risk of Canadian casualties than on the Western Front.⁶⁷ Obviously, Ottawa’s authorities viewed the US public declaration as the *raison d’être* for the expedition. However, an underlying aim to re-establish the Eastern Front existed for both the British and French, but not necessarily using Canadians.

Once again, individual national goals were not shared with Allies and the collective aim was not made plain to all. Moreover, the Canadian Militia Minister was concerned with how the raising of a new force would be viewed by the Canadian public in light of the bitter conscription crisis that was still tearing at the national

fabric. He told Borden that the force should be made up of volunteers, if possible, to allay any effect on reinforcements for France. He was also concerned over the role the Canadians would play and feared that if Japan did not send a strong force, Canada's action would have a negligible effect.⁶⁸ In the end, the employment of the Canadians ultimately rested upon negotiations between Britain and the United States with regards to working with the Japanese.⁶⁹

Borden tried to allay Mewburn's fears by telling him that sending the Siberian force would stand Canada in great stead in the eyes of the international community and give the nation a commercial foothold in an expanding and rapidly developing country. With the brigade at such a great distance from Canada, the Prime Minister also believed that Elmsley should be trusted to make decisions in the best national interests of Canadian troops. Notwithstanding the confidence placed in Elmsley, Borden also made it clear to the War Office that Canada would not deploy its soldiers deep into Siberia without knowing in advance all the facts concerning the situation.⁷⁰ Clearly, this was an improbability.

Despite the lack of definite military aims for the Canadian contingent, BGen Elmsley was confirmed as commander of the British contingent. At the behest of Canada, the War Office agreed to Elmsley's promotion to Major-General, but went one step further and made the promotion under Imperial authority since he would be in overall command of all British forces in Siberia.⁷¹ However, therein lay a potential problem of serving two masters even before any Canadians set foot in Russia. And that was not all.

In Siberia Alfred Knox, now a Major-General, was appointed as head of the British Military Mission attached to the Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force with Japanese General Otani as Commander-in-Chief.⁷² Although Knox's orders clearly stated that Elmsley was in command of the Imperial contingent and Knox's duties were as liaison between the War Office and the High Command, the potential for disagreements existed from the beginning. Nevertheless, these arrangements continued to progress. The minutiae of that process delayed the dispatch of the troops, but were a necessary adjunct to ensure that Canada controlled, as much as possible, the employment of its own citizen-soldiers. Nor was delay restricted to Canada, as the United States was still working out the details of its own participation while both the British and Japanese already had troops in place.

The back-and-forth negotiations over Siberia with the Japanese and the unilateral and sudden declaration by President Wilson in mid-July had not only caught the Allies by surprise, but, in addition, had not allowed any preparation time for the US Army. Although by 25 July the French ambassador in Washington had informed Paris that the United States had designated units for Siberia and that these forces were in the process of embarking for Russia, in fact that was not the case.⁷³ This was another example of one Ally not being forthright with another.

At the time, President Wilson was still reluctant to participate in Siberia despite his public statement. Long and tough negotiations with the Japanese over the number of troops to be provided from each nation presented the United States with the opportunity to change their mind. Japan's sudden public revelation on 2 August that a joint intervention was agreed forced President Wilson either

to act or to renege on the Siberian operation. Apparently he decided in early August to act, for only after the publication of the Japanese announcement did the War Department appoint Major-General William S. Graves as the US Siberian Expeditionary Force Commander. This was the final step, but it was the first signal for the US military to commence organizing the US contingent. Only on that date did the War Department order the commander in the Philippines to despatch US troops to Vladivostok. On the same day, General Graves received a copy of the president's 17 July aide-memoire as his only operational orders.⁷⁴

Despite stalling the intervention for months and then abruptly and unilaterally taking over the political direction of the operation, President Wilson had not prepared any military contingents until forced to do so. No detailed political or military orders had been prepared for the US commander. Only the ambiguous aide-memoire personally written by Wilson gave any direction. Unfortunately, Graves took this as all that was necessary. For the duration of the Siberian operation Graves never sought clarification nor requested any update from Washington as the situation changed.

This proved disastrous for Allied cooperation in Siberia and perpetuated the fact that individual national agendas interfered with the stated joint Allied goals of stabilizing the region. The basic US undercurrent appears to have been one of non-interference in Russian internal politics to the point of preventing other Allies from acting against Bolshevik violence. Fortunately for the Canadians, their government had worked out detailed arrangements with the British War Office before any Canadian troops arrived in Siberia. Similarly, Canada clarified the details of the North Russia intervention with the British authorities since the Canadians would be under Imperial direction there.

The North Russia contingent was less of a problem for Canada, since the Canadians being sent to Murmansk and Archangel were already available at depots in England and had volunteered for fighting in Europe. Having received permission from Borden, the Minister for Overseas Military Forces, Kemp, formally approved the organization of the Canadian contingent to North Russia.⁷⁵ The artillery units chosen for Archangel were the 67th and 68th batteries and Headquarters 16th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery.⁷⁶ The additional training contingent of 18 officers and 70 NCOs under the command of Lieutenant Colonel J. E. Leckie was also assembled for embarkation to Murmansk.⁷⁷

For events then unfolding over the previous several months in North Russia, the identification and assembly of the Canadian contingent was timely. The Supreme War Council's May 1918 direction to have the Second Czech Corps at Omsk travel to Murmansk and Archangel for embarkation instigated the need to control Archangel. But the decision to do so had been taken on 3 June at Versailles without reference to the British Foreign Office.⁷⁸ If somewhat surprised, nevertheless the British War Cabinet directed Major-General Poole to take command of Allied forces in North Russia and to hold the two ports of Murmansk and Archangel for the reception of the Czechs. Despite Cecil's contention in April that seizing the Northern ports was not in Allied plans, and his later complaints about not being informed, changes in policy occurred rapidly in the face of changing Allied needs.

While the Allies were preparing to control North Russia, thousands of miles away to the south, Dunsterforce was proceeding to Baku to defend that port from a Turkish assault. On 4 August, the reconnaissance team sent to Baku by Dunsterville reported that the whole British force should be dispatched there immediately.⁷⁹ This was done post haste. On 17 August Dunsterville arrived at Baku with a mixed force numbering just over 1000 men comprised of British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African troops.⁸⁰ Now he had to defend it with inadequate numbers of trained men and unreliable local Armenian troops.

Unbeknownst to the Allied commander, the argument over who should control Baku still continued. The dispute between the Turks and Germans slowed their operational plans for a time. As late as 22 August, the German High Command told their Commander in the Caucasus that the Bolsheviks had given the Germans permission to drive the British from Baku. The Germans would then be allowed to occupy the town provided it remained under Russian administration and the Turks pulled back to a designated frontier.⁸¹ Even enemy allies had self-interest conflicts that prevented timely and effective tactical action. In this case, it was the German desire to have the Russians retain control of Baku to ensure that Germany could have a ready supply of oil.

Despite the diplomatic delay in the Turkish assault, Dunsterville's situation was precarious. He had too few reliable troops to secure Baku and he could not control the Baku fleet in order to guarantee command of the Caspian Sea for the British. The local government disputed every detail of every plan, but was powerless to compel the local Armenian and Russian levies to fight. This prevented the British commander from carrying out his strategic aims of controlling the Caspian and keeping the oil supply and its production out of enemy hands.⁸² When Dunsterville and Commodore David T. Norris, the British naval commander on the Caspian, approached the Baku government to take control of the shipping, both the government and the fleet refused.⁸³ Without British naval personnel, control of the shipping depended on British persuasion and local Russian agreement, which was not readily forthcoming. This situation worried the War Cabinet, and the Eastern Committee was told that seizing the Russian ships without adequate Royal Navy sailors to control the vessels would end the British ability to transport anything in the Trans-Caspian area by sea. British naval personnel were proceeding to Enzeli to help alleviate the situation.⁸⁴ However, without a reinforced British presence, the retention of Baku was very problematic. This became nearly impossible when Marshall reacted to reported Turkish advances towards the Hamadan–Enzeli road.

Intelligence indicated that a Turkish Corps was set to cut the British lines of communication to Enzeli and thereby prevent further reinforcement of Baku or the British control of the Caspian. In reaction to this, General Marshall halted the transfer of any troops to Enzeli on the 27 and 28 August, thus isolating Dunsterville and sealing his fate.⁸⁵ Dunsterville was forced to defend Baku with even less resources than expected. Despite these shortcomings, the British were able to delay the capture of Baku for over two vital weeks. Although the Armenians fled at the first attack, British discipline allowed for orderly retreats.⁸⁶ In this way, Dunsterville held on until mid-September 1918.

The inability to stem the Turkish advances, despite heroic efforts by the British and large losses on the enemy side, prodded Dunsterville to vent his frustration to the War Office, arguing that the operation to Baku should not have been undertaken if it was not to be supported with enough troops and supplies.⁸⁷ The general failed to recall that it was he who had pressed for the British occupation and defence of the Caspian port. His superiors in London did not let him forget. In reply, the War Office sent a detailed summary of events that had led to the Baku operation.⁸⁸

In the next several days, the Eastern Committee had to evaluate all the conflicting information from three sources: Dunsterville, Marshall and the Commander-in-Chief of India, Sir C. C. Munro. They concluded that Dunsterville should be supported and Baku held if possible, thus contradicting Marshall's opinion.⁸⁹ This decision was wired immediately to Baghdad.⁹⁰ Regardless of the clashing opinions of Dunsterville, Marshall and Munro, support was not forthcoming fast enough to save the port. In fact, on 1 September Marshall ordered Dunsterville to evacuate Baku and told him that no reinforcements would be sent. In addition, the GOC-in-C urged the destruction of the oil fields as long as the British troops were not compromised.⁹¹

Despite Marshall's orders (which may not have been received in time), Dunsterville harangued the Baku government; the city, he said, could not be held unless the local troops cooperated. But the Baku leadership did nothing and yet demanded that the British send sufficient force to save the port.⁹² General Marshall's earlier evacuation orders had made this relief impossible, and he repeated them on 9 September. The same day that Marshall resent his orders he received three telegrams from Dunsterville. The commander said that the tactical situation had stabilized, that he was expecting reinforcements from Bicherakov and that the Turks had sustained heavy casualties during the most recent fighting. Marshall then sharply condemned Dunsterville for not carrying out his orders to abandon Baku.⁹³ Adding to this imbroglio, the C-in-C of India was simultaneously advising the War Office that he did not agree with Marshall's orders for withdrawal nor that all of Northern Persia was threatened by the Turks. He urged the reinforcement of Enzeli to protect British control of the Caspian as a strategic necessity.⁹⁴ Notwithstanding Monro's view and Marshall's orders, Dunsterville telegraphed that evacuation was impossible as long as the local government controlled the armed ships in and around Baku.⁹⁵ However, this all became moot when the Turks launched their final assault.

The Turks attacked in the pre-dawn of 14 September, but Dunsterville had been warned and had stationed reliable troops at all vulnerable points. Nevertheless, the attack was too large and the fighting continued until sunset when Dunsterville put into action his plan for pulling out all the British troops.⁹⁶ Fighting a disciplined rear-guard battle, Dunsterforce retreated to the docks and the entire force boarded three waiting ships.⁹⁷ The ships escaped in total darkness and reached Enzeli the next day.⁹⁸

As soon as Dunsterville's retreat became known, the GOC-in-C, General Marshall, fired him and broke up his force, appointing General W. M. Thomson

to command in Northwest Persia.⁹⁹ This ended Dunsterforce and British attempts to enter the Caucasus. Yet Dunsterville had held up the Turkish advance for six vital weeks, preventing them from crossing the Caspian and moving towards India. Fortunately for the Allies, all this happened after the German Army had experienced its stunning reverses in August 1918.

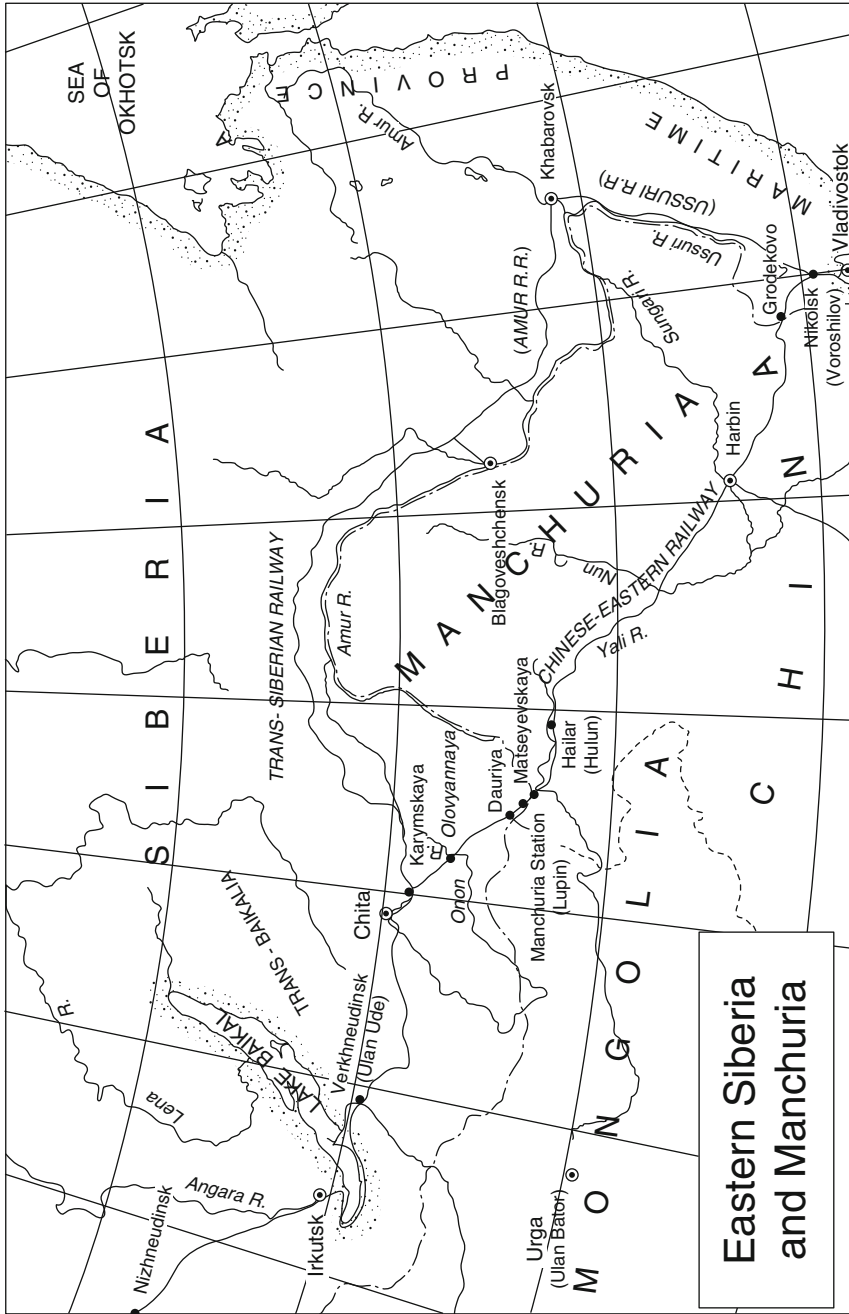
Nonetheless, Marshall's actions had endangered Britain's strategic aim of preventing the Turks from approaching India. Only the Turks' failure to press their advantage prevented a British disaster. Regardless of the Turkish success at Baku, the British remained committed to defending the routes to the subcontinent and established contacts with anti-Bolshevik groups in the Trans-Caspia, which increased in importance with the retreat from Baku. Even with the set-backs in the Caucasus, other parts of Russia demanded British participation in Allied military engagements at this same time.

Siberia and Military Intervention

While the North of Russia and the Caucasus were suffering military action that involved Allied intervention, Siberia also saw British troops working with anti-Bolsheviks against the Red Army there. As noted previously, the 25th Middlesex Regiment arrived in Vladivostok on 3 August 1918. Two days later, their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel John Ward, was told that a critical battle on the Usseri Cossack front had recently been fought, with the Reds advancing 12 miles, threatening to cut railway communication with Czech forces at Irkutsk.¹⁰⁰ London now granted permission for the battalion to go inland to aid the Usseri Cossacks.¹⁰¹ The Middlesex moved up the railway line to assist the Czechs and Cossacks, but before Ward could initiate his attack, British political staff in Vladivostok halted any offensive action.¹⁰² As a result, on 20 August 1918 the Allied force retreated to Sviagina, 90 miles north of Nikolsk.¹⁰³

Two days previously, General Otani of the Imperial Japanese Army, assumed over-all command of Allied forces in Siberia and established his headquarters at Nikolsk.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the British political advisors, he showed no hesitation to get involved. He hurried his Division forward and deployed behind the Czechs and the joint British-French detachment, the French having arrived there a few days earlier.¹⁰⁵ On 26 August, the Allied force drove the Bolsheviks back decisively. This assault resulted in the disintegration of the Reds in the area. The Allies thus gained control of all of Siberia east of Lake Baikal.¹⁰⁶

Regardless of this tactical success, Japan was of a similar mind as Britain that its forces were inadequate for the job. In light of the danger that any delay would cause to the Czech Legion and the possible loss of prestige to the Allies in the event of failure, the Japanese government decided to send an additional 10,000 troops to the Russian maritime province. Tokyo also informed the Allies that it intended to send an additional division (12,000 men) to the Trans-Baikal region to capture Chita and rout the combined Austro-German prisoner and Bolshevik 30,000-man army that was pressing the 7000 Czechs in that area.¹⁰⁷ Japan also announced the establishment of its own economic commission similar to those



**Eastern Siberia
and Manchuria**

Map 2 Eastern Siberia and Manchuria 1919
Source: Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921 Vol. I*, 97. Renewed PUP reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

created by Britain, the United States and Canada.¹⁰⁸ And so, even before the United States had despatched its part of the Allied contingent or before the bulk of the British or French contingents had arrived, the Japanese had increased their numbers beyond all other countries' proportions, indicating that it was quite prepared to follow its own agenda regardless of other Allies' wishes. And some of those Allies made their own contribution to future misunderstandings.

On 10 August the British appointed a High Commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot, to Vladivostok to oversee the political aspects of the intervention.¹⁰⁹ In making this appointment public, Britain pronounced Eliot the supreme British representative in Siberia for all things except military and naval matters.¹¹⁰ In the wake of this appointment, the French declared their own general officer, General Maurice Janin, as the Commander-in-Chief of Czechoslovak forces and commander of the French contingent. He came with his own set of instructions quite different from those of his Allies.¹¹¹

The stage was set for full intervention in Siberia and North Russia. Cooperation was supposedly the public order of the day, but it was made almost impossible because of the different national objectives given to each commander. None of this augured well for Allied cooperative success anywhere in Russia.

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3. Dunsterville, 60–1, 66–7.
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6. Marling to FO, Telegram B.58, Tehran, 25 March 1918 PRO Cab 27/25/E.C. 30.
7. DMI to Military Attaché, Telegram 55458, London, 31 March 1918, PRO Cab 27/25/E.C.59.
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9. Dunsterville, 21 and Dunsterville to Marling, Telegram G 129, Marling to FO, Telegram 262, Tehran, 30 March 1918 PRO Cab 27/25/E.C.40.
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15. WCEC Minutes 10, 28 May 1918 PRO Cab 27/24 and WO to GOC Mesopotamia, Telegram 59064, London, 27 May 1918 PRO Cab 27/27/E.C. 416.
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20. Warden, diary, 18 to 20 June 1918 in *Warden Diary*; Dunsterville, 102 and 148; Murray, 383.
21. Dunsterville, 157 and WCEC Minutes 12, 5 June 1918 PRO Cab 27/24.
22. Dunsterville to GOC Mesopotamia repeated to WO, Telegram G. 744, Kasvin, 8 June 1918 PRO Cab 27/27/E.C. 496.
23. WO to GOC Mesopotamia, Telegram 59567, London, 4 June 1918 PRO Cab 27/27/E.C. 480.
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25. G.O.C in C. Mesopotamia to War Office, Telegram X.9813, Baghdad, undated but continuation of Telegram X. 9788 25 June 1918 PRO Cab 27/28/E.C. 642.
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27. Murray, CDQ Vol. VIII, 385. Murray notes that Newcombe's remaining with Bicherakov meant that the major was the only Canadian soldier to ever see service with the Soviet forces.
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30. GOC-in-C Mesopotamia to WO, Telegram X.9987, Baghdad, 4 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/28/E.C. 715.
31. WO to GOC-in-C Mesopotamia, Telegram 61450, London, 2 July 1918, GOC-in-C Mesopotamia to WO, Telegram X.9897, Baghdad, 30 June 1918 PRO Cab 27/28/E.C. 696.
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33. WCEC Minutes 20, 15 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/24 and WO to GOC Mesopotamia, Telegram 62323, London, 15 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/29/E.C. 822.
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35. GOC-in-C Mesopotamia to WO, Telegram X.398, Baghdad, 19 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/29/E.C.869 and GOC Mesopotamia to D.M.I., Telegram X.434 M, Baghdad, 20 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/29/E.C.876.
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39. WO to GOC-in-C Mesopotamia, Telegram 62635, London, 20 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/29/E.C.879.
40. WO to GOC-in-C Mesopotamia, Telegram 62829, London, 23 July 1918 PRO Cab 27/29/E.C.898.
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45. WC Minutes 443, 10 July 1918 PRO Cab 23/7; WC Minutes 445, 15 July 1918 PRO Cab 23; Lloyd George to Reading, Telegram 4473, London, 18 July 1918 PRO FO 371/3319/125173; Cubitt to Secretary, OMFC, letter 0149/5122. (S.D.2), London, 12 July 1918 *LAC MG 27 II D9 Volume 159 File R-25 – Russia – North 1918–1919*.
46. Smith, 867.
47. WC Minutes X-13, 14 June 1918 PRO Cab 23/17.
48. IWC Minutes 19B, 24 June 1918 PRO Cab 23/44A.
49. IWC Minutes 20A, 26 June 1918 PRO Cab 23/44A.
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66. Borden to Acting Prime Minister White, telegram, London, 7 August 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56145.
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7

Disaster for the Misunderstood – Anti-Bolshevik Support in North Russia, August–November 1918

The earlier part of 1918 witnessed an interesting interplay between the ideas behind Allied intervention and its relationship to the Bolshevik and the anti-Bolshevik forces then contending for supremacy in Russia. This interplay only made the course of events even more complicated and confused, especially in North Russia. The intensity of the fighting on the Western Front through the spring and summer of 1918 did not alter the national goals of the individual Allies with respect to Russia. In fact, Russia retained its importance to the Allies insofar as what the Eastern Front could do to prevent German reinforcements from being sent to Western Europe. In August 1918 the arrival of Allied military forces in North Russia and Siberia marked the resumption of military action in the east and coincided with a major breakthrough against the German forces on the Western Front. The creation of alternate Russian governments in the North and Trans-Caspia in opposition to the Bolsheviks, as well as Allied control of Vladivostok, encouraged the Entente. Nonetheless, masked national agendas remained paramount. Military needs overrode any Allied good-will statements given to the Whites. As August proceeded into September, it was obvious that the Entente was winning the war. In turn, the sudden success only heightened the tendency of each partner to concentrate on achieving the best possible position when peace came.

National objectives worked at cross-purposes. While the French saw control of Archangel as a means to have the Czechs exit Russia for the Western Front, the British saw this Northern port as a gateway for Allied forces to link up with the Japanese in Siberia.¹ The United States still objected to any military expansion and considered the Northern operation as simply a port defence to help the Russians stabilize their internal political situation against a German threat.

In late spring 1918 things were highly volatile on the Western Front, as they were in Russia. The Bolshevik leadership feared an Allied incursion. Ever-paranoid because it threatened his power and ideology, Lenin articulated his assessment of the intervention in a wire to Murmansk as an attempt “to link up with the Czechoslovaks and, if successful, with the Japanese, in order to crush the worker-peasant government and establish the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie”.²

This was followed by diplomatic protests from Chicherin and more vitriolic speeches by Lenin, which only augured more confrontation. The Soviets had

demanded that foreign troops be removed from Russian soil. The initial reaction to the presence of Allied military in Russia was through diplomatic notes, since the Reds were in no position to use force. Yet the Bolshevik attitude towards the US presence was different from that towards the British or the French. On 14 June 1918, Chicherin sent US Consul-General Dewitt Poole a protest note over the presence of US warships in Russian ports. However, he softened the objections, expressing confidence in the US government's friendly attitude towards Russia.³ Less amicable was the ultimatum he presented to Lockhart on 15 June over the British landings at Murmansk. He demanded that they withdraw immediately.⁴ Lockhart advised his government to ignore the protest and to act "without delay".⁵ Chicherin's threats had no effect on the Allies' actions.

The Bolsheviks' Council of Commissars considered declaring war on the Allies, but Lenin was able to cool Trotsky's demand.⁶ Still, the Soviets recognized the conundrum that a separate and hostile government in Russia's North presented to the revolution.⁷ On 20 June, Chicherin warned the Petrograd Bolsheviks of Murmansk's rejection of Moscow's authority, demanding Red forces be sent to repel the British landings in order to restrain the local Soviet and to take over the defence of Murmansk.⁸ The Sovnarkom quickly agreed and directed that 2000 men be provided for Murmansk's defence.⁹ Although Trotsky, as Commissar for War, opposed supplying men that would not be under his control, Chicherin prevailed.¹⁰ The troops were put under S. P. Natsarenus, the commissar responsible for Murmansk. Instead of waiting for the complete force to assemble, he sent small groups forward to take control of both the railway and the port.¹¹ This proved disastrous for the Bolsheviks.

On the Allied side, General Maynard in Murmansk was warned that the Reds intended to eject the Allies. Moscow was determined to defend the port and the coast, and was sending two divisions of Red Guards there.¹² Forewarned was forearmed. On 27 June, Maynard set off down the line to Kandalaksha, 140 miles from Murmansk. There he met the first contingent of Red Guards where he bluffed their commander, Spiridornoff, into surrendering.¹³

Having directed that the Bolsheviks be held in place, Maynard continued to Kem, a further 160 miles south, where the bulk of the Soviet forces were waiting. At Kem, the Allies had a mixed force of 500, an armoured train and a naval gun to control the only bridge spanning the river, which carried the rail line to Murmansk. The intimidated Red commander willingly complied with Maynard's orders to remain at Kem.¹⁴ On his return to Kandalaksha, Maynard ordered Spiridornoff's force to be disarmed and sent back south. He then directed reinforcements from Murmansk to man the two towns.¹⁵ In addition, HMS *Attentive* anchored at Kem to control the port and the railway bridge, ensuring no unauthorized trains passed north.¹⁶ Without casualties on either side, Maynard cleared the Murman region of Red forces and established British hegemony 300 miles south of the port.

This situation encouraged Francis Lindley to wire London that there was now an opportunity of enrolling large numbers of North Russians to join the Allies provided British forces were adequately reinforced.¹⁷ Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the

Admiralty, supported this idea at the Supreme War Council in Paris and sought approval of General Poole's request for 5000 additional men to land at Archangel. With a force that size, Poole believed he could rally over 100,000 Russians to the Allies and have enough force to reach Vologda.¹⁸ From there he could connect with the Czech Legion in Siberia.

But this was a forlorn hope. The Western Front was still the primary battlefield and the Germans had launched their fourth spring offensive at the beginning of June. Although halted in mid-June, the threat of continuing German attacks meant no substantial number of men could be spared for the sideshow of North Russia.¹⁹ Fortunately, the Bolsheviks were not aware of the Allied problems. Natsarenus, only hearing of the Red disaster six days after it occurred, panicked.²⁰ In despair, he told Moscow that 15,000 Allied troops had occupied the northern part of the Murmansk Railway and would probably move south of Kem soon.²¹ But Moscow was more preoccupied with internal troubles.

On 6 July 1918 two far-left Social Revolutionaries (SR) assassinated the German Ambassador, Count Mirbach, hoping to provoke Germany to restart the war.²² On the same day, Boris Savinkov, leader of a right-wing faction of the SRs, initiated a revolt against the Bolsheviks in Yaroslavl. Although Lenin quickly put down the attempted coup in Moscow, the revolt at Yaroslavl proved more difficult to quell. Yaroslavl was only a few miles south of Vologda and Savinkov's success would give control of the railway centre to the Whites allowing free passage of Allied forces from Archangel to Siberia.

But the revolt began prematurely based on French assurance that Allied intervention had already been decided.²³ It was not true, and the precipitous revolt predated Allied landings at Archangel by almost a month.²⁴ The premature rebellion not only harmed the White Russian resistance, it caused further deterioration in diplomatic relations between Lenin's government and the Allies. The Soviets feared that the Allied ambassadors would incite White rebels to seize Vologda while awaiting reinforcements from the Northern ports. The Soviets had good reason to fear the ambassadors' actions. The day after the Yaroslavl rebellion started, Francis telegraphed Washington (a telegram which never arrived) urging the Archangel landings be made earlier than planned.²⁵ British Rear Admiral Kemp said that it appeared that the Vologda ambassadors wished to overthrow the Bolshevik government.²⁶ Lindley also worried that General Poole's delay of the Archangel attack to the beginning of August was too long. He believed that the outbreak of civil war required immediate Allied intervention.²⁷ On 13 July, the British Consul at Archangel wired London that the Whites at Vologda were ready to help Savinkov and that all the Allied ambassadors had sent personal telegrams to their governments urging immediate action.²⁸ Meanwhile, in the face of Savinkov's revolt, Chicherin urged the foreign ambassadors to come to Moscow for their own safety. Francis, on behalf of the diplomatic community, refused.²⁹ Although the Soviet Foreign Minister remained conciliatory, he sent the thuggish Karl Radek to bring the ambassadors to Moscow.

Commissar Radek's presence did nothing to improve relations between the ambassadors and Moscow. He used all means short of force to convince the Allied

diplomats to quit Vologda. Failing to do so, he left on 17 July.³⁰ However, one of Radek's ploys – surrounding all the embassies with Red guards to screen all visitors – forestalled the ambassadors from plotting with the Whites and kept any Vologda revolt at bay. This action also prevented the Yaroslavl revolt from expanding. Consequently, although lasting two weeks, the rebellion died when the Bolsheviks bombarded Yaroslavl with heavy guns.³¹ The Reds blamed the Allies for the insurrection, and not without reason. The premature French encouragement to the Whites and the ambassadors' support for Savinkov's actions gave a stark reality to the Bolsheviks' view.³² Consequently, the Yaroslavl revolt was just another step in the decline of Bolshevik–Allied cooperation.

The ambassadors knew their usefulness was at an end. The day Radek left Vologda, General Poole urged them to go to Archangel. They now realized that serious Allied intervention was very likely. Yet Chicherin had not given up and on 22 July he again urged the diplomats to come to Moscow.³³ Afraid they would be incarcerated, Chicherin's telegram prompted the ambassadors to leave for Archangel immediately.³⁴ In his reply, Francis said they were following Chicherin's advice and leaving Vologda, but he did not say their destination was Archangel in case the Bolsheviks blocked their train.³⁵ When this actually happened, Francis admitted their destination to Chicherin, who, after one last appeal for them to come to Moscow, allowed the ambassadors' departure to Archangel. They arrived there on 26 July.³⁶

Chicherin regretted the representatives' departure. He declared publicly that Moscow did not want a diplomatic rupture with the Allies and he hoped the ambassadors' exit from Vologda was not seen as such.³⁷ His declaration suggests that the Bolsheviks wanted to play the Allies off against the Germans to augment their control in Russia. But open, if undeclared, conflict was not far off. The Allies had been playing a dangerous game of wooing the Reds while still giving moral and financial support to the various White factions.

With the decision to occupy Archangel taken, the Allies needed a friendly city government in place to advance their strategic plans. On 1 August, when General Poole launched his offensive to seize Archangel, by good luck or good planning, the Allies had an enterprising and loyal Russian in the city to help.

Naval Commander Georgi Ermolaevich Chaplin, a Tsarist naval officer and Russian monarchist masquerading as a Royal Naval officer, had established a "fifth column" group among ex-Tsarist officers in Archangel. The heads of the Red Army and Navy in the port, although not part of Chaplin's cabal, were in contact with the Allies and supported Chaplin's aims. By the end of July, the group was ready with over 500 disciplined men prepared to instigate a revolt.³⁸ With the arrival on 26 July of the Allied ambassadors, talks were held with Chaplin where it was made clear that the Allies wanted a democratic government established at Archangel following the Bolsheviks' expulsion. Discussions went so far as to indicate that the Allied choice to head this new government was N. V. Chaikovsky, a former member of the Russian Constituent Assembly and leader of the anti-Bolshevik "Union for the Regeneration of Russia".³⁹ With these arrangements in place, all was ready for General Poole to capture Archangel at the earliest opportunity, which came at the beginning of August when the winter ice had finally dissipated from the port.

The capture of Archangel became a bloodless exercise for the Allies, although the Bolsheviks were not so lucky. The Royal Navy's bombardment of the forts guarding the approaches signalled Chaplin's revolt, and on the evening of 2 August the new Archangel government greeted the Allied commanders on their arrival.⁴⁰ The two North Russian ports were now in Allied hands with White local governments in place ready to support Allied aims.

With the occupation of Archangel in early August 1918, the true attitude of the Bolsheviks towards the Allies became clearer.⁴¹ On 29 July, at a public forum of the Moscow Soviets, Lenin announced that a state of war existed between the Allied powers and the Russian Republic.⁴² When queried by the Allied consuls in Moscow over this war declaration, Chicherin obfuscated, saying that no state of war existed, but rather a state of defence. The consuls insisted that Lenin himself announce this publicly to assuage their concerns. Notwithstanding this demand, the consuls requested that the Allied military missions be permitted to leave, as they were no longer of use, considering the deteriorated state of international relations. Chicherin, who previously had agreed to the exit, raised "inadmissible objections" to their departure.⁴³ On 2 August Chicherin declared that since Lenin's comments on the state of war were made at a non-public forum, no public denial would be forthcoming. As to the exit of the military missions, the Foreign Minister said that he was negotiating with the Germans for safe passage of the Allied officers to Stockholm since it was too dangerous to leave through Archangel.⁴⁴ This was a blatant ploy to keep Allied officials incarcerated in Moscow in retaliation for the British and French occupying Archangel. On 5 August Chicherin unveiled the true reasons for what was tantamount to open arrest of Allied representatives. In an official letter to the United States, he complained of the Allied occupation in North Russia and the killing of Bolsheviks there. Due to these deaths, he said, Moscow was interning all Allied nationals as "civilian prisoners".⁴⁵

He also told the US consul, Dewitt Poole, that the military members of the Allied Missions would not now be allowed to depart.⁴⁶ In turn, the United States warned Chicherin that the Allies would not be intimidated and that members of the Moscow government would be held personally responsible for any harm done to Allied civilians. Japan's Consul backed the US diplomat and warned that his nation would not take the Soviet actions "with indifference".⁴⁷

While Chicherin was speaking with the US and Japanese diplomats, and despite assurances to the contrary, in Moscow the Bolshevik Secret Police stormed both the French and British consulates and arrested the consuls and their staffs.⁴⁸ Although most of the Allied private citizens and all the diplomatic staff were released by 9 August, the trust was gone, and the Allied citizens were still not permitted to quit Russia. Chicherin announced that British and French citizens would be permitted to exit the country only when Maxim Litvinov, the Bolshevik representative in London, and his staff had safely left England and when all Russian soldiers serving in France had returned to Russia.⁴⁹

The ever-willing, if impetuously optimistic, Lockhart told Chicherin that, in his opinion, the British government would find the conditions acceptable since he knew of no impediments preventing Litvinov's departure from England.⁵⁰ Again

playing verbal games, Chicherin said that his conditions did not apply to the diplomatic staff and he assured all that they could have their passports. However, he observed that there was no place to leave the country since the Germans held Finland, the Turks held Constantinople and he did not think the diplomats wished to “trek” to the Afghan border. Also, he would not allow them to go through Archangel since counter-revolutionaries held the city.⁵¹ This was how the Soviets intended to keep the French and British diplomats in Moscow, but there was some truth to his assertion that the situation at Archangel was unsettled.

While Chicherin prevented the diplomats’ exit in August via Archangel, events in that city remained in flux for the Allies. With the expulsion of the Reds, the Social Revolutionaries (SR) formed their own civilian administration entitled the “Supreme Dictatorate” (*sic*).⁵² The SRs appointed N. V. Chaikovsky to lead the government.⁵³ In turn, he named Chaplin as Commander-in-Chief of all Russian forces.⁵⁴ But British General Poole looked upon Chaikovsky’s government as a civilian administration for only the Northern port while the Russian considered himself as the new president of all North Russia, and an ally of other White governments in Siberia and Southern Russia.⁵⁵ On 3 August Chaikovsky notified all foreign consuls in Archangel of a new administration independent of Moscow and requesting official recognition from their respective states.⁵⁶ At the same time, Chaikovsky’ issued a proclamation that “the highest governmental authority in northern territory is ‘Supreme Government of Northern Territory’”.⁵⁷

These edicts brought Chaikovsky into direct opposition with more than just Moscow – they challenged General Poole’s ideas from the very beginning of the intervention. The Russian’s declarations that he was the highest authority clashed with the general’s proclamation of martial law with himself as the supreme power in the region.⁵⁸ Obviously the British intended to enforce their position in North Russia.

Declaring martial law was understandable from the military command’s point of view, but was contrary to the public promises of the Allied governments not to interfere in internal Russian affairs. Ironically, President Wilson issued his declaration concerning Russian intervention on the same day as Chaikovsky’s proclamation, and, on 6 August, the British issued their own statement on the subject.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Chaikovsky was naive in not realizing that his administration’s existence was, in fact, completely dependent on the Allied military presence in North Russia.

Moreover, General Poole was less than diplomatic in his treatment of Chaikovsky. He depended for much of his day-to-day information and action on Chaplin and other Russian officers, who, being monarchists for the most part, were not fully behind Chaikovsky, a republican and socialist.⁶⁰ Poole exacerbated the situation by appointing a French officer, Colonel Donop, as Archangel military governor. This was done in anticipation of linking with the Czech Legion, which was under French command.⁶¹ The general then wrote to the civilian government that every officer, including those appointed by the North Russia government, was subject to Donop’s authority.⁶²

Chaikovsky was greatly disturbed by what he thought was the usurpation of his civilian authority, but he could fall back only on a legalistic argument. It

mattered little, so Chaikovsky laid his complaints before the Allied ambassadors. Francis informed Lansing about the hostility between the Russians and the British commander.⁶³ Lindley also wired London a list of the problems between the civil and military authorities and indicated his confidence in Chaikovsky. The military considered the Russian administration to be “unsatisfactory and incompetent” and that the Russians held the impression that the territory was treated “as a conquered province”. Lindley had discussed the problem with Poole and they hoped to solve it locally by establishing an Allied council to assist the Russian administration.⁶⁴ The Foreign Office supported Lindley, but thought it too early to formally recognize Chaikovsky’s government.⁶⁵

In London, authorities were concerned about General Poole’s evident high-handedness. Cecil complained to Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for War, wanting his general to act much less like a conqueror.⁶⁶ From the Foreign Office vantage point, cooperative diplomacy with the new government was a far better policy. Poole viewed his sole task as to hold the North against the Germans and he was not about to let Russian sensitivities prevent this. There was still the war to win and, with the Germans still in Finland, the military remained in charge. Diplomatic niceties had to give way to military necessity. However, it is ironic that both Poole’s and Maynard’s mission to hold North Russia soon became unnecessary.

The Allies began their breakthrough on the Western Front on 8 August. The Germans began to withdraw their forces in Finland to meet this attack.⁶⁷ Only a week earlier, the IWC had noted that the Germans were unable to do much in Finland. Russia absorbed over 30 enemy divisions, and this force was virtually ineffective.⁶⁸ German offensive action into the Murman district was basically over. Yet the British officers on the ground did not know this and Lindley’s appeal to the Foreign Office was therefore appropriate. Lack of timely intelligence and poor communications again perpetuated the chaos.

Notwithstanding the good will Lindley expressed for Chaikovsky’s government, the Allied diplomats and the military treated it as nothing more than a very junior partner, and a nuisance at that.⁶⁹ This irked Chaikovsky. The Russian was determined to preserve his authority, despite the reality that the Allied military had all the power. Moreover, led by Chaplin, the Russian officers that made up the small Russian military, supposedly loyal to his administration, distrusted Chaikovsky.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, General Poole was concerned with the military situation rather than with the local political aspirations of the Russian socialists. Chaikovsky’s demands to be the sole authority in North Russia, in Poole’s eyes, interfered with his mission. In the face of this civil–military struggle, Lindley urged his government to expedite the despatch of troops earmarked for Russia’s North and to increase the numbers to 5000, a number Poole asked for previously. Lindley hoped to reduce the chaotic situation of civil–military relations in North Russia. The increased military strength would also ensure the capture of Vologda and Viatka to link with South Russian White forces in Siberia.⁷¹ Controlling Vologda and its environs was seen as a means to stabilize the region. This requirement to unite with other White forces resulted in a change of orders for Poole. Initially his task was to train

the Czechs if and when they arrived in Archangel and to support the Russians against the Germans. The failure of the Czechs to reach Archangel and Lenin's ambiguous declaration of war on the Allies radically changed the mission.

On 10 August London issued new instructions to Poole: he was to prevent German influence in Russia; link with the Czechs to ensure control of the Archangel–Vologda–Ekaterinburg Railway; and support local military and local government.⁷² Only forces already identified for North Russia, he was told, would arrive to reinforce him, as no others were available at the time. These new orders were in direct contradiction of US policy, which was limited exclusively to guarding the two ports.

Although the new orders did not specifically identify the Bolsheviks as the enemy, they mentioned that the Czechs were in control of most of the Siberian Railway to Ekaterinburg, but were faced with 16,000 armed Reds who held the railway from there to Perm. Without being explicit, the War Office had actually changed the Allied mission in North Russia from fighting Germans to supporting White Russians ("support ... any administration ... friendly to Allies") against the Bolsheviks. Poole was far more blunt. The general's directions handed to newly arrived troops stated that "We are not fighting ... honest Russians. We are fighting Bolsheviks who are the worst form of criminals".⁷³ Poole's statements ignored the fact that the Allies were interfering in Russian internal politics.⁷⁴ Although clearly contrary to the public aims of his own country, this position was not opposed by the Foreign Office. Poole clearly put military necessity above any diplomacy, while the Foreign Office ignored Poole's actions either through ignorance or more likely through unvoiced agreement. Once again military need contradicted the publicly espoused Allied political goals, perpetuating diplomatic chaos among the Entente. Nonetheless, orders issued from afar can seldom be carried out to the letter and this proved to be the case in North Russia.

As one of the principal aims of their mission, Poole and Maynard were to raise local militias to form large forces to defend the North. However, the Russians would come forward only if a substantial Allied force arrived to assist them.⁷⁵ The pitifully small contingent the British sent to North Russia failed to do this. As predicted, the Russians did not flock to the Allies.⁷⁶ And so the two British generals were left to defend the North with what force they had. As a result and at the urging of Poole, on 20 August, Chaikovsky issued a decree for conscription, but announced a deferment until after the harvest.⁷⁷ Despite the delay, Lindley reported that the edict was unenforceable. Chaikovsky demurred and insisted that the populace supported his government and would comply.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, conscription was delayed until later in the year. Poole was left to defend Archangel and its environs with fewer than 10,000 men.

Although the Allies needed manpower to hold the front, it was not Germany but rather the Bolsheviks who posed the greatest threat. With the news of the British attack on Archangel, Lenin realized that the Bolsheviks would be hard-pressed to defend against their enemies on all fronts. Faced with no alternative, Chicherin, with Lenin's blessing, turned to Karl Helfferich, the new German ambassador, and requested military aid against the Allies.⁷⁹ The Germans asked

to occupy Petrograd to make it easier to attack the British in the North. The Bolsheviks refused, fearing that the Germans would eventually attempt to overthrow them. But without Petrograd's occupation, the Germans declined to attack the British in North Russia.⁸⁰

In lieu of this proposal, on 7 August the German Foreign Minister agreed that Germany would not attack Russia if Russians withdrew their forces facing the German Army.⁸¹ This done, the redistribution of available Red troops enabled the Soviets to cling to power by stabilizing the front to the south of Archangel and building a reserve to attack the Czechs. By supporting the Communists at their weakest instead of overthrowing them, the Germans saved the Moscow government.⁸² Yet little of this was known in North Russia, and the Allies continued their political manoeuvring to maintain control of both northern ports.

Beginning in mid-August 1918, the Allied military intervention unfolding in both the North and Siberia had major repercussions on the diplomatic representatives of both France and Britain remaining in the Russian capital. Balfour finally accepted Chicherin's conditions for the release of Allied citizens and diplomats.⁸³ Then Chicherin suddenly changed the conditions for their freedom. He demanded that only when all repressive measures against Bolshevik sympathizers and Soviet officials in Allied countries and in Russian territory controlled by the Czechs and Allies ended would Allied citizens be freed. Confirmation was to be carried out by Red Cross officials. On 26 August neutral diplomatic representatives in Russia rejected these conditions.⁸⁴ New negotiations were never scheduled, for, on 30 August, a Russian military cadet assassinated the head of the Petrograd Cheka Secret Police, Moses S. Uritsky, and that evening in Moscow, a leftist Social Revolutionary, Dora Kaplan, shot and seriously wounded Lenin.⁸⁵ These events ushered in a Bolshevik reign of terror. Overnight, the Civil War became more deadly.

The Bolsheviks also blamed the Allies for the attempted coup, and issued a communiqué to that effect, naming Lockhart, the French Consul-General, Grénard, and French General Lavergne as leaders.⁸⁶ The Cheka arrested Lockhart early on 31 August.⁸⁷ Later that day they raided the British Embassy in Petrograd. Captain F. N. A. Cromie, the British Naval Attaché, was murdered while trying to defend the premises.⁸⁸ This was the unalterable break by the Soviets with the British, although Lockhart was released on 1 September. But now the British saw the Naval Attaché's murder as justification for the Allied intervention. To say that the British were alarmed and angry is an understatement. Cecil suggested that Litvinov, who was still in England, be arrested or at least interned, and that a strong diplomatic note be sent to the Moscow government holding them personally responsible for Cromie's death.⁸⁹ Other ministers were less sanguine. They queried whether it would be legal to detain the Bolshevik representative. The Reds had no such qualms. The same day of the Cabinet meeting, Lockhart was again arrested.⁹⁰ This time he would be gaoled almost a month.

But revolts and coups were not restricted to attacks on the Bolshevik government. In Archangel, Chaikovsky continued to seek the upper hand in his power struggle with Poole. Hoping to split the Allies and thus become the authority in

the North, the Russian leader played up to the US Ambassador, Francis, who was no great supporter of the British. After Francis had sent Chaikovsky a copy of President Wilson's earlier aide-memoire, the Russian said his government agreed completely with the US policy of non-interference.⁹¹

Francis recognized that only the Allied army prevented the Bolsheviks from destroying Chaikovsky's government and tried to mediate between the civil and military leaders. Nevertheless, he encouraged Washington to support Chaikovsky to prevent the prolongation of civil dissension and victory by the Reds.⁹² To try and stop the growing rift between General Poole and Chaikovsky, the Allied diplomatic community finally set up the long-anticipated Inter-Allied Chancery to coordinate and liaise between the Russian civil administration and the Allied military control.⁹³ Chaikovsky's apparent dithering had further lowered his administration's esteem in the British general's eyes, but, more importantly, also in the eyes of Chaplin and other Russian officers.

Chaplin was angry that the government he had established had relegated him and his colleagues to a secondary role. He feared that Poole would dissolve Chaikovsky's government and appoint a puppet in its place, transforming North Russia into an Allied colony. To prevent this from happening, the Russian commander decided to depose the North Russia government himself and set up one led by a respected Russian general who would not back down from Poole.⁹⁴ Chaplin worked slowly with the provincial commissar, N. A. Startsev, so as to have a foundation of support among the Russians. However, on 5 September, Startsev informed Chaplin that the Allies were about to grant Chaikovsky's government *de facto* recognition. Poole confirmed this news later in the day.⁹⁵ This forced Chaplin to instigate his revolt sooner than he had expected. A coup against a government recognized by the Allies would cause an international incident and probably prevent support for Chaplin's own administration.⁹⁶ Chaplin decided to arrest the Russian ministers on the night of 6 September. When General Poole became aware of the plan, he only wrote to Chaplin advising against it.⁹⁷ Significantly, the British general took no other action, not even warning Chaikovsky.⁹⁸

Chaplin struck before midnight. He arrested Chaikovsky and four of his ministers. A fifth was arrested soon after, but two others found safety in the US Embassy. By early morning, Chaplin had the Russian ministers transported to Solevetsky Island. At a review of US troops the next day, Poole informed Francis of the coup, and Chaplin, who was present, freely admitted his actions.

Both Lindley and Francis were incensed. On hearing that Chaplin intended to announce publicly a new government with Startsev as its head, Francis told Poole not to permit any public announcements by Chaplin without first having them vetted by the Allied ambassadors.⁹⁹ The diplomats feared that the Allies would be blamed for supporting a monarchist revolt.¹⁰⁰ Protest strikes were organized and the two ministers who were still free issued their own proclamation denouncing Chaplin.¹⁰¹ To assuage the growing anger in the local Russian civil population, the Allied ambassadors issued a proclamation denying all responsibility for and participation in the coup.¹⁰² In addition, a British destroyer was sent to free the

Russian ministers and return them to Archangel. But Poole declined to arrest Chaplin because he said such action would turn the Russian military against the Allies. Seeing the dissipation of any Allied help, the Russian commander resigned and vacated Archangel to avoid Chaikovsky's retribution.¹⁰³

Lindley, the British consul, was aghast at Poole's inaction to stop the coup and tendered his resignation. He offered two courses of action: one, to appoint a High Commissioner with authority over all British officers except in military operations; or, two, combining the Commander-in-Chief and the High Commissioner in one person. He recommended the first course, saying he would help whomever London appointed if it was not himself, but he could not remain in Russia with only his current powers.¹⁰⁴ Balfour agreed with his diplomat and so control of political affairs remained in Lindley's hands. Balfour then insisted that all local military authorities must consult Lindley before taking any action.¹⁰⁵ What both Balfour and Lindley wanted was to reduce the chaos that was undermining any semblance of sound civil–military relations in North Russia.

Although Lindley's protest was telling, it was not the catalyst that in any way reined in the aggressive British general. It was US reaction that did it. Francis had informed Washington of the high-handed way General Poole had treated Chaikovsky. This accusation caused Lansing to protest most vehemently to Britain, threatening that unless Poole's methods changed, President Wilson was determined to withdraw the US contingent from the general's command.¹⁰⁶ Balfour was aghast and quickly sent a copy of Lansing's protest to Lindley with instructions to show it to Poole. This was a clear case of one Ally pressuring another to achieve a political aim without any regard for military needs. Yet, in the circumstances, the British could not afford to have the United States withdraw. If it cost a general for the United States to remain involved, so be it. However, it took time for the US protest to make its way to Archangel. Meanwhile, the local political drama played itself out with General Poole still *in situ*.

On 8 September the North Russia president returned to Archangel. Lindley urged Chaikovsky to drop some of his more strident ministers and not to make any public statements without first meeting with the Allied ambassadors.¹⁰⁷ Despite agreeing to these terms, Chaikovsky issued his own proclamation, signed by all his colleagues, which acknowledged his administration's reinstatement as a result of the action of the Allies, but then continued, "Having returned to the fulfillment of its duties and of its rights with its membership intact, the Supreme Administration expresses its thanks to the population of the northern region for the moral support it received."¹⁰⁸ This was both to forestall pressure to dismiss the more left-wing members of his cabinet and to establish the North Russia government as paramount in the region.¹⁰⁹ It was the first of several manoeuvres and counter-moves between Chaikovsky and the local diplomats.

Over the next two weeks, the Russian administration threatened resignation several times. Each time the Allied ambassadors persuaded the premier to change his mind.¹¹⁰ Chaikovsky had refused to drop any ministers, but accepted Colonel B. A. Durov as the new War Minister.¹¹¹ But then he suddenly threatened resignation over General Poole's censorship of the official gazette. Negotiations lasted

into early October, during which time Chaikovsky's group re-established its position as the civil government in North Russia.¹¹²

One of the more controversial actions on Chaikovsky's part was the incorporation by decree of Murmansk into his sphere of control. This was done against the wishes of the Murmansk administration, which had earlier been elected by the entire Murmansk population. Chaikovsky's decree also said that the agreement, previously signed on 2 March 1918, between the Allies and the Murmansk government would continue. This statement had no legitimacy since the Allies had made the agreement with the Murmansk Soviet and they were under no obligation to the Archangel government to perpetuate it.¹¹³ Still, Lindley requested London to assure Chaikovsky that this treaty made earlier in July with Murmansk would remain in force.¹¹⁴ After consulting the War Office, the Foreign Office agreed, subject to any modifications caused by the change of the Russian administration.¹¹⁵

By mid-September 1918, while negotiations with Chaikovsky continued, Lindley received President Wilson's threat to quit the North if Poole's conduct did not improve. When shown the ultimatum, General Poole and the French Ambassador agreed to the installation of a Russian Governor General who would have "extreme powers".¹¹⁶ With a Russian as commandant replacing Poole's French appointee, the Allied military would have little cause to interfere in the civil administration. Lindley used this as a persuasive argument for Chaikovsky to stay on as the representative of the White government based at Samara in Siberia. But finally, Chaikovsky carried out his threat and resigned. His departure from office caused much confusion and matters only worsened.

Further deterioration into chaos did not take long to occur, for suddenly on 25 September, the date selected for the government's resignation, Chaikovsky announced that he would stay.¹¹⁷ The next day, the Russian again reversed himself. The government would resign after all, and he would form a new government with himself as head.¹¹⁸ There followed several days of political manoeuvring.¹¹⁹ In addition, Chaikovsky strengthened his hold on the Murman Region by abolishing the Murmansk Regional Soviet.¹²⁰ Finally, on 7 October 1918, a new North Russia administration was announced with a melange of local bourgeoisie and Social Revolutionaries as ministers. Chaikovsky retained complete control with the power to dismiss ministers as he saw fit.¹²¹

All the political manoeuvring and increasing chaos of the previous two months had reduced the North Russia government to only an adjunct of the Allies. This civil administration had little influence on the Allied military. Chaikovsky's abolition of the Murmansk Soviet had jeopardized the Allied–Murmansk Soviet agreement, since one of the parties no longer existed. Only the political acumen of the British Foreign Office prevented the agreement from being declared void.¹²² Chaikovsky's politics had succeeded only in forcing him to share the administration with the bourgeoisie and endanger the one official agreement anti-Bolsheviks had with the Allies in North Russia. Moreover, Chaikovsky's politicking exposed Allied cracks and other flaws, especially US reluctance and resultant anger. Adding to the chaotic and fragile political scenario was the continued fighting between

the Allies and the Bolsheviks in the North as well as with the Czech Legion in Siberia.

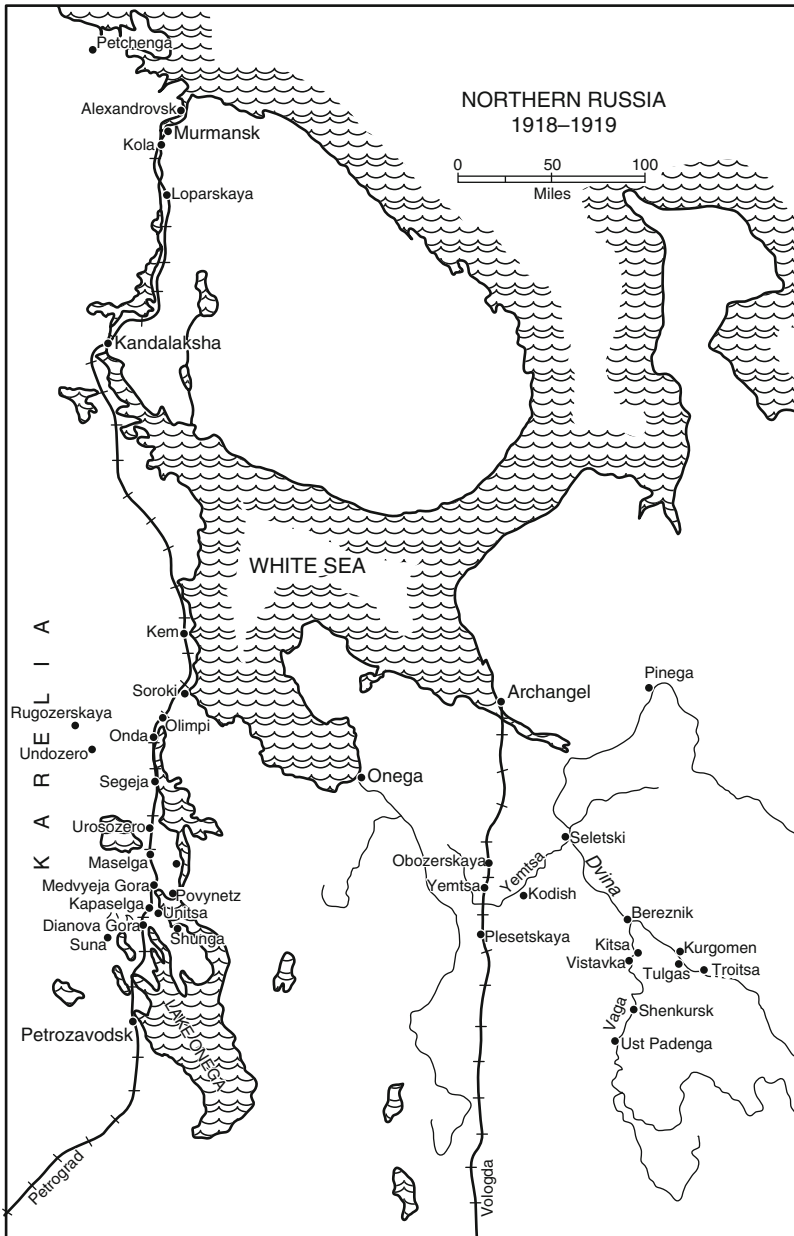
While all the “to-ing and fro-ing” went on around Poole’s Archangel command, in Murmansk General Maynard had consolidated his position in the Murman district throughout the summer of 1918. He cleared the Red Guards from the railway and occupied Soroka, south of Kem, by mid-July.¹²³ The general continued efforts to recruit local militias and had some success forming Red Finnish forces to help defend against the expected German White Finn attacks. Mobile units were formed at Kem and Kandalaksha for operations towards the Finnish frontier. These small forces were able to clear the region of hostile Finns by October, thereby retaining Allied control of the Railway and Murman (see Map 3).¹²⁴

While Maynard gained control of the Murman region, Poole pushed his front line 100 miles south along the railroad towards Vologda and 200 miles up the Dvina River towards Kotlas.¹²⁵ This pressured Chaikovsky to implement mobilization for a large enough force to hold the front line of what was as much a ‘forward defence’ as it was offensive action.

General Poole’s troops ranged into the Volga district in an attempt to hook up with the Czechs. Parts of the Czech Legion had tried to move north to do the same with the Allies. The attempted SR rebellion in July had weakened the Bolsheviks militarily, despite the revolt being put down by Moscow. The Red Army was demoralized and their Commander-in-Chief, M. A. Muraviev, an SR, defected to the Czechs on 10 July.¹²⁶ This situation allowed the Czechs to move westward facing almost no opposition. Their aim was to seize Perm and Viatka to join with Allied forces that were attempting to fight down the railway from Archangel to the same cities.¹²⁷

At Archangel, the Allied contingent consisted of a mixed force of British, French, Serbian, US and Canadian soldiers. The US contingent disembarked on 4 September under the command of Colonel George E. Stewart and moved up the Divina River and along the railway towards Vologda immediately.¹²⁸ This was done despite President Wilson’s orders that US troops were to be used only to guard stores and help form new Russian military forces. Immediate military requirements overrode political directions. Artillery support eventually appeared five weeks later with the landing of the 16th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery led by Colonel C. H. L. Sharman.¹²⁹

The need to overcome the Bolsheviks was more important to Poole than any political threat or direction from the US president, and the US commander at Archangel either did not understand the president’s political direction or chose to ignore it, as he was under the direct military orders of the British commander. Battle ultimately required all the Allied forces available. US soldiers took part in the fighting and suffered casualties, in spite of differing and higher US intentions.¹³⁰ However, in mid-September, Trotsky thwarted attempts to link the North with the Czechs along the Archangel–Vologda–Viatka Railway. On 10 September, the recovering Red Army stopped the Czech advance and ended any hope of joining with the Allies in the North (see Map 4).¹³¹ The defeat of the Czech Legion steeled US resolve to avoid re-establishing an Eastern Front, something Woodrow



Map 3 North Russia

Source: John A. Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (1967), 74. Reproduced with permission.

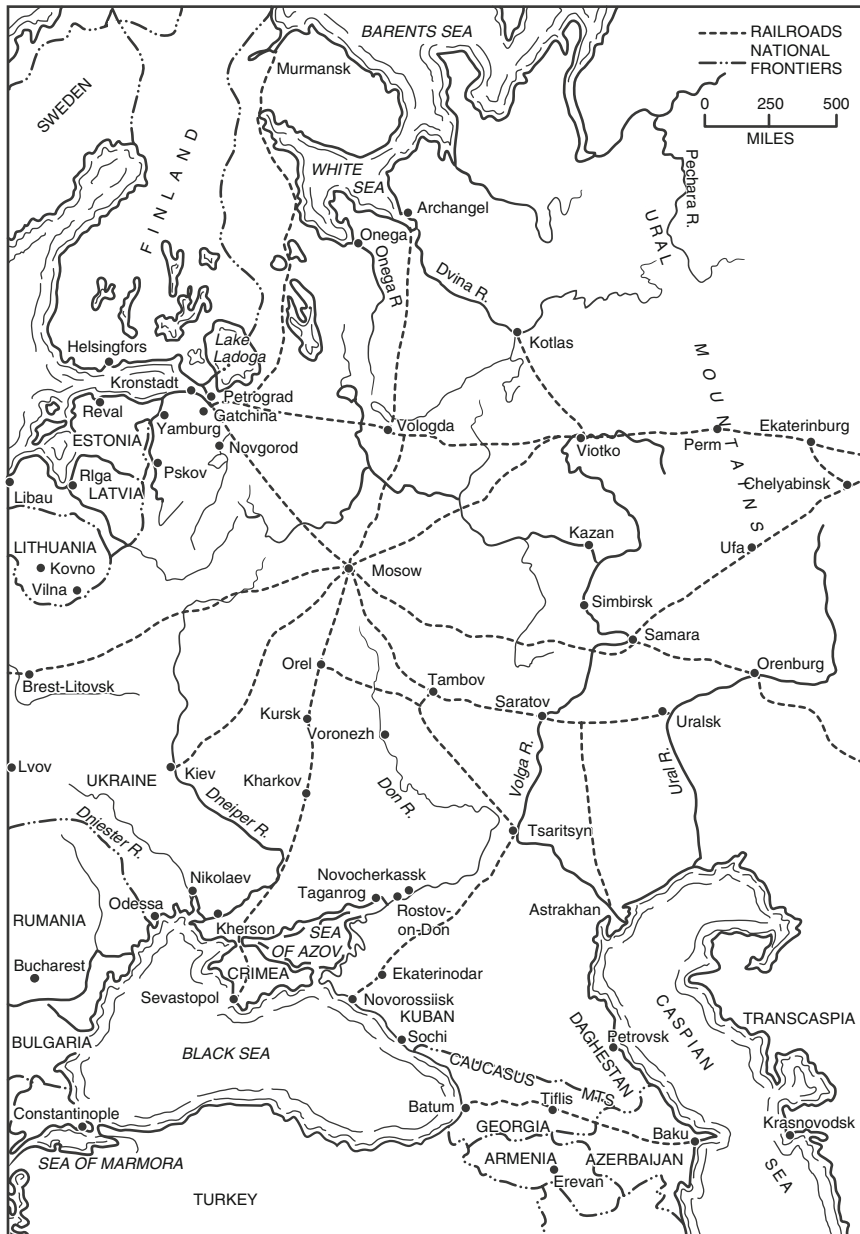
Wilson had always been against. The president now insisted that the Czechs must move east to await their fate.¹³²

This was but another example of President Wilson's high idealism making him act as the schoolmaster, trying to control the seemingly errant Europeans. His views about an Eastern Front and the Czechs were also Wilson's attempt to limit US military liability. However, Lansing finally convinced him that the United States must abide by its July aide-memoire, which had stated that the United States did not intend to prevent other Allies from acting as they saw fit.¹³³ Regardless of Wilson's views, the military situation in Russia remained highly fluid and ever-changing. Nonetheless, even with the Red Army's success against the Czechs, it was unable to repulse the Allies in the North. By the fall of 1918, a stalemate in the areas south of Archangel and Murmansk became the norm, with continuing skirmishes making up the bulk of the fighting.

Yet General Poole, unlike President Wilson, still retained hope of establishing contact with the Czechs and of raising substantial local levees to fight the Bolsheviks. On 13 October, he told the War Office that he planned an offensive down the Archangel–Vologda Railway through a heavily populated area to draw a large number of Russian recruits. For this he required substantial reinforcements. He wanted forces destined for Murmansk to be diverted to Archangel. The War Office refused, saying that it did not see that the presence of British troops would spawn a local "feeling of revulsion" against the Reds.¹³⁴

The United States had also denied any more troops for the North.¹³⁵ In fact, they did not think a linking of the Czech Legion with the Allies in the North was achievable. Echoing Wilson's wishes, Lansing insisted that all military efforts in North Russia be abandoned, except for the guarding of the ports. He directed that US troops not be used to establish a line of operation from Siberia to Archangel.¹³⁶ The British were fully aware of the US policy in this regard, but also knew that without reinforcements further advance would be impossible.¹³⁷ Lord Cecil acknowledged the US position, but disagreed with its conclusions. He believed that the Czechs, together with White General Alexeiev's forces in the South, could hold the line if supported by the Allies. The Allies, he thought, could not abandon White forces that had stood by them for the duration of the war, but he understood that the United States might not share the same obligation.¹³⁸ If this was London's subtle way of appealing to US honour, it did not work. Regardless, the British government denied Poole's call for the additional troops destined for Murmansk.

The increase that Maynard had requested remained earmarked for his command. On 2 September he had asked for it in anticipation of a German offensive from Finland. Despite having previously been made aware that the Germans did not have the manpower available for such an attack, the War Cabinet immediately agreed.¹³⁹ However, on 10 October, they said Maynard had two options open to him for his force. After "Black Week" on the Western Front in August, it was now obvious that the Germans were in no position to start an operation from Finland; thus, his force could either be withdrawn or be used to move down the Murmansk–Petrograd Railway towards Onega to establish railway connections with Archangel. London favoured the latter action. It was in this matter-of-fact



Map 4 European Russia 1919

Source: Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921 Vol. II, 2*, © 1968 Princeton University Press. 1996 Renewed PUP reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

manner that the objectives of the Allied Northern Force changed from fighting Germans to fighting Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁰ Political direction lagged behind the local immediacy of military orders, but was evolving, and by mid-October 1918 such an opportunity to catch up occurred in the North.

Since his arrival several months earlier, General Poole had been a constant source of friction on the political scene in Archangel. A change in the Allied command in North Russia would likely ease some of that friction, but this was not expected. Yet, on 14 October Poole departed for England to discuss his plans with the War Office and to take leave. In his absence, Major-General W. E. Ironside, who had arrived in Archangel on 1 October as Chief-of-Staff, assumed command.¹⁴¹ Poole was expected to return in 30 days. However, on 16 October the War Office rejected Poole's plan. Only enough troops to ensure the safety of the Allies would now be sent as additions to North Russia. The War Office believed that even with four additional battalions the Allies could not make a junction with the Czechs at Ekaterinburg during the winter.¹⁴² Before Poole's 30-day leave was up, the Armistice was declared, and Poole would never return to North Russia.¹⁴³

While Poole sailed to London, the North's military situation remained precarious. The Allies had established five defensive positions east and south, like the fingers of a hand, with Archangel as the centre (Map 3). The front stretched east to Pinega, on the Pinega River, south to Shenkursk on the Vaga River, west to Seletskoe, between the Dvina River and the Archangel–Vologda Railway, then to Obozerskaia, ending at Onega at the southern tip of the White Sea.¹⁴⁴ The disposition, in the new circumstances, meant this area was too big to defend.

Maynard, headquartered at Murmansk, was similarly over-stretched. While pacifying the Reds along the Murmansk–Petrograd Railway, he had worried that the Germans and Finns would advance against his positions at Petchenga as well as attempt to capture the rail centre at Kem. Once Maynard had neutralized the Bolshevik military mission aimed at Murmansk, he ordered two mobile columns to move towards the Finnish border to counter any offensive thrusts from there.¹⁴⁵ Although minor in comparison to the scale of fighting on the Western Front, Maynard's actions prevented the Germans and Finns from organizing an effective offensive towards Murmansk or its railway.¹⁴⁶ This was the situation when the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918.

The rumour of peace, well before it actually came, had affected the Allies' ability to be truly effective in North Russia. The French contingent at Archangel had been shaken by the possibility of a cessation of hostilities with Germany, and the US commander there had informed the British that his troops would not fight offensively in the event that war ceased in Europe.¹⁴⁷ This alarming news caused the War Cabinet to debate Britain's future military policy in Russia just three weeks before the Armistice.

Balfour put it plainly to his colleagues.¹⁴⁸ The sole rationale for intervention in Russia, he pointed out, was to prevent Germany from absorbing the Western Russian provinces. As for the United States, President Wilson had always been against interfering in Russian internal affairs and had been unwilling to reconstitute the Eastern Front. The only reason for the presence of US soldiers in Siberia

was to help the Czechs evacuate from there. Balfour emphasized, however, that “If we withdrew our forces from European and Asiatic Russia we would suffer a serious loss of prestige, and should be letting down our friends.” He also advised that, with the United States so adamantly against military action in Russia, the British must engage the French on future Allied moves, both military and diplomatic. For their part, the French believed that they had special rights and privileges in Russia based on their old relations and interests in that country. But it appeared that the French in Archangel would not fight if an armistice occurred. Nevertheless, some British Ministers argued that Bolshevism was a danger to the whole world and that the Allied intervention was the beginning of a necessary conflict with this dangerous ideology. Lord Cecil warned his colleagues that, although he hated to abandon Russians who had supported the Allies, it might end badly if the Allies tried to destroy Bolshevism through military intervention. Not all of them listened. As the war wound down to its last days in Western Europe, the British realized that the battle would continue in Russia, not against German hegemony, but rather against the Bolshevik ideology and its forces.

The British War Cabinet now faced the dilemma of all who partake in a war. Once begun, how does a nation stop military action short of a decisive military defeat, or victory for that matter? As pragmatic politicians they sought a plan that would extricate them from a quagmire while fighting an ideology that some now recognized as a danger to the whole world. And by the time the Armistice came about, the ever-pragmatic Winston Churchill, Minister of Munitions and soon to be Secretary of State for War, had become an ardent anti-Bolshevik.¹⁴⁹ The Armistice changed everything for the interventions and at the same time it changed nothing.

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141. Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, 338.
142. DMO to Cecil, letter 0149/5428 (M.O. 5), London, 29 October 1918 PRO FO 371/3339/180174.
143. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 255–6.
144. Strakhovsky, *Intervention*, 93.
145. Maynard, 90.
146. Maynard, 96–8.
147. WC Minutes 489, 18 October 1918 PRO Cab 23/8.
148. WC Minutes 489, 18 October 1918 PRO Cab 23/8.
149. Markku Ruotsila, *Churchill and Finland: A Study in Anticommunism and Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 21.



1 HMS Kent in Vladivostok Harbour 1918 (author's private collection)



2 Major Harold Lewis (Canadian Medical Corps), Sgt Llewellyn Lewis (Canadian Army), Lt Raymond Massey (Canadian Army) at Vladivostok 1919 (author's private collection)



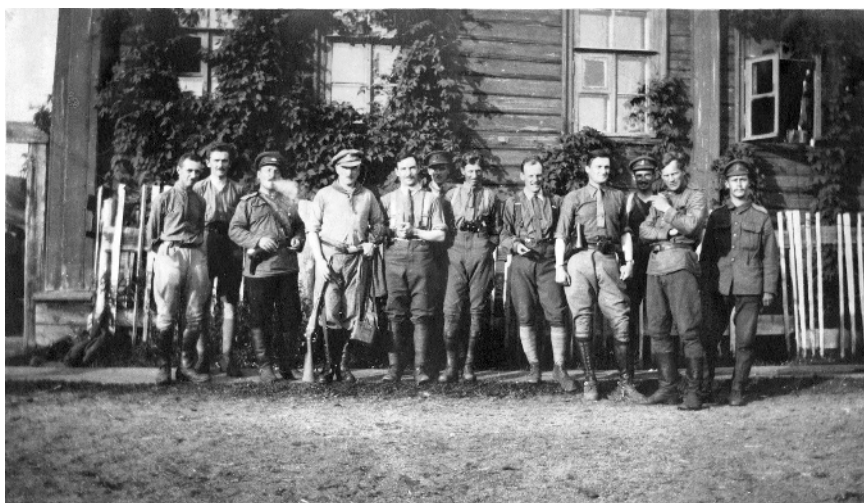
3 Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada 1911–20 and Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty London 1912 (© public domain)



4 68th Battery Canadian Field Artillery (CWM 19700178-001) (George Metcalf Archival Collection © Canadian War Museum)



5 Major General and Mrs Elmsley (CWM 19750155-005) (George Metcalf Archival Collection © Canadian War Museum)



6 Col Leckie (4th from Left) with Canadian Officers North Russia (Murman) 1919 (CWM 19780429-070) (George Metcalf Archival Collection © Canadian War Museum)



7 Galician Czechs going to France to join the French Army: arrival at Vladivostok (CWM 19920085-1126_p) (George Metcalf Archival Collection © Canadian War Museum)

8

Friends or Enemies Together? Allies in Siberia, Summer 1918

While the North Russia intervention was unfolding, the Japanese, US, British, French and other Allies were attempting to organize the rescue of the Czechoslovak Army strung across Siberia. But, as in North Russia, there was no unity regarding how this would be achieved. Each Ally having its own agenda was the root cause of the chaos.

Coincident with the rescue attempt of the Czechs, Japan was trying to establish its control of the region. To achieve this, it needed weak Russian governments in Siberia and so backed various factions in the area; something that did not work for Russia's greater good. This overt support for some Russian groups in lieu of others was again contrary to the declared policy published by all the Allies and especially that espoused by the US president. Added to this was the friction caused by the opposing operational views, especially between US and Japanese senior military leaders.

Despite the agreement to have the Japanese appoint their general as the supreme military commander, the United States set up an independent operation with every intention of obstructing Japan and preventing any interference in internal Russian affairs. On the other hand, the British and French supported the creation of a White government across Siberia, while fighting the Red forces at every turn. Complicating all was each Ally seeking its own economic foothold in Siberia while paying lip service to military cooperation.

In late July 1918, the Foreign Office informed Tokyo that Britain considered the provision of material relief to the Russians as a vital part of intervention.¹ This relief would commence with the arrival of Allied troops and should be cooperative among all the Allies. The British knew that the Japanese were sending their own trade commission to Siberia and that the bulk of supplies would have to come from the United States with the assistance of Japanese transport.

The United States also dominated the Commission established to rebuild and manage Russia's railway system. This placed them in a position to profit from any commercial benefits resulting from the modernized railways. Although the British, and this included Canada as well as other parts of the British Empire, initially proposed that profit-making should be excluded from the supply of relief goods to the Russians, that loss of profit would only be temporary until normal

commerce was re-established after the war. In conceding US pre-eminence in this relief effort, Lord Cecil emphasized that Britain must secure its share of this work due to the vast British goods stored at Vladivostok as well as supplies available in Canada.² Nevertheless, no economic plan could be implemented until the military situation had stabilized. Although the rescue of the Czechs was the agreed Allied aim for the Siberian intervention, the collateral target for some was financial gain. Yet, these goals were masked by the public announcements of Allied intentions towards Russia, its people and territory.

Obviously the public statements made by the individual Allies in 1918 that they would not interfere in the internal politics of Russia were made to assure the Russians. Japan's declaration explicitly said it had no interest in Russia's internal affairs and Japan was only there to aid the Czechs and protect Russia from German hegemony.³ Britain's pronouncement, published 9 August, was similar, claiming that they, too, were only there to help Russia fight Germany.⁴ The official US communiqué was less declaratory. However, it was explicit that the United States would not interfere in Russia's internal politics.⁵ The trouble with these proclamations was that, even with the best intentions, the Allies could not achieve their declared strategic aim of helping the Czechs escape Russia without fighting the Bolsheviks, and this could not be interpreted in any other way than interfering in internal Russian politics. In the end, the various edicts clearly demonstrated the different attitudes towards the Russians among the three nations.⁶ Criticism and controversy were the result.

In August 1918, John Caldwell, Vladivostok's US Consul, reported that the Russians had made favourable comments on the Japanese public statement.⁷ However, Charles Moser, Harbin's US Consul, noted contrary opinion in his city. Many, he said, were convinced that the United States saw no need for an Eastern Front and if Russia wished to continue the fight against Germany in the East "it was of no interest to the Allies".⁸ In the Russian view, the United States was only concerned with economic aggrandisement and getting the Czechs out of Russia with the least effort possible.⁹ The local Russian press urged the early dispatch of larger Allied forces to ensure the Czechs' safety.¹⁰ The stage was set for the clash between the United States and the rest of the Allies. It was in this unsettling situation that Allied troops began to deploy into Siberia.

The first British units arrived in Siberia on 3 August 1918. The British readily accepted the Japanese general as the Supreme Allied commander, as had been agreed by all involved in the Siberian operation.¹¹ By mid-month, the first US troops also landed at Vladivostok.¹² They paraded through the city, but did not go forward to support the fighting.¹³ This was probably because the US commander, Major General William S. Graves, had not arrived with them. When he finally did, two weeks later, friction between him and the Japanese commander, General Otani, was immediate.¹⁴

On 2 September, Otani asked Graves whether he had any instructions from his government recognizing Japanese overall Allied military command in Siberia. Graves promptly replied that the US government had not informed him that that was the case. In fact, he told Otani that there were limitations on the use of

US troops.¹⁵ The only direction that Graves had received was a copy of President Wilson's July aide-memoire. The confusion arose because neither the president nor the State Department had informed the War Department that the United States had agreed that the Japanese senior officer would be the Commander-in-Chief of all Allied forces in Siberia.¹⁶ The problem of command and the future conflicts between the United States and the Japanese were exacerbated because Graves did not even try to get clarification from Washington, despite Otani forcefully reminding him that all Allies had agreed to Japanese command.

Furthermore, Japan also irritated the US administration by moving in more troops than was agreed. In addition to the original 12,000 soldiers, Japan quickly placed 7000 more men on the northern Manchurian border. Ostensibly this was done to cover the Czechs on the Trans-Siberian Railway and to protect the Japanese colony in the area.¹⁷ Japan's Foreign Minister also cited the need to help the Chinese secure the border against the Cossack Semenov and reduce the danger to the Czechs around Lake Baikal.¹⁸ Although this statement appeared to be an excuse for further Japanese aggrandisement, the Czechs had in fact appealed for more Allied help in defending against Bolsheviks around the Lake.¹⁹

In mid-August, General Otani advised that 60,000 to 70,000 Allied troops were required immediately in Siberia if the Czechs were to be saved before winter, and Japan was ready to furnish these men if asked.²⁰ When London informed Washington of the enthusiastic proposal of the Japanese, both agreed that it would be better if non-Japanese forces were there. The British suggested that if the Canadian contingent were to leave for Siberia immediately, then they could help the Czechs or relieve Japanese units guarding the railway. This military aid would raise Britain's prestige in the eyes of both the Czechs and the Russians. However, if the senior Dominion did not speed things up, its force would arrive too late to help.²¹ Yet delays in organizing the dispatch of the Canadians continued. Consequently the only immediate forces available were from Japan. The British believed that the position of the Czechoslovaks was precarious and the refusal of the US president to sanction the increase in Japanese troops put a "great moral responsibility" upon Wilson if the Bolsheviks eliminated the Czechs.²² None of this eased the United States' irritation over Japan's increased military presence in Siberia.

Due to the growing Bolshevik danger to the Czechs and the shortage of troops to help, Britain was inclined to officially ask Japan for more soldiers.²³ This angered President Wilson who neither wanted more military involvement nor a deeper commitment in Russia. He especially did not want anymore Japanese than had been agreed scarcely two weeks before.²⁴ He did not want any nation, and especially Japan, to dominate the region for fear of having US trade there restricted. Keeping good relations with the Russians would ensure the United States access to their future markets. For Wilson, US prestige in the eyes of Russians was more important than achieving the collective aim of rescuing the Czech Legion. Consequently, on 20 August Washington announced it was not in a position to increase its commitment in Siberia beyond what had been agreed and the United States was not in favour of proceeding west of Irkutsk to help the Czechs. They urged the Czechs to retire eastward as quickly as possible for their own good.²⁵

US antipathy to Japanese actions worried the British War Cabinet and the Dominion prime ministers. At a mid-August IWC meeting, Sir Robert Borden warned that for the British Empire to remain strong it needed the support of the United States as well as all the Dominions.²⁶ Borden's warning appears as the genesis of a significant shift in a future Canadian posture on its relationship toward Britain and the Empire relative to the United States. But for the moment, to Borden, friendship with the United States was a necessity for the survival of the British Empire and much more important than operations in Russia.²⁷ However, the United States remained reluctant to take a leading role, even when attempts were made to thrust leadership upon them. When the French Ambassador told Lansing that they and the British were forming an economic commission for Siberia and wanted the United States to participate, Lansing strongly urged Wilson not to do so. To him, such a commission was just another attempt by the other Allies to dominate Siberia. If the United States declined to participate, Lansing pointed out, the commission would "have little weight".²⁸ President Wilson readily agreed and said that the reply should indicate strongly that "we do not think cooperation in *political* action necessary or desirable in *eastern* Siberia because we contemplate no political action of any kind *there*".²⁹ This was as clear a statement as could be expected that the United States would not cooperate with their Allies in Siberia. Still, the British continued to pressure the United States and were joined by the Japanese. More troops were urgently needed to aid the Czechs. Cooperation was a military necessity.

The British Chargé in Washington, Colville Barclay, informed London that only 5000 poorly armed Czechs were at Irkutsk and that they were facing 30,000 armed German prisoners in the Siberian region. Also, in Washington, Professor Masaryk considered that 40,000 Allied troops were needed to help his countrymen, and only the Japanese were in a position to supply such a large force. Lansing asked for an official memorandum from Masaryk outlining the crisis.³⁰ Coincidentally, Japanese Ambassador Kishiro Ishii told Lansing that the Japanese would send an additional 10,000 troops to aid the embattled Czechs.³¹

In the face of this Allied pressure, the United States were at a loss as to how to proceed. On 31 August the Czechs themselves relieved some of the crisis by defeating the Bolsheviks around Lake Baikal. The victorious Legion was then able to link with the Czechs west of Vladivostok and gain complete control of the Trans-Siberian Railway.³² The consolidation of the Czech forces was the perfect excuse for the US commander to do nothing. Czech success also relieved some pressure on the British as the Canadian contingent, by far the greater portion of the British Siberian force, was taking longer to arrive than had been anticipated.

That same August, although the decision to send Canadians had been made quickly, Ottawa and London became bogged down in the details. What Canada paid for and what Britain paid for was one sore point. What the lines of communication would be between the Canadian Commander, Elmsley, and Ottawa and between Elmsley and the War Office had yet to be decided. What extent operational control of the force would be shared between Canada and Britain was also not clear.³³ The devil was, indeed, in the details.

In addition, with the war in Europe still raging, the Canadian desire that the force for Siberia consist of volunteers meant that a recruiting drive had to be made among troops who had returned to Canada from the Western Front as well as from the general population of the Dominion. The creation of the new units would be in competition for desperately needed reinforcements for France and Flanders. At first, the Militia Minister, Mewburn, had made it plain that any soldier going to Siberia had to be a volunteer so as not to interfere with the much more vital recruitment for Europe.³⁴ Borden agreed. Yet Mewburn was also aware that enough volunteers might not be available and conscripted Canadians might be required.³⁵ In August the Canadian government had to sanction this new force by Orders-in-Council.³⁶ Since the German lines on the Western Front had been breached about mid-month, finding enough men for the fighting in France was the strategic focus, not Siberia. It was the beginning of "100 days" that demanded and consumed enormous numbers of troops, Canadians included, which would ultimately produce the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

But in August 1918 it took the Canadians and the British over a month to hammer out the costs and control of the Siberian contingent. Delay and confusion was one result, but it did show that there were many larger questions, even for Imperial partners, suddenly springing out of this enterprise. The most important issue for Borden's government was the command and direction of Canada's citizens in this far-off operation. Interestingly, the Siberian command structure between London and Ottawa echoed similar if larger events, which restructured the entire war alliance in 1917. Then, after French General Nivelle was made overall Allied Commander for the coordinated *Chemin des Dames* offensive, Field Marshal Haig had objected to having all British forces subordinate to a Frenchman. He had sought the right to appeal French orders to his government and a compromise had eventually been made between the two Allies that allowed Haig to forward his objections to the British War Cabinet, while at the same time proceeding with the orders to the point of execution.³⁷

In the Siberian operation, the original British orders, signed by the CIGS, General Sir Henry Wilson, officially appointed Canadian Major General Elmsley as commander of British forces in Siberia and subordinated him to General Otani as the Commander-in-Chief. Since the majority of the British force was to be Canadian and the commander was Canadian as well, Borden and Mewburn decided that the Dominion must have control of its own soldiers. Moreover, Borden had a long-standing policy of asserting national jurisdiction of Canada's forces and it had been hard-won. So he was not prepared to give up such power, especially since the overall operational control of the mission lay with the British War Office.³⁸ On 4 September 1918 Canada made this clear when it laid out the governance aspects of the force.³⁹ Canada demanded and Britain agreed that Major General Elmsley had the right to appeal to Ottawa any order he deemed to be disadvantageous to his contingent. Still, the War Office was not ready to concede all that immediately.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, new orders were issued to Elmsley on 10 September. They stated that the British units would operate in Siberia exactly as they had acted in

France and the wording of the order concerning communication with Ottawa was identical to that proposed by the Canadian government on 4 September.⁴¹ The directions also described Elmsley's relationship with Major General Knox as one of keeping each other informed of events rather than one being superior and the other subordinate. Knox was to be London's representative at the Allied Headquarters in Siberia for political and economic purposes rather than military.⁴² The British General had been issued similar guidance separately in late August, which specifically named Elmsley as British commander and himself as the British liaison officer to Otani.⁴³ The instructions to Elmsley also required him to keep in touch with Sir Charles Eliot, the British High Commissioner in Siberia, for political matters.

The British direction to Elmsley was significant because it acknowledged the Canadian general's responsibility to Ottawa for the security of Canadian troops. While such serpentine manoeuvring aided Canada in determining sovereignty over its own military, independent of Britain, it was equally another element of chaos in the overall command of Allied forces in Siberia. Furthermore, notwithstanding Britain's acquiescence of Canada's control of its soldiers, Ottawa demanded further concessions.

Clearly the Siberian question was also one that involved Canada's assertion of its national status. However necessary, what that helped to do was slow the Dominion's response and complicate the issue further. Ottawa insisted that before Canada committed its troops to Siberia it required that information concerning the expected general operations be passed to Ottawa as well as what part the United States would play. The Dominion also changed the British terms to stipulate that any of Elmsley's objections to foreign orders would not be decided against him except with the express approval of Ottawa, and that Elmsley could correspond directly with the Canadian government without any reference to the War Office or any other outside authority.⁴⁴ In the end, the War Office accepted the Canadian terms, likely because they were short of troops and time, indeed, so short that they could do nothing else.⁴⁵ Moreover, compared to Europe, Siberia was a sideshow.

The main body of the Canadian brigade was formed in Victoria, BC during the early fall of 1918. Despite Mewburn's wish that volunteers man the units, that proved to be impossible. Unpopular and divisive as it was, conscripts had to be enlisted. The advance party of headquarters and support staff led by Elmsley sailed for Russia in mid-October and arrived in Vladivostok on the 26th.⁴⁶ Some no doubt had high hopes of adventure when they left Canada, but there were others in the larger units, among the conscripts especially, who were far from happy when they left.⁴⁷

While the Canadian contingent was being assembled and dispatched, the British Cabinet was worrying over the strategy to be pursued in Siberia. In Washington, the president remained concerned over the presence of so large a force from Japan. With control of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the hands of the Czechs, Wilson saw no need for so many Japanese soldiers. Obviously frustrated, he vented to Lansing, "some influence is at work to pull absolutely from the

plan which we [the United States] proposed and to which the other governments assented, and proceed to do what we have said we would not do, namely form a new Eastern Front".⁴⁸ Wilson was correct.

The British pushed for the Czechs to link with White General Alexeiev's forces at the Volga River. They also wished to reconstitute a Russian Army to support the re-establishment of the Eastern Front and to assist the Czechs in the fight against the Bolsheviks. This new Russian Army, it was hoped in London, would support the provisional Russian government formed at the Ufa conference in September and located at Omsk. To help accomplish this task, General Knox identified Admiral Aleksandr V. Kolchak, the last Tsarist commander of the Black Sea Fleet, as "undoubtedly the best Russian for employment as advisor in raising Russian units in the Far East".⁴⁹ Moreover, the Japanese General Staff, Knox stated, had no objection to Kolchak as an advisor. He also emphasized that Semenov, the Cossack cavalry officer backed by the Japanese and, beforehand, supported by the British, was totally unsuited to be at the centre of any new Russian Army. Things got even more complicated.

On arrival in Vladivostok at the beginning of September, Knox found that the different Allies were not working together and that some ex-Russian officers wished to form a force under the Allied Commander-in-Chief (Japanese General Otani) with himself, Knox, as nominal commander. He saw this group of Russians as the nucleus for an army raised in the Russian maritime province. However, Knox was loath to start without the agreement of the French.⁵⁰ And he knew what a problem that would be. "The difficulties caused by petty jealousies among the Russians", the general observed, "are much increased by lack of agreement among Allies", and Eliot, the British High Commissioner, shared this observation.⁵¹ For both men, the French proved to be very difficult.

And there were frustrations among the French. As we know, they previously claimed responsibility for the Czechs in Siberia and, in their eyes, by extension any re-establishment of the Russian Army. But they had no resources to do any of this. Knox, on the other hand, had recently been given this responsibility by the War Office to do exactly what the French wanted to do.⁵² In early September 1918, when Knox wished to start training the Russians, Paris insisted that only the French had responsibility for the organization of the Czechs and that the Russians were "in perfect liaison with Czech troops", thus the "Russian forces in Siberia should therefore be reorganised in liaison with Czech troops".⁵³ The French then revealed that General Pierre T. C. Maurice Janin had been made Commander-in-Chief of Czech forces in Russia by the Czech National Council and was proceeding to Siberia. Clearly the French saw the responsibility to train and raise the new Russian Army as theirs alone. This attitude hid the underlying goal of the French, which was to be the main influence over the new Russian Army and subsequently the new Russian government that would replace the Bolsheviks when they were deposed.⁵⁴ However, it was essential to start training Russians immediately, as any delay would cause them to lose faith in the Allies altogether. For that reason the British ignored Paris and authorized Knox to begin training up to 3000 White troops. The French acquiesced, because at that moment they could do little

otherwise, but they constantly chafed under these limitations while continually asserting that the full organization of the Russian Army remained the responsibility of General Janin on his arrival in Siberia.⁵⁵ The United States also agreed to the training of the new army, but were adamant that there was no value in trying to re-establish the Eastern Front west of the Urals.⁵⁶

There was also confusion over what should be defended or not and where. The US consul at Irkutsk, Ernest L. Harris, restated the US view that nothing could be gained by trying to hold the line west of the Urals. The Russian population had no enthusiasm for continuing the war, and Allied statements, regardless of which country made them, were received with total indifference. The Bolsheviks, Harris thought, would immediately take over any city vacated by the Czechs without resistance. In Harris's opinion, no strong men had come forward to counter the Bolsheviks and lead the Russian people.⁵⁷ At the same time, after visiting Siberia, the US Ambassador to Japan, Roland Morris, told President Wilson that the Czechs on the Volga Front were in great danger of being overwhelmed, but they could not abandon their Russian Allies to the mercy of the Reds. Since the Czechs needed immediate help, General Graves proposed to go to Omsk with "a substantial portion of his command and form a base there for the winter, cooperating ... with other Allied forces in supporting the Czechs to the west". Ambassador Morris vigorously pushed the scheme back to Washington.⁵⁸

Once Morris's recommendations arrived, Lansing told the president that the United States would be blamed for the Czechs' defeat, but also said that he did not see how a small US force could help.⁵⁹ Wilson ordered General Graves to establish his headquarters at Harbin, Manchuria, where he would have access to an ice-free port during the winter. He forbade a camp at Omsk or any other place far inland.⁶⁰ On 27 September Lansing reiterated the US desire that the Czechs retire east of the Urals and abandon all efforts to link with the Allies in North Russia.⁶¹ The president believed that, since the Russians were not rallying to the Allied cause, all military effort in North Russia should also be abandoned. As such, it confirmed Wilson's belief that military intervention was interference in Russia's internal politics. This late September 1918 internal Allied debate simply stalled any substantial military action in Siberia.

The French found President Wilson's attitude both confusing and offensive. The French Ambassador in Washington, Jusserand, angrily conveyed these sentiments to Paris. He pointedly advised that this decision not only removed US material support to Allies, but in so doing "It is no longer a question of advancing or staying where we are but of abandoning what we now hold".⁶² In other words, despite saying he would not impose his will on other Allied governments, Wilson's actions jeopardized the efforts of the French and British to re-establish the Eastern Front.

As for the British, Balfour quickly dispatched the British War Cabinet's objections to Washington. Britain, he said, "fully appreciate[s] the attitude of the United States government and their desire to act in such a matter in accordance with the advice of their military authorities", but British military authorities considered that the Czechs should be able to hold the line against any force if

linked with the White Russians.⁶³ In any case, the British were reluctant to abandon Russians loyal to them. On the other hand, President Wilson was willing to send supplies to Siberia, but not to send them west of the Urals. Without these supplies it was doubtful that much could be accomplished in Western Siberia. If the Czechs failed to link with the White Russians and Allied forces, it would be a military disaster.⁶⁴ Despite both the French Ambassador's telegram and Lansing's message, the British were still getting contradictory signals from Siberia regarding the willingness of the United States to move to Omsk.⁶⁵ No one seemed to know for sure what the United States was willing to do or not do in Siberia.⁶⁶

This welter of differing views illustrates the problems the London decision-makers faced when trying to formulate British policy in Russia. However, they still counted on support from Japan with its force of 70,000 to help re-establish an Eastern Front west of the Urals, despite having been told from the very beginning that the Japanese had no intention of venturing west of Lake Baikal. When the Czechs evacuated their force from Samara in mid-October when attacked by 25,000 Reds, it became obvious that the Japanese would not advance out of the Siberian maritime province.⁶⁷ Angrily, London protested to Tokyo claiming that not aiding the Czech forces was "a great mistake on political, economic and military grounds".⁶⁸ But no British pleading could budge the Japanese from eastern Siberia. On 23 October Japan urged the Czechs to retreat to Omsk for their safety.⁶⁹ The Japanese simply wanted to consolidate their forces in Eastern Siberia for control of the region. This was President Wilson's fear. Again, Tokyo's massive troop build-up and refusal to help further west eclipsed the supposed greater Allied objective. And lack of action from the United States tarnished their image among Russians and other Allies.

Another serious consequence was that faith in the United States was strongly shaken among the Czechs and potential elements of any new Russian Army. Special US Consul J. Paul Jameson reported from Chelyabinsk that the "Czechs hold the United States government alone responsible for Allied failure to aid them on the Volga Front". Only months before, the United States had been the most popular nation with the Czechs and Russians, but the reverse was now true.⁷⁰ Jameson calculated that just a few troops sent to the Czechs' aid would restore US prestige. But even with this advice, Wilson would not permit US soldiers to venture into Siberia's interior.

The US Commander was also concerned that he was not being told everything he needed to know. General Graves complained that his government kept the Japanese fully informed of all the US commander's orders, but that he was "kept in the dark as to any agreements between the Japanese government and the United States government".⁷¹ This was undoubtedly so, since Graves was never made privy to the accord among all the Allies, including the United States, that the Japanese would hold the Commander-in-Chief's position and all other Allied military forces would be subordinate to him. Added to this confusion was the lack of faith the US administration had in the interim Russian government at Omsk. The British Foreign Office shared these doubts. And so chaos continued to grow among the powers ranged against the Bolsheviks. It was nevermore so

than among the various White elements, which attempted to establish a united Russian government in Siberia. While the senior Allies were protesting President Wilson's attitude throughout September, at the same time, thousands of miles away in Ufa, various White Russian factions were struggling to create an all-Russian government.

White Russian Government in Siberia

On 8 September 1918 the Ufa Conference, made up of anti-Bolshevik elements, tried to hammer out a consensus government. But it broke down into bickering over what form it should take. The majority of the delegates represented the Samara Socialist Revolutionaries (SR) and were opposed by the Siberian government centred at Omsk. Near the end of the conference, the Siberian government arrested the SR members of the Siberian Regional Duma (coincidentally the political entity from which the Siberian government had its authority).⁷² Although the ministers were freed almost immediately, a Cossack member was assassinated. B. F. Alston, the British Consul at Vladivostok, reported that these actions destroyed any credibility for the Omsk-based government, but also reduced the power of the SRs at the Ufa conference.⁷³ As a result, on 23 September the conference appointed a five-man directorate to act as an all-Russian provisional government. Regardless, the British did not consider such a creation stable enough to be formally recognized.⁷⁴

As for the United States, they too did not think this new government was ready to wield power. The US Ambassador disapproved of the formation of an all-Russian government. Instead he wanted the individual provinces to work out their differences, "by civil war if necessary", and establish their own district governments. Then, once stable, these provincial governments could form a central government. Alston thought the US opinion to be naïve and that the only salvation for the Russians was for the Allies to "take them by the hand" and lead them to sound government.⁷⁵ Ever contrary to other Allied views, Washington told Boris Bakhmeteff, the White Russian Ambassador there, that the United States was not prepared to recognize the new provisional government, "though we watch with interest and hope for the future".⁷⁶ Harris, US Consul at Irkutsk, strongly concurred. He told Lansing that recognition of the new Omsk government would only strengthen its position and encourage it to have Siberia break away from Russia to form its own country. There was too much internal strife and no strong leader to organize a definite course of action. Without the presence of the Czechs, Harris believed that the Bolsheviks would quickly take over.⁷⁷

Adding to the maze of cross-purposes and skewed jurisdictions was the Japanese attitude towards the various Russian factions in Siberia. Tokyo did not want a strong Russian government in the region, and when the Omsk regime attempted to float loans using Russian state property as collateral, the Japanese protested. Employing the argument that none of the various factions posing as governments was legally authorized to dispose of Russian state property, Japan's Ambassador to Britain proposed that the five Allies involved in the Siberian intervention devise

a policy where the “unanimous judgement” of the Allies involved would rule on loan applications.⁷⁸ In London, Balfour thought that Japanese Ambassador Chinda’s proposal had some merit. At that moment he did not know that it was disingenuous. Japan was then secretly supporting the Cossack leader Semenov and another lesser Cossack ataman, Ivan Kalmykov, in their independent actions in the region. Both Cossack chieftains were in opposition to the Omsk all-Russian government.⁷⁹ Thus, the Siberian situation was highly fluid, full of conflicting ideas and a cesspool of confusion. There was no common Allied policy with respect to what was to be achieved by the intervention. Into this cauldron of mixed goals the French now once more demanded that they be the sole agent to train the Russian Army being raised for the provisional all-Russian government.⁸⁰

French Russian Ambitions

Originally General Janin was ordered to Siberia to command the Czech forces in the region. The infighting and disorganization shown by the different anti-Bolshevik groups convinced the Quai d’Orsay that Janin had to concentrate on influencing only those stronger and better-organized elements if they were to defeat the Bolsheviks.⁸¹ In this way he would also promote the French objective of being a major influence in post-war Russia.

At the end of September 1918 the French Council of Ministers decided to take responsibility for the organization of the new Russian army by unilaterally extending the recent August 1918 accord, which had divided responsibility for financing operations in Russia between Britain and France. Britain would be responsible for the North, and France the areas around Moscow and for Polish, Serbian and Czech forces.⁸² As a result, the French General Staff issued unilateral instructions that no one was to train Russian forces in Siberia except the French.⁸³ The problem was the French Ministry of Finance then bluntly pointed out to the Quai d’Orsay that France could not afford the expense this would entail.⁸⁴ Consequently, the French did little.

Despite the French ultimatum, General Knox had been authorized to train up to 3000 Russians as a cadre for the new Russian Army. But to keep some semblance of Allied collegiality in the face of French incapacity, the War Office proposed that a division of responsibilities be made between Knox and Janin. The proposal gave the French general the task of advising the Omsk government on the direction of ongoing operations west of Lake Baikal, especially advising on the use of Czech units and already-formed Russian units engaged in the fighting. He would act as Commander-in-Chief for Allied forces west of Lake Baikal.⁸⁵ Knox’s task would be to continue to train the Russian Army being mobilized and to advise the Omsk government on how the new army would be organized. The British general would also secure the arrival of needed material from Vladivostok and the dispatch of reinforcements to the Front.⁸⁶ After much negotiation, the French finally, if reluctantly, accepted this division of labour.

This was politically face-saving for the French since, by early September 1918, General Knox had already set up an efficient training system. Earlier in August,

when Knox had met Admiral Kolchak in Tokyo, they had established a close and friendly relationship. At that meeting the two men had decided that the training of any new Russian Army could be accomplished only with British supervision, instructors and material.⁸⁷ Knox met Kolchak again in Vladivostok prior to the Russian leaving for Omsk. The Admiral told Knox that he was extremely bitter towards the Japanese and United States. Moreover, he believed that the Japanese had no intention of giving real help to the Russians.⁸⁸ This attitude did not bode well for future relations between the all-Russian government at Omsk and the Japanese in Siberia. Nonetheless, Kolchak still had faith in British support and in Knox's friendship when he left for Omsk in late September.

Knox was therefore pleased when he heard that Kolchak had accepted an invitation from General V. B. Boldyrev, the Russian Commander-in-Chief at Omsk and one of the five directors of the all-Russian government, to become its Defence Minister. Kolchak had been on his way to join General Alexeiev and the White Russian forces west of the Urals when he was informed of Alexeiev's sudden death.⁸⁹ The five directors of the all-Russian government had just arrived in Omsk from Ufa on 9 October and had convinced the old Omsk Duma to disband.⁹⁰ As the new Defence Minister, Kolchak added prestige to the fledgling government, and being a close friend of Knox assured the continuation of the British control of training over the objections of the French. On 24 October Knox formalized this training agreement with Boldyrev and Kolchak at Omsk and things seemed to be coming into order. But it did not last long.⁹¹ The end of the fighting in Europe on 11 November changed the *raison d'être* for the entire Allied intervention, not least of all in Siberia.

Germany's capitulation removed any need to re-establish an Eastern Front. It also meant that the Allies could concentrate their efforts on evacuating the Czechoslovak forces from Russia via Vladivostok. However, with the Armistice removing much of the original rationale for being anywhere in Russia, it only put into competition other national considerations of each Ally. Moreover, the armistice with Germany did not stop the Reds from attacking the various White forces, or the Czech Legion and Allied troops supporting them.

With Germany removed from fighting, Bolshevism now became the enemy, if only unofficially. Sir Henry Wilson, the British CIGS, noted on the eve of the armistice that "Our real danger is not the Boche but Bolshevism."⁹² Lord Milner, in discussions with US General Tasker Bliss, opposed the demobilization of the German Army because "Germany may have to be the bulwark against Russian Bolshevism."⁹³ On 1 November 1918, William Bullitt, a US diplomat who had been sent to Russia by President Wilson in 1917, put forward a scheme on how best to combat Bolshevism, and he also underscored the danger of a Bolshevik dictatorship.⁹⁴ But the Allied populations the world over were weary of war and none of the Allied governments had a mandate to continue the fight in Russia. Moreover, there was no consensus among the Allies on how to proceed, or whether fighting the Bolsheviks was now an action to pursue.

Powerful statesmen like Balfour still believed that Britain had a responsibility to help the Czechs escape Russia as well as supporting the new White governments.⁹⁵

Yet Balfour was also acutely aware of the limitations of Britain's ability to fight Bolshevism. He acknowledged Britain's dependence on the other Allies to help combat the Soviets. Nevertheless, there was no real possibility of immediately vacating Siberia, nor were there the resources or the will to send in more troops. Other Allies present did not necessarily have the same objectives as the British. The Japanese in particular were working to secure a sole position in the region east of Lake Baikal and in Manchuria.

And so, operations now continued in Siberia as if an armistice had not happened. Only in the capitals of the Allied nations did Russian military intervention lose its impetus in the face of the much larger issues of a bloodily won peace. After 11 November 1918, the Paris Peace Conference was now the main concern of the Allied heads of state. Events in Russia only concerned them insofar as they affected these negotiations. Yet Allied soldiers remained in Russia fighting and dying.

Notes

1. FO to Greene, Telegram 719 D, London, 27 July 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/131624.
2. Cecil, minute to French letter 30 July 1918 and FO memorandum 132506/W/38, London, 14 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/132506.
3. Ishii to Lansing, Memorandum, Washington, 2 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 324–5.
4. British Press Release, Serial No. C. 0464, Vladivostok, 9 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/136318.
5. Polk to Morris, telegram, Washington, 3 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 328–9.
6. Unterberger, 87.
7. Caldwell to Lansing, Telegram 79, Vladivostok, 6 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 332.
8. Moser to Lansing, telegram, Harbin, 10 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 338–9.
9. IntSum 14 (Siberia), 23 August 1918.
10. Jordan to FO, Telegram 702, Peking, 19 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/143959.
11. Chinda to Balfour, letter (file 167), London, 5 August 1918, FO minutes on same letter, London, 6 August 1918 and Balfour to Chinda, letter 125371/W/38/18, London, 7 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/135371.
12. William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure 1918–1920* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, no date; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 55.
13. Caldwell to Lansing, Telegram 107, Vladivostok, 20 August 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 352.
14. IntSum 15 (Siberia), 10 September 1918.
15. Graves, 57.
16. Polk, diary entry re: cabinet meeting, 16 July 1918 *PWW* Vol. 48, 639; Polk to Morris, telegram, Washington, 17 July 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 292; Woodrow Wilson to Polk, letter, Washington, 17 July 1918 *PWW* Vol. 48, 639.
17. Hodgson to FO, Telegram 64, Vladivostok, 10 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/138592.
18. Greene to FO, Telegram 883, Tokyo, 15 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/142059.
19. Rear Admiral Hong Kong to Admiralty, Telegram 493, Hong Kong, 15 August 1918, PRO FO 371/3287/142109.
20. Robertson to WO, telegram, Vladivostok, 19 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/144893.
21. FO to Barclay, Telegram 3176, London, 21 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3287/144893.
22. WC Minutes 462, 21 August 1918 PRO Cab 23/7.

23. Barclay to Lansing, memorandum 894, Washington, 12 August 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 248–9.
24. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 14 August 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 248.
25. Lansing, “Memorandum of the Secretary of State on Siberian Policy after Conference with the President, August 20 1918”, Washington, 20 August 1918, *FRUS 1918 Russia* Vol. II, 351.
26. WC Minutes 457 (IWC Minutes 30), 13 August 1918 PRO Cab 23/7.
27. This appears to be the first time that Canada, in the words of Borden, expressed the view that the United States was more important to Canada than Europe and that the continuation of the British Empire as an entity required US friendship and support. This 1918 comment was well before the strong views presented in the 1920s at the London Naval Talks.
28. Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 22 August 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 323.
29. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 23 August 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 332. Italics in original.
30. Barclay to FO, Telegram 3865, Washington, 28 August 1918 *PWW* Vol. 49, 373.
31. Ishii to Lansing, “Statement of the Japanese Ambassador”, Washington, 27 August 1918, *FRUS 1918 Russia* Vol. II, 357–8.
32. Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, 343.
33. Notes on Conference held in General Radcliffe’s Room, WO – 12.00 noon August 13th, 1918, London, 13 August 1918 *LAC RG 9 III A 3 Vol. 371 File A3 SEF folder Force HQ 27 Mobilization Generally*.
34. Mewburn to Kemp, letter, London, 13 August 1918 *Borden Papers*, 56166–7.
35. Mewburn to Borden, letter, London, 13 August 1918 *Borden Papers*, 56164–5.
36. Order-in-Council P.C. 1983, 12 August 1918 in *DCER Vol. I*, 207 and Order-in-Council 2073 – 23 Aug 1918 – Formations of CEF for service in Siberia File 9-78 *LAC RG 9 III A 1 Vol. 98 file 10-14-19 (Parts II, III & VI) Lists of Orders in Council*.
37. Hankey, 617.
38. Borden to Mewburn, letter, London, 13 August 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56162–3.
39. Gow to Mewburn, Telegram Y1138 CATSUP, London, 4 September 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56182.
40. Gow to Mewburn, Telegram Y1138.
41. CIGS to Elmsley, General Staff orders 0.1/173/496, London, 10 September 1918 *LAC RG 9 III A 2 Vol. 362 File A3 SEF folder 114 Conferences, Instructions, Orders in Council, Royal Warrants CEF (Siberia)*.
42. Notes on Conference held in General Radcliffe’s Room, WO – 12.00 noon August 13th, 1918, London, 13 August 1918 *LAC RG 9 III A 3 Vol. 371 File A3 SEF folder Force HQ 27 Mobilization Generally*.
43. WO to Knox, Telegram 65077 cipher M.I., London, 26 August 1918 *LAC RG 9 III A 2 Vol. 362 File A3 SEF folder 114 Conferences, Instructions, Orders in Council, Royal Warrants CEF (Siberia)*.
44. Mewburn to WO, draft Telegram Y1192, Ottawa, 10 September 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56189.
45. Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 230–1, 232.
46. R. Gwynne, circular memorandum E.H. C No. 2514, Ottawa, 21 September 1918 *LAC RG 9 III A 3 Vol. 367 File A3 SEF Folder B-H 20-2 Movement of Troops Re: Instructions*.
47. Sgt Llewellyn L. Lewis to sister Nell, Letter, Vancouver, 10 October 1918. Original letters in possession of Sgt Lewis’s daughter Mrs Mary Jessee of White Rock British Columbia, Canada. Copies in author’s possession. Sgt Lewis was attached to the Headquarters Company of MGen Elmsley’s command. His brother, Major Harry Lewis, was a doctor attached to the medical company who also sailed to Vladivostok with the first contingent in October 1918. Lewis wrote in his first letter home to his sister and parents,

"There are a fine bunch of fellows on the expedition and we expect to have a real good time."

48. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 17 September 1918, in *PWW* Vol. 51, 25.
49. DMO to Lord Hardinge, letter 455 (M.I.2.d), London, 4 September 1918; Knox to DMI, Telegram 9, Tokyo, 31 August 1918; Knox to DMI, telegram (unnumbered), Tokyo, 31 August 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/152493.
50. Knox to DMI, Telegram 20, Vladivostok, 7 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/154261.
51. Knox to DMI, Telegram 20, Vladivostok, 7 September 1918.
52. Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921 Volume II - Britain and the Russian Civil War November 1918-February 1920* (Princeton University Press, 1968), 32.
53. Derby to FO, Telegram 1093, Paris, 11 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/155658 and Pichon to Derby, Note, Paris, 11 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/157073.
54. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 33.
55. Derby to FO, Telegram 1145, Paris, 24 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/162056.
56. Barclay to the FO, Telegram 4323, Washington, 24 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/162524 and Lansing to Barclay, Memorandum, Washington, 1 October 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 399.
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58. Morris to Lansing, telegram, Vladivostok, 23 September 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 387-8 and o Enclosure I to Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 24 September 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 98-101.
59. Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 24 September 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 97-8.
60. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Washington, 26 September 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 121.
61. Lansing to Barclay, enclosure to letter, Washington, 27 September 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 140.
62. Jusserand to French Foreign Ministry, Telegram 1334, Washington, 28 September 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 153.
63. Balfour to Barclay, draft telegram, London, 2 October 1918, Appendix to WC Minutes 481, 2 October 1918 PRO Cab 23/8.
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65. WC Minutes 482, 3 October 1918 PRO Cab 23/8.
66. Wiseman to Reading, letter, New York, 2 October 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 188; WC Minutes 481 2 October, 1918 PRO Cab 23/8; Barclay to Lansing, letter 1099, Washington, 3 October 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 403-4.
67. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 264-5.
68. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. I*, 265.
69. Morris to Lansing, telegram, Tokyo, 27 October 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 418.
70. Jameson to Lansing, telegram, Chelyabinsk, 10 October 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 411.
71. Graves to Harris, letter, Vladivostok, 25 October 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 449.
72. Harris to Lansing, Telegram 118, Irkutsk, 25 September 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 392.
73. Alston to FO, Telegram 95, Vladivostok, 30 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/164996.
74. Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, 350.
75. Alston to FO, Telegram 159, Vladivostok, 16 October 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/173853.
76. Lansing to Bakhmeteff, letter, Washington, 17 October 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 413.
77. Harris to Lansing, telegram, Irkutsk, 1 November 1918, FRUS 1918 Russia Vol. II, 420-1.
78. Chinda to Balfour, letter 258, London, 18 October 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/175830.

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88. Knox to War Office, paraphrase Telegram 72, Vladivostok, no date but attached to Knox to CIGS, Telegram 3, 19 September 1918 PRO FO 371/3293/161942.
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92. C. E. Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries* (London: Cassel and Company, 1927), 148.
93. Rothwell, 257.
94. Bullitt, Memorandum, “The Bolshevik [sic] Movement in Europe”, Washington, 2 November 1918 *PWW* Vol. 51, 563–8.
95. Balfour, “Notes on our policy in Russia by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, London, 1 November 1918, Appendix to WC Minutes 511, 10 December 1918 PRO Cab 23/8.

9

Dying in Russia While Others Debate, October 1918–January 1919

The 11 November 1918 Armistice did not halt the killing in Europe. Fighting ceased only on the Western Front against the Germans, and in the Middle East against the Turks. Even as the Europeans gave thanks for their deliverance from four long years of war, battles continued to rage elsewhere. The Armistice changed only the priorities and added to the Russian chaos. Revolution and civil war rampaged through six distinct areas of Russia – North Russia, South Russia, the Baltic States, Central Siberia, the Ukraine and Crimea and Siberia east of Lake Baikal. In each of these regions different hues of White Russian sought supremacy over their Red enemies.

The White factions were myriad and adhered only nominally to a common goal of destroying Bolshevism and its Moscow government. Some regions fought to remain independent of Russia, some had governments that were socialist but not Bolshevik, and some were military dictatorships with reactionary goals of returning to a monarchy. To this mix was added the different Allied positions, some publicly espoused and some kept secret from other Allied governments. For Britain in particular, these national positions were complicated. Various members of the British Empire had their own national policies that did not necessarily follow the exact game plan voiced by Britain.

It all reached a frenzy at the Armistice, which was a watershed in Allied dealings with Russia. The Armistice changed the rules as well as national and public expectations. Before 11 November 1918, all efforts of the Allies, both in Russia and elsewhere, were directed at winning the Great War. After that date there was no unifying goal for the Allies. Rather, it was every nation for itself and, with respect to Russia, no nation was sure what could be achieved. Yet little could be accomplished until the Paris Peace Conference was completed and the Versailles Treaty signed. Meanwhile pockets of Allied troops sought to support old cohorts against Bolshevik aggression. Armistice Day, 11 November, was no different than any other day in 1918 in Russia. A Canadian artillery battery distinguished itself in battle against Bolsheviks in North Russia on the day the Armistice occurred and earned the praise of the new British commander in Archangel.¹ While fighting continued, the politicians argued.

Decisions over what the Allies should do and what they could do in Russia were part of independent discussions in the halls of power in all the Allied capitals,

but little or no consensus could be reached by each nation's decision-makers. Throughout late 1917 and the winter and spring of 1918, the very real threat of a German victory had forced a modicum of unity in Allied strategies on Russian affairs. Even President Wilson finally subordinated his doubts on military intervention to back a unified Allied policy of sending troops to both North Russia and Siberia. But, the Armistice heralded the end of this uncommon Allied unity. Coordination ceased when the Supreme War Council ended its role in Russian affairs. The withdrawal of US representation caused the end of Anglo–French consultations. Both governments acted independently from then on, without exchanging information before taking action.² Diplomatic chaos continued to direct Allied policies. Wheels within wheels, which were operating in the various halls of power, now came to dominate policies for Russia. No Allied consensus was possible. And even within each country's government, there were factions disputing what plans to pursue.

In London, just prior to the Armistice, Lord Cecil acknowledged that the chief danger to Britain was Bolshevism and that recognition of the Soviet government would be disastrous; however, he was still against any anti-Bolshevik crusade.³ At the same time, in Russia, Bruce Lockhart, having been freed from incarceration, made his report to Balfour on conditions under the Soviets.⁴ His November assessment remained on close-hold until the end of December.⁵ Nevertheless, it declared that the Bolsheviks were the strongest faction in Russia and were the de facto government, using terrorism and murder to destroy all opposition. Although backed by only ten per cent of the population, Bolshevism still had the largest following of the many factions in Russia. However, Lenin's ultimate goal was a "general European revolution on a class basis".⁶ The Red Army was now a force to be reckoned with. Bolshevism's weakness, however, was its economic stratagem, or lack thereof. There was no system for the creation of wealth and there was a great shortage of food. If Bolshevism could be contained in Russia it would eventually self-destruct.

Lockhart proposed three courses of action: one, abandon all operations in Russia, secure the safe exit of the Czechoslovak Legion and treat with the Bolsheviks; two, same as one except fight the Bolsheviks by supporting the White factions and new border states with arms and money to form an economic cordon sanitaire around Bolshevik Russia; or, three, intervene with heavy Allied military force in Siberia, North Russia and South Russia, linking with Generals Alexeiev's and Denikin's forces for a march on Moscow. Lockhart recommended this last course as the solution.⁷ Both Balfour and Cecil found the paper thought-provoking but impractical.⁸ Yet other Cabinet members also had ideas.

At a War Cabinet meeting on the eve of the Armistice, Winston Churchill, the Minister for Munitions at the time, pushed to have Britain rebuild the German Army to act as a deterrent to Bolshevism.⁹ His opinion echoed Lord Milner's words to US General Bliss earlier in October, views shared by Sir Henry Wilson, the CIGS.¹⁰ However, Wilson and Milner were against sending additional British troops to Russia. Yet those already in place were not about to be relieved in the near term. The Foreign Office still saw a need for a continuing Allied military

presence there. On 13 November 1918, the Minister made ten recommendations requiring the continued intervention of British troops.¹¹ Despite considering Lockhart's advice to be impractical, the Foreign Office believed that Britain should remain in Russia.

To show how rapidly strategic perceptions had shifted, only three days after the Armistice, the War Cabinet devoted the majority of its time to discussions on Bolshevism and Russia. Balfour sought approval of the Foreign Office's proposals. Although Lockhart and others had advised a crusade against Bolshevism, it was impossible because of the magnitude of such an operation and the lack of support from the public. Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary urged that Britain continue to support anti-Bolshevik elements with whatever resources were available. Walter Long, the Colonial Secretary, wished to retain the Canadians in Siberia, but knew that Canada wanted its soldiers home immediately.¹²

Discussion then turned to the White governments and the secessionist states that had broken from the Russian Empire. Arguments were made for Britain to only support the new states in the south and Russian factions supporting the Allies, while others urged commitment only for anti-Bolshevik governments that actually affected British Imperial interests and were easily aided. Lloyd George supported Balfour's policy to give all material help possible to the Whites, but he also wanted the British public told what Bolshevism meant in practice.¹³ Cabinet's acceptance of the Foreign Office recommendations meant that the Russian government set up at Omsk would be officially recognized by Britain. On 16 November, the Foreign Office told Sir Charles Eliot in Vladivostok that recognition of the Omsk government was about to be announced, but that Britain could only acknowledge it if it was strong enough to control the region effectively.¹⁴

In short, British political leadership wished to fight Bolshevism through the proxies of the White forces and would support the current efforts only with the resources in place. With the end of fighting in Western Europe, Britain was not prepared to take on another full-scale military operation. The principle was to continue as before without increasing the numbers of British soldiers or publicly declaring a crusade against Bolshevism. This was hardly a principle, but rather a vote for the status quo. Moreover, domestic unrest also concerned the British Cabinet and many members thought that Bolshevism was at its heart.¹⁵ Bolshevism was not only a foreign problem but also one that had a direct impact on Britain's domestic peace. Yet creating a coherent strategy to combat the threat remained illusive.

Meanwhile the French feared the Bolsheviks, as much if not more than the British. In October General Lavergne had reported the growing strength of the Soviet regime. Lenin and company were ready to back world revolution with direct military action. The Allies would have to decide whether to reinforce their military in Russia or negotiate with the Moscow government. He did not recommend treating with the Soviet administration since its survival would expose Western Europe, and especially Germany, to the "virus" of revolution.¹⁶ Diplomats at the Quai d'Orsay predicted "a terrible recrudescence of Bolshevism in the Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland with a *jacquerie*, the massacre of estate owners, pillage, etc."¹⁷

With these warnings, the French General Staff planned for military action through Southern Russia with landings in the Crimea and occupation of the Ukraine. The French government promoted these plans both out of fear of revolution at home and from a desire to re-establish France's political and economic pre-eminence in Russia. Yet public demand for rapid demobilization and opposition to further military adventures forced the French General Staff to reduce its ambitions.¹⁸ Nevertheless they allocated six divisions to occupy Odessa and Sebastopol with the aim of advancing into both the Dnieper and Donetz basins and linking with the White forces commanded by Denikin.¹⁹

The United States were less supportive of military action, but still considered the Bolsheviks a threat to peace and democracy in Germany and Central Europe.²⁰ Having been warned of the excesses of Bolshevism, President Wilson tried to emphasize the need to help the new nations and the peoples suffering from the effects of the war. However, he preferred moral rather than military aid. On 11 November, in his speech to Congress on the details of the Armistice, Wilson declared that the war's end had brought not just political change but revolution, which had yet to play out in Central Europe and Russia.²¹ Nevertheless, the president saw no future for intervention. In his naïve idealism, he believed that disorder would eventually sort itself out.²² The United States was willing to give all help and support necessary to democratically minded movements in Europe short of military aid. While Wilson was not certain what strategy to follow, his goal was to be the leader whose policy was at the forefront of the victors. Moscow quickly challenged this desire to be the moral leader of the democracies as being hypocritical.

The Bolshevik Foreign Minister demanded that Wilson publicly promulgate the Allied demands. Chicherin threatened to expose the president as just another capitalist leader who was opposed to the interests of the Russian people and of all workers, if no response was forthcoming.²³ When Lansing proposed a rebuttal to Chicherin's telegram berating Wilson, the US president decided to defer his reply until after his arrival at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919.²⁴ Lansing's version of the president's reply was not to be directed to the Bolshevik government, but rather to the Russian people and the world. His draft statement appeared to leave the door ajar for US military aid to Russia when he suggested that "the United States proposes to assist by all means in its power".²⁵ It is assumed that deferment of an answer was made because of the open-ended sense of Lansing's proposal.

Newton Baker, Wilson's Secretary of War, didn't agree with Lansing. He thought the continued presence of US military in Russia would be counter-productive, particularly in Siberia.²⁶ The longer the United States stayed, the more additional Japanese soldiers would be sent there and the more difficult it would be to induce Japan to leave. Although Baker claimed little understanding of Bolshevism, he still did not like it. Regardless, he believed that "we ought then to let the Russians work out their own problem".²⁷

Wilson now had conflicting advice from two of his most senior Cabinet Ministers, Lansing and Baker. This was reason enough for him to delay any

decision before his consultations with French and British leaders. Nonetheless, conferring with European Allies would not make creating a Russian strategy any easier. The US position was shaped directly by the personal preferences of President Wilson. In the immediate aftermath of the Armistice, he still felt bound by his declaration of non-interference in Russia's internal politics. At the same time, he publicly abhorred the Red Terror.²⁸ And fear of Bolshevism was what drove the European Russian policy. However, the public throughout the victorious Allied nations expected peace to bring a quick demobilization and the return of the soldiers to civilian pursuits in short order.

Even in Canada, still a small player on the international scene but a large contributor to the Allied force in Siberia, there were grievous doubts. Some had already begun to surface in Sir Robert Borden's Cabinet, itself a product of a coalition government not yet a year old. On 10 November 1918, the Canadian prime minister left for England as soon as the signing of an armistice was indicated.²⁹ Only three days after the Armistice, Acting Prime Minister Thomas White asked A. E. Kemp in London to "discuss Siberian Expedition with Prime Minister as soon as he arrives".³⁰ Most of the Canadian Cabinet believed that "no further troops should be sent".

A few days later, Borden quickly responded that there was no intention of either the British or Canadians being used in any offensive actions and "that Canadian Forces now in Siberia should remain until Spring", and "that the additional forces originally arranged for should proceed to Siberia".³¹ Borden then pointed out that one good reason to continue was Canadian business opportunities now that peace was here. It was a new dimension and one that was not what the Canadian Cabinet had expected. On 22 November, an anxious "Tom" White wired that the use of draftees may be illegal and sought a delay to fill the gaps with volunteers.³² It was a sign of the difficult politics of Borden's coalition government. With the armistice agreed, there was great pressure both from members of Borden's cabinet who were not in his party as well as public opinion to bring the Canadians home and demobilize quickly. The Cabinet felt that further expeditions in Russia to fight something that was not understood or, in most cases, even known, had the potential for political disaster for the "delicate" Canadian union government.

Domestic labour and socialist opposition to the intervention, which had actually caused a split among Canadian organized labour, echoed the political concerns of the government.³³ A Bolshevik-type revolt in Canada remained an underlying fear. Even Borden was not immune to these worries. On 11 November he had recorded in his diary, "Revolt has spread all over Germany. The question is whether it will stop there. The world has drifted far from its old anchorage and no man can with certainty prophesy what the outcome will be."³⁴ These concerns occurred to him even before word of the doubts of his ministers reached him.

Notwithstanding the potential for political disaster, Borden tried to convince White that Canada's withdrawal from the Siberian expedition would be disgraceful and was a matter of Canada breaking a promise given in good faith to the Imperial government. Nevertheless, Borden left it to his Cabinet to decide.³⁵ Yet there was no consensus among his ministers. With this threat of a Cabinet

split pushing him, White told Borden, “There is an extraordinary sentiment in Canada in favour of getting all our men home and at work as soon as possible.”³⁶ Nevertheless, Borden’s Cabinet decided to continue with Canada’s involvement, but placed the caveat that any soldier desiring to return home after one year could do so.³⁷

Canadian policy remained officially supportive of intervention, but that support was at best lukewarm and brittle. Borden was guided by a sense of responsibility to honour a promise made to Britain, but also saw participation as an opportunity for Canadian economic growth in Siberia.³⁸ No doubt he also realized that the much ramped-up Canadian industrial war effort could and would need to produce other things to survive once the demand for munitions fell off. Peacetime demand for domestic goods would satisfy some of this newfound industrial capability, but not all, and foreign markets like Russia might provide the rest. His judgement to leave the final decision to his ministers was guided by political pragmatism, leaving it to those at home to assess the mood of the Canadian public. Borden remained true to his convictions to support the intervention, but as 1919 progressed his views began to alter.

Notwithstanding Borden’s endorsement, opposition among Canadians was growing. Radical socialism was particularly vociferous and had infected Canadian labour. It was particularly strong in British Columbia where the Canadian contingent was concentrating in preparation for dispatch to Siberia.³⁹ In Victoria, radical labour waged a vigorous propaganda campaign aimed directly at the soldiers assembling for Siberia.⁴⁰ This propaganda caused morale to plummet and discipline suffered.⁴¹ The French Canadian company of the 259th Battalion, manned mostly by conscripts, was particularly susceptible to this socialist message. It came to a head on the departure date, 21 December, when some of the French Canadians refused to march to the docks. Only physical force caused them to move and board the transport, funnelled between two lines formed by the Ontario companies with fixed bayonets.⁴²

An immediate and emotional analysis of the incident laid blame on Quebecois resistance to conscription and the province’s anti-militarism said to be instilled in the French-Canadian psyche. Yet that interpretation fails to take into account British Columbia’s strong socialist movement and its support from radical labour.⁴³ The mutiny could only strengthen the Canadian Cabinet’s fear that a Bolshevik-type revolt could occur in Canada. Where the Great Powers sought policies to contain and possibly destroy Bolshevism in Russia, the smaller powers, such as Canada, hoped to remove causes for internal revolt by returning the men home as soon as possible and demobilizing the common soldiers to accelerate a return to peacetime life. At the same time, the Russian Bolsheviks endeavoured to survive the sudden peace thrust on the world.

While the Allies were arguing stratagems for Russia, the Bolsheviks continued to consolidate their power. The lack of unified Allied Russian policies permitted this to happen.⁴⁴ As the Germans retreated from the east, the Reds prepared to move into the abandoned territory behind them, all the while making conciliatory peace overtures to the Allies.⁴⁵ Chicherin’s peace gambit was underscored

when documents were sent to the Allies that showed that the Bolsheviks were willing to pay all pre-war debts, compensation to foreign citizens whose property or enterprises had been nationalized and to allow the entire Russian gold reserve to be held as a pledge for the debts owed.⁴⁶

The Bolsheviks had bought off the Germans previously with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and they thought that the Allies would be coerced into war's end with similar soothing methods.⁴⁷ Although some members of the Foreign Office advised to begin talks with Moscow, the senior members of the British government, as well as the other Allied statesmen, considered it premature to enter into any relationship with the Soviets.⁴⁸ So at the end of 1918, the Red Army continued the civil war and the Allies were not yet prepared to abandon the Whites. No peace was forthcoming and Chicherin's overture was ignored.

The Allies rejection of these truce-feelers did not frighten or disappoint Lenin or his confrères. Some believed that the West was ripe for revolution and expected it to occur in the near future.⁴⁹ Fighting continued across Russia, with Allied troops either in direct combat with Red armies or indirectly through support to White forces such as those of General Denikin in the South.

While the Allies discussed various options, events in Russia often made these futile. The 14 November 1918 British War Cabinet decision to recognize the Omsk government, not yet implemented, became impossible five days later when it was overthrown by a military dictatorship led by Admiral Kolchak. The sudden coup forced Britain to re-evaluate its resolution. The French would not support the British decision and neither would the United States. Both these Allies believed that the Omsk Directorate was no more stable than other White governments.⁵⁰ But, for the moment, none of this initially deterred the British Foreign Office.

Although Britain had been about to acknowledge formally the Omsk government, on 19 November Balfour had second thoughts. On 22 November, four days after Kolchak's coup, the recognition stalled.⁵¹ The coup had proved to be problematic for Britain. Yet the reasons for the overthrow of the Omsk Directorate were more concerned with internal Russian politics than the desire of one person to seize political power. The Omsk Directorate had been formed at the end of September 1918 as a result of the Ufa Conference.⁵² The five-man Directorate was a compromise of right-wing anti-Bolsheviks and Social Revolutionaries (SR).⁵³ A Cabinet was also formed with Admiral Kolchak as War Minister.

The political marriage of convenience did not sit well with many people, and on the night of 17 November right-wing Cossacks arrested the two SR directors. At the government council the next morning, the Ministers declared that the Directorate "had ceased to function" and chose Admiral Kolchak as dictator.⁵⁴ The coup had far-ranging diplomatic repercussions. The British government decided to withhold recognition of Kolchak and adopted a "wait and see" attitude. The United States was also disinclined to officially recognize the new Omsk regime.⁵⁵

Despite the coup, Kolchak was considered a moderate and commanded a great deal of respect among White Russians. However, the Czechs refused to support him and wished to abandon the front against the Bolsheviks. But French General Janin convinced them to stay. The Japanese, though publicly claiming that

Kolchak was of no interest to them, saw him as a threat to their plan to have only weak regional governments that they could dominate and control.⁵⁶ General Knox saw through the Japanese strategy and warned his superiors. He was particularly incensed at Japan's support for the murderous Cossack leaders Semenov and Kalmykov, then laying waste to the country and threatening Kolchak's regime.⁵⁷ The United States also was against the depredations of the Cossacks and the support they received from the Japanese.⁵⁸ But rebel Cossacks were not Kolchak's only enemies.

The Admiral also faced open hostility from the various left-wing factions in Siberia. SRs from the Constituent Assembly at Ekaterinburg denounced the Omsk coup. Other areas in the Urals saw workers protest Kolchak's actions. Nevertheless, his Siberian troops moved quickly to quell dissent. The SRs in Ekaterinburg were arrested, but freed by the Czechs. Although advised to flee to Chelyabinsk, instead they left for Ufa where the majority were arrested and later shot. Those who escaped arrest tried to negotiate with the Bolsheviks, but their overtures were rebuffed. This was the end of the Social Revolutionaries.⁵⁹ The last of the Constituent Assembly had been eliminated, not by Bolsheviks, but by their allies. Such was the internal chaos.

Kolchak inherited a Siberian army in disarray: three divisions with three commanders in three regions, South, West and North, and having no single vision. Only the Northern division had a competent leader, the Czech general Rudolf Gajda, who convinced Kolchak to let him attack Perm.⁶⁰ A success there would consolidate Kolchak's power and put the White Siberian army in striking distance of Vyatka and Kotlas, giving hope for a linkage to the Allies at Archangel (see Map 4). Simultaneously the Admiral also decided to attack south to join with Denikin's Volunteer Army in South Russia.⁶¹

Lenin had identified Denikin as the greatest danger to the Bolsheviks and had allowed his Commander-in-Chief, I. I. Vatsetis, to redeploy several Red divisions from Siberia to South Russia.⁶² When Gajda struck north-west in November 1918, the remaining Red forces collapsed, and, despite Lenin's panicked entreaties to now protect Perm, the Bolsheviks gave way to Kolchak's army.⁶³ Gajda captured Perm on Christmas Eve and continued his drive towards Vyatka, but came up short halfway there, beyond the reach of the Allies at Archangel.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, Gajda's success did not gain Kolchak the political support he needed to consolidate power in Siberia. Moreover, the Admiral's thrust south failed and the Reds took Ufa, cutting Kolchak off from Denikin.⁶⁵ The Whites then withdrew to reconstitute with new conscripts.

East of Lake Baikal, Japan ordered both Semenov and Kalmykov to reject Kolchak's authority and they continued marauding under Japan's protection. Although Irkutsk's British Consul obtained a copy of the Japanese orders to Semenov, General Otani declared the support was only to help raise more Russian troops.⁶⁶ The Japanese viewed Kolchak as a threat to their hegemony in the Far East. They couched this in softer terms to their allies saying it was not yet time to establish a single central government in Siberia, but rather a series of provisional governments should first be set up.⁶⁷ Initiation of this idea would have brought

such provisional governments into direct conflict with the Kolchak administration. Any provisional government fostered by Japan would not have had the support of the local populace.⁶⁸ Such action only confirmed the United States' belief that the Japanese sought control of Siberia through weak local governments.

Frank Polk, acting US Secretary of State, observed that Japan combined commercial and political activities so tightly as to become inseparable. In practice, to the United States this made Japan's interests exclusive of all others. Polk feared that if Japan was left to pursue such an exclusive policy, equal trade relations with other nations would disappear causing friction among the powers in the East.⁶⁹ But despite their concern, the Allies allowed Japan to continue its Siberian erosive policy without significant interference. Each was caught up in its own self-interest and perceptions of what mattered and what did not. Under such conditions consensus and cooperation were impossible.

Meanwhile the Allied forces remained east of Lake Baikal, save for a contingent of the Middlesex Regiment located at Omsk for Kolchak's security. The Japanese refused to rein in the Cossacks. The French had too small a force to have any effect. The United States stuck to the letter of their orders not to interfere in the internal Russian situation.⁷⁰ The British and Canadians were only beginning to arrive, with the latest Canadian troops landing at Vladivostok on 5 December.⁷¹

Part, but not all, of the chronic aggravation between the French and the British in Siberia had only been resolved in late November 1918 when the War Office issued General Knox clarified orders that directed that French General Janin would have supreme command of Allied troops west of Lake Baikal. A proviso from the War Office noted that orders issued to British or Canadian forces must have the complete support of the British government as advised by Generals Elmsley and Knox. General Knox was in command of all training for Russians and for the management of all material destined for the front.⁷² The War Office fiat did not immediately give Janin command of the anti-Bolshevik troops since, by then, the Czechs had largely withdrawn from the fighting and Kolchak was reluctant to relinquish control to the Frenchman, who only arrived at Omsk in December. All parties came to an agreement only in January 1919 when Knox retained command of Russian training and the distribution of military material from abroad. Janin became Commander-in-Chief of all Allied forces and Kolchak agreed to work closely with the French general to ensure unity of effort.⁷³ Still, jurisdictions were many and potentially conflicting; the proof would be in the execution. Well before this agreement was hammered out, there were other issues to be settled. Increasingly Knox was worried over the commitment of the Canadians. In late November he had heard that they would be restricted in their employment in Siberia.

On 24 November Canadian Militia Minister Mewburn told Borden that there were growing demands in Canada for the demobilization of the draftees destined for Russia. The conscripts had only enlisted for the duration of the war and that had now ended.⁷⁴ Other Canadian cabinet members agreed. Meanwhile, from Siberia, Knox complained that the Canadians would be employed exactly as the Americans, not fighting but stationed closer to the front. This would not sit

well with the Russians. In contrast to the Canadian tasking, Knox had authorized the Middlesex Regiment at Omsk to join in the fighting alongside the Whites.⁷⁵ Perhaps because of Knox's complaint, Ottawa yielded a bit and decided to maintain its participation, albeit with certain caveats on the use of its soldiers.

By early December a relieved War Office quickly acknowledged Canada's continued support and urged its government to allow Elmsley to move to Omsk to take command of British forces stationed with Kolchak there.⁷⁶ In Ottawa, the Canadian CGS, Major General Gwatkin, was gravely concerned about his men's morale and military efficiency in light of growing public pressure to end participation soon. He acknowledged the British request, but warned that his government had "guaranteed that men would not be kept against their will in Siberia longer than one year after signing of armistice".⁷⁷

Being unable to do much about it, the War Office agreed with the one-year commitment and declared that the Russians would be able to stand alone by mid-summer of 1919, raising hopes for early withdrawal of both Canadian and British troops.⁷⁸ Despite this reassurance, and notwithstanding Borden's and the increasingly doubtful Canadian Cabinet's growing political fears, Gwatkin communicated directly with the CIGS, explaining the concerns of his government. He made it clear to his British counterpart that it was incumbent upon Britain to clearly describe its Siberian grand strategy and the measures it was adopting. Until such policies were made clear, Canadian soldiers would not proceed inland from Vladivostok and consideration would be given to withdrawing them from Russia altogether.⁷⁹ In England, Borden reinforced his CGS's comments and demanded that an official statement be sent to Ottawa on the reasons for Canadian and Allied forces to remain in Siberia. In addition, he required that information on the political situation there be provided to his government on a regular basis.⁸⁰ This was no more than a reiteration of similar sovereign demands made to Britain throughout the War.

On 8 December 1918, in Ottawa, White telegraphed Borden that official advice from Vladivostok indicated that there was no military reason for Canadian or any Allied forces to remain in Siberia and that it was only for political expediency that they stayed. White was very afraid that a serious domestic political crisis could arise over the issue, especially from organized labour.⁸¹ Immediately Borden put this view in front of the IWC. The War Office was fully aware of Canada's wish that its soldiers be quickly withdrawn and that no disposition of Canadian troops should occur that could lead to disaster. Borden then left it "entirely to the judgment of [his] Council" in Ottawa as to what action Canada should take.⁸² This certainly did not seem to be decisive leadership from Borden. More to the point, with no further direction from Borden, the Canadian Cabinet believed it was a sign to continue the status quo. Perhaps, then, this was more the Canadian prime minister's political astuteness to sustain what he had already agreed.

However, in Ottawa, the CGS did not concur. Gwatkin told Mewburn that further sailings of Canadians to Siberia should be cancelled and that the return of those in Siberia should be arranged immediately.⁸³ But despite this informed military opinion from their top soldier, the Canadian government decided

to continue the dispatch of troops, with the caveat that they would return to Canada in the spring. In the interim, the War Office was told that the “Dominion Government cannot permit them to engage in military operations nor, without its express consent, to move up country.”⁸⁴ Elmsley was also told that he could not leave Vladivostok until his second-in-command arrived. Nevertheless, some Canadians, *sans* Elmsley, had already been dispatched to Omsk to act as headquarters staff for the British battalions stationed there. Lieutenant Colonel T. S. Morrisey, with 54 Canadians, had departed for Omsk on 18 December to bolster the Middlesex Regiment.⁸⁵ A week later, the crack 1/9 Hampshire Regiment was also dispatched to Omsk to shore up the Middlesex. At the request of Knox, the Hampshires had arrived from India at the end of November to act as a “stiffener” to newly conscripted and dispirited Russian soldiers.⁸⁶ Despite the tactical redistribution of Canadians and the hesitant Canadian decision to continue participation in the Siberian intervention, General Knox believed non-fighting troops were a liability to Allied strategy in Russia.

On 28 December, after Ottawa had told London that Canada would continue sending soldiers to Siberia, Knox urged that all Canadians be withdrawn to Vladivostok and that those still in Canada not be allowed to sail for Siberia. He observed that “Bolshevism has no lasting force behind it and requires only 1 or 2 knocks to finish it, but the Allies, by their present conduct in the Far East are only increasing its strength by showing impossibility of our working together.”⁸⁷ In other words, while Knox may have been wrong about the “knocks”, he was correct that the inability of the Allied leadership to make a decisive policy was causing chaos in the military prosecution of the fight.

On 4 January 1919 the War Office took Knox’s message to heart and wired Elmsley that Canadian troops in Siberia should be returned to Canada in light of the Canadian decision not to allow them to proceed into the interior of Siberia. No other Canadian military should be dispatched from Canada and those already at sea should be recalled. The remaining British battalions at Omsk were to be withdrawn to Vladivostok and no further Allied forces be sent to the Siberian garrison. The entire question of Russia, it went on, was to be dealt with at the Paris Peace Talks.⁸⁸

This message shocked Elmsley as well as both Knox and Eliot. On 8 January 1919 the Canadian commander told both London and Ottawa that the removal of the Canadians from Siberia “would have a disastrous effect” on Allied Siberian operations, nullifying any Peace Conference decisions.⁸⁹ Elmsley asked that withdrawal be delayed until the Peace Conference made its determinations. Both Eliot and Knox, the latter now having suddenly done a complete volte-face on Canadians, criticized their own government. Eliot argued that the White Russians would feel abandoned by the Allies. He predicted that the Kolchak government would fall and general anarchy would prevail with the Bolsheviks perpetrating massacres unless prevented by the presence of Allied troops.⁹⁰

In London, the Imperial War Cabinet agreed with Eliot and overrode the War Office decision. On 14 January, Elmsley told Morrisey at Omsk that the decision to withdraw British forces to Vladivostok and the return of the Canadian military

to Canada had been suspended to await the results of the Paris Peace Talks.⁹¹ The British also acknowledged the domestic political difficulties the Canadians faced and admitted that the British government had similar political problems in the United Kingdom. As for the Imperial War Cabinet, it put much of the blame for the faltering Siberian situation on its other Allies. The problem stemmed from a lack of a common Allied policy on Russia. The refusal of both Japan and the United States to deploy west of Lake Baikal prevented a combined solution from being achieved.⁹² Britain saw that a lack of an agreed Allied strategy stymied any real progress in Siberia. Britain had done its own part in this, whether it admitted it or not, but still did nothing to change it. However, Siberia was not the only operational front for the Allies and the anti-Bolsheviks. Although strictly a British concern, the Trans-Caspian and Trans-Caucasus regions remained volatile.

At the Armistice, Britain controlled the Caspian Sea, and soon after, Baku, which prevented the Bolsheviks from ejecting the Social Revolutionary governments established in the Trans-Caspian region.⁹³ Yet the Indian government wanted all British forces withdrawn to Persia.⁹⁴ Britain demurred, partly because it was concerned over the Caucasus and the oil contained there. It did not want France to control the area for fear of future conflicts.⁹⁵ However, there was little to fear as France was in no position to oversee the region and was now concentrating on South Russia.

In the fall of 1918, France believed it could strike a blow at Bolshevism in South Russia despite being ill informed on the politics among the factions in the region and the strength of the Red Army there.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Clemenceau directed the French Army to make Odessa an Allied base for operations in South Russia and the Ukraine.⁹⁷ Time was of the essence since the Ukraine was in the midst of a revolt against the pro-German leader, Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky.⁹⁸ Seeking Allied support, Ukrainians in Constantinople begged for Allied forces to be dispatched immediately to the Ukraine. However, French General Louis Franchet d'Esperey said he only had enough troops to hold Odessa. Not deterred, the White Russians asked d'Esperey's boss, General Henri Berthelot, for military help and were promised 12 divisions, even though that number was impossible to find. Clearly the two French generals were at odds.⁹⁹ In the end, only six divisions could be constituted, three French and three Greek.¹⁰⁰

While the French planned, civil war raged in the Ukraine. Two Nationalist factions, the Ukrainian National State Union led by Volodymyr Vynnychenko and the All-Ukrainian Union of Zemstva led by Simon Petlyura, ranged against the Bolshevik army and Ukrainian factions dedicated to reunion with Russia. The pro-Russian groups met with the French at Jassy while the Nationalists attacked Kiev and invaded the Crimea, thrusting at Odessa.¹⁰¹

Fearing Petlyura and his followers were Bolsheviks, the Allies sent French Consul Émile Henno to Odessa to urge inhabitants to resist the Ukrainian Nationalists while the French dispatched the six divisions on 5 December 1918.¹⁰² Concurrently, the Reds were attacking the Ukraine Nationalists in the North of that country. Taking over Kharkov from the dispirited and defeated Germans, the Bolsheviks promised Petlyura to stay east of the Dnieper River.¹⁰³ Denikin moved

to counter the Bolshevik advance and asked for Allied help, but was ignored. He sent his own forces to defend the Donetz basin and the Crimea, but was rebuffed by the French in his attempts to mobilize that region.¹⁰⁴ The French attitude towards Denikin was at odds with the Allied public declarations of support for the Whites, underscoring the fact that national agendas trumped Allied aims. Adding to this were simple but critical local blunders.

To gain reactionary Russian support, the French Consul in Odessa, Henno, backed the appointment of far-right General A. N. Grishin-Almazov over centrist General Biskupsky as the city's White Army commander. This very unpopular decision threw the Whites into turmoil, which prevented them from keeping the retreating Germans from handing their weapons to the Reds or resisting the approach of Petlyura's Nationalist forces.¹⁰⁵ On 11 December the Ukrainian Nationalists occupied Odessa, leaving only the harbour in White Russian hands. On the 14th, Petlyura captured Kiev.¹⁰⁶ Petlyura, in the hope of gaining Allied support, had ordered his forces not to threaten or harm the French force.¹⁰⁷ However, those Frenchman in Odessa sided with the reactionary Whites and pledged French support to the "Russian cause". The arrival of the French occupation force on 18 December did not change this pledge. The commander, General Albert Borius, had asked General Berthelot to be able to negotiate with Petlyura, but was forbidden to do so. As a result, the French commander publicly declared French control of Odessa with General Grishin-Almazov as governor under French mandate.¹⁰⁸ Petlyura tried to treat with the French, but was ordered to vacate Odessa. In the hopes of future French recognition for his government, he reluctantly complied.¹⁰⁹

These confusing events greatly surprised the French. They had expected the Ukrainians to welcome them enthusiastically, but instead the Nationalists had fired upon them. France was not well informed of the politics in South Russia, believing that there were only two factions – the Bolsheviks and the Whites. Through ignorance caused by a lack of intelligence, the different left- and right-wing anti-Bolshevik parties had not been addressed in the French plans. It was easy for the White Russians to paint the Ukrainian Nationalists as Bolsheviks. So, in the South, as in Siberia, the anti-Bolshevik groups were at loggerheads with each other and the French were unable to bring them into a single political or military entity to fight the Reds. Moreover, many of the French soldiers were weary and morale was low. Some had complained about participating in the expedition and illness had started to make its way among them.¹¹⁰ These conditions combined to limit the French commander's ability to conduct operations.¹¹¹

The French government pressed ahead with a policy of intervention as if they still retained the political influence and resources of their pre-war status. Prestige and pride dictated the necessity of the landings in South Russia, despite a lack of troops or finances to sustain the operation.¹¹² They also lacked good intelligence of the political landscape in the Ukraine and, as a result, failed to support the strongest faction – Petlyura's Ukrainian Nationalists – to both Russia's and their detriment. This was the situation in the South as 1918 ended. In the North, the British faced real threats from the Bolsheviks while attempting to create a cohesive native military force from the local population. One has to go back to

mid-November 1918 to see how this developed. On the 13th, as part of his overall plan for Russia, the British CIGS, General Wilson, proposed a British military strategy for the North. He saw the British mediating between the Finns and Karelians in the Murman region, holding Archangel for the winter, but handing over defence of the area to local Russians in the spring of 1919.¹¹³ The War Cabinet endorsed the general's views and both the French and the Archangel command were informed by early December.¹¹⁴ The decision not to increase troop strength in Russia left Maynard at Murmansk and Ironside at Archangel in difficult situations. One tactic that helped both commanders was the War Office decision to separate the Murmansk and Archangel commands into two equal entities on 19 November 1918.¹¹⁵ Ironside was promoted to Major General and told that Major General Poole would not be returning to Archangel. At the same time, Major General Maynard was given a separate command at Murmansk.

Maynard recognized the need to prepare the defence of the Murman if he was to preserve his position throughout the winter. He acknowledged, even without explicit orders, that his force was at war with the Reds and would remain so as long as the Allies stayed in the region. He believed that his primary course of action was to preserve the anti-Bolshevik force in the Murmansk area and endeavour to have it stand alone as quickly as possible.¹¹⁶ Maynard had 7000 British troops, including a company of 92 Canadians commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel John E. Leckie.¹¹⁷ He also had 3000 other Allies, a mixture of French, Serbian and Italian soldiers, and 4000 Karelians, Russians and Finns.¹¹⁸

Maynard needed to create a regional militia quickly to add to the Allied force assigned to him. Conscription was the only means possible and needed the support of the local White government. The new Russian Deputy-Governor, Yermolov, fully supported Maynard and issued the order, but enforced it only on a limited scale. Although grudgingly accepted by the population, the goal of 5000 could not be reached and the area for recruitment was expanded southward.¹¹⁹ Yermolov believed this would drive the Bolsheviks further south, while Maynard needed to neutralize several batteries of enemy guns located at Segeja,¹²⁰ but operations were only planned for later in the winter due to a lack of enough trained men.¹²¹ However, intelligence revealed an opportunity to neutralize the Bolsheviks. Launching a surprise attack, Maynard's forces captured or killed the entire Red garrison at Rugozerskaya, collecting vital intelligence that revealed the exact situation on Maynard's front.¹²² At the turn of the year, Maynard felt secure in his region and continued to plan his assault on Segeja in February 1919.¹²³

In Archangel, Major General Ironside faced similar challenges to those of Maynard, but with the added problem of dealing with a White government centred in the city and led by President Chaikovsky. Previously, Chaikovsky had had a stormy relationship with General Poole and, with that general's abrupt and surprising departure in mid-October, Ironside expected the Russian president to continue to be difficult.¹²⁴ However, at his first meeting with the Russian leader, Ironside found him to be reasonable. He directed the British commander to deal with the Russian Governor General, Colonel Durov, in all military matters.¹²⁵ Yet there were still divisive political factors at play in North Russia, both among Allies and among the Whites.

Ambassador Francis was pushing to unseat British command in the North and replace it with a US command. In mid-October, on General Poole's departure, Francis asked Washington whether a US general could take over the Allied command in Archangel.¹²⁶ He asked for this despite being aware that President Wilson had no intention of expanding US involvement. He also reported the discontent of the Americans and French deployed in the northern wilderness against the Bolsheviks.¹²⁷ Both the French and US soldiers believed that continued service in North Russia was only for the benefit of the British. Nonetheless, Francis was also realistic enough to see that if the United States withdrew then the French would as well, and the Bolsheviks would win. There were other problems as well.

The political factor that underlaid the problem of Russian anti-Bolshevik unity in North Russia was the animosity between the Social Revolutionaries (SR) and the ex-Tsarist military officers. Chaikovsky was an SR and his appointment of Durov as Governor General became problematic.¹²⁸ In addition, Chaikovsky declared that the North Russia government was part of and subservient to the Omsk government.¹²⁹ As Francis pointed out, this conciliatory declaration was made at the urging of the Allies. It was an attempt to have a united Russian opposition to the Bolsheviks, but this unity was only a façade that soon came apart with Kolchak's coup at Omsk.

While the political manoeuvring in Archangel proceeded during and after the European armistice, simultaneously military complications and operations continued there as well. In the field, Bolsheviks attacked the Allied units along the Dvina and Vaga Rivers, which marked the start of their winter campaign against the Allies. It was to go on into the spring of 1919.

While fighting occurred in the forests of North Russia, politics continued in Archangel itself. Dewitt Poole (not to be confused with British General Poole), the US chargé d'affaires in Russia, warned Washington that the Armistice had created uncertainty among the French and US soldiers, which echoed Ambassador Francis's comments in October. But the reasons for intervention no longer seemed valid at war's end. Once again the chargé complained that US troops were being used only to further British aims contrary to American values. He did advise, though, that the United States must stay in North Russia to protect the Whites that had sided with the Allies and to safeguard Russia's financial interests from exploitation by the victors.¹³⁰ This may have been naïve or it may have been the chargé's strategy to position the United States for its own economic advantage in Russia. However, the Russians needed some strong-willed leaders to take charge of the anti-Bolsheviks in Archangel. Such was General Marushevskii.

On 17 November General V. V. Marushevskii arrived from Paris to take command of the White forces and to act as Governor General until the arrival of General Eugene K. Millar.¹³¹ Ironside described Marushevskii as a man of energy determined to work with the Allies.¹³² He felt confident enough in the Russian commander to leave Archangel, with only his batman, to tour the Front in early December.¹³³ On his inspection, Ironside found much to improve upon. The French were paralysed to inaction in their outposts and he had to order the commander to carry out patrols.¹³⁴ Ironside discovered the local population ignorant

of Chaikovsky's government and convinced that the war was only between the Allies and the Bolsheviks. The locals feared that helping the Allies would mark them as traitors, and as so, subject to the Reds' retaliation.¹³⁵ The ignorance of the locals stemmed from Chaikovsky's failure to inform them that the Allies were there only to support Russian anti-Bolsheviks. On his return to Archangel, Ironside met further unrest among the local Russian troops. Although enlistment was up, mutiny still reared its ugly head at the barracks. However, Marushevskii was up to the challenge and quickly used force to put down any revolt, executing the ringleaders and sending the rest to the Front.¹³⁶ Chaikovsky was angered at the summary executions of the mutiny's leaders, but remained silent.¹³⁷

With calm re-established, Ironside continued his inspection of the Front. He found morale high among Canadian and British forces and preparations well in hand for the defence of the area.¹³⁸ By mid-December 1918 Ironside believed he was adequately prepared for anything the Reds could throw at him. The immediate suppression of the mutiny and the subsequent arrest of a number of Bolshevik agents in Archangel helped to re-establish calm and control in the city.¹³⁹ Better discipline was once again apparent among the Russian troops. Although the US chargé, Poole, initially had thought the mutiny showed the inability of ex-Tsarist officers to adapt to the changed political reality and the bankruptcy of the policy of conscription to fight the Bolsheviks, he was now far more optimistic. Poole said that the vigour of the Russian command in quashing the mutiny and the fact that the executions had been carried out solely by Russians had had a favourable effect, restoring calm to the local area. The Russian rank and file were glad to be free from agitators and were reported to have good morale.¹⁴⁰ It remained to be seen if this would hold into 1919.

However, the 11 November 1918 Armistice with one stroke had destroyed the principle motivation of Western governments to intervene in Russian affairs in any determined fashion.¹⁴¹ As 1918 came to an end and politicians wrestled with what policies should be implemented, including whether to allow Russia to attend the Peace Conference, bloody turmoil prevailed across the vast Russian territory. Allied soldiers continued to die in battle and from exposure to disease and the elements. And so the New Year commenced in the same vein as the old one had finished.

Notes

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27. Baker to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Washington, 27 November 1918.
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30. White to Kemp, telegram, Ottawa, 14 November 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56216.
31. Borden to White, telegram, London, 20 November 1918, *Borden Papers*, 56221–2.
32. White to Borden, telegram, Ottawa, 22 November 1918, *DCER Vol. III*, 52.
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10

Vision versus Reality: The Paris Peace Conference and Russia, January–February 1919

At the beginning of 1919, more than 180,000 Allied troops were inside the borders of what had been the Russian Empire. They represented a cross-section of all the nations that had fought the Central Powers and included British, Americans, French, Japanese, Serbians, Italians, Greeks and Czechoslovaks.¹ Alongside this kaleidoscope of military forces were a few thousand native Russians who had banded together to fight the Bolshevik revolutionaries. With so many nations supplying manpower to the military intervention and with different anti-Bolshevik factions operating in varied areas of Russia, good communications and especially sound diplomacy as major instruments of policy were critical for successful operations. So, too, was accurate intelligence, yet most of the time all three of these vital conditions were lacking. Chaos was, more often than not, the result. With chaos being the norm, the eventual success of the Whites and their allies remained in doubt. And 1919 saw Paris become the major venue for talks about Russia, even if secondary to the larger issue of a peace treaty with Germany.

With the Great War fighting suspended, the Allied focus now turned to Paris. Major and minor world leaders, even some statesmen, congregated in the “City of Light” to argue and decide the fate of nations. Hosted by French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, the Peace Conference had a list of dignitaries that was endless. It included leaders from almost every country, those who had fought and some who had not.² However, there was one significant omission – Russia. The question of that nation’s future was fundamental to the peace of Europe, since it appeared impossible to guarantee the stability of Eastern Europe without some Allied policy for Russia.³ This was a major concern, since that nation was still fighting a war that had ostensibly ended with the 11 November 1918 Armistice. Soldiers from many of the states meeting in Paris were still dying in the continuing conflict between the Bolsheviks and those opposed to them. Still, consensus on Russia, even in individual nations, was impossible to attain. And this was to be expected since the leaders of the Allied Great Powers were at odds with each other over the various terms of peace to be imposed on the vanquished. President Wilson was adamant in his opposition both to Lloyd George and Clemenceau’s insistence on reparations from Germany, and he strenuously argued against Italy’s demands in the Balkans, while Britain had strained relations with France over the

settlements in the Middle East.⁴ Moreover, President Wilson feared Japan's expansion in the Pacific and he earned the enmity of various British Dominions for his opposition to their retention of German colonies.⁵

There is no better example of the serious flaws in Allied communications and diplomacy than the split in Britain's Imperial War Cabinet (IWC) on what to do in Russia. In late December 1918 this body was severely at odds regarding its Russian policy and debate was both vigorous and divided. Perhaps the most vocal about the Bolshevik danger, Winston Churchill was quick to demand a realistic Russian strategy. Was Britain to leave the Bolsheviks to "stew in their own juice" or was the intention to attempt to destroy Red power? He was concerned over the attitude of Woodrow Wilson and feared that the president would continue to be averse to interfering in Russian politics. This would force Britain to leave the Reds alone. In his opinion, regardless of the policy chosen, the use of small contingents of troops "could do no good".⁶ The Cabinet must decide whether to let the Russians murder each other or to interfere in their affairs in the name of international order.

Lloyd George doubted Churchill's premise on Russian murder and contended that Russia must choose its own government. However, there was no consensus. With thousands of Allied soldiers, including many British, still in Russia, any sudden announcement that Britain was abandoning Russia, Balfour warned, would spread panic and despair among White allies.⁷ Moreover, Britain would have to take measures to defend against the spread of Bolshevism since it was cancerous and was forming its own army to spread the doctrine. Then there were the domestic concerns. Above all, Lloyd George feared that any further military interference in Russia would jeopardize electoral safety and cause trouble, if not revolution, in Britain among the labouring classes. Many public voices questioned why Britain was in Russia and why the army was not being demobilized expeditiously. Perhaps over-optimistically, the prime minister felt that the Bolsheviks were willing to come to terms.⁸

The War Cabinet went on to probe the Caucasus situation. Britain was concerned about what happened in the area due to its long-time position in the Near East and the approaches to India. Since the Bolsheviks did not control the region, the situation in Southern Russia was different than in other regions of that nation.⁹ The newly liberated states had already appealed to Britain for support, and British troops were the only Allied force capable of aiding these new nations. It was not a question of Bolshevik against Bolshevik, but rather of nascent native states, not Russian in nationality, fighting against each other and against some Russians wishing to re-establish their old empire. Some in Cabinet believed British forces should only remain until the terms of the Armistice had been fulfilled, while others contended that Britain should only stay in the Caucasus until the end of the Peace Conference. As a compromise, it was decided not to withdraw British forces in the Caucasus until after the Turks and Germans had been withdrawn, but there would be no increase to current British military strength in the region.¹⁰ And so the British inner Cabinet remained divided.

The CIGS was also concerned. The general worried over the Cabinet's preoccupation with the peace process and the very establishment of a League of Nations,

the latter being a major goal of the US president. Frustrated with his civilian masters, Sir Henry recorded in his diary, “Why not face facts, there are still wars going on in several countries and that until these are crushed out it is no use talking about peace?”¹¹ As the primary military advisor to the War Cabinet, he was clearly at odds with the views of his prime minister. A week later, discussions in the IWC once again returned to the Russian question. Having spoken privately to Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George told his colleagues that the United States remained as opposed as ever to armed intervention in Russia. Consequently, Lloyd George feared that the United States would withdraw its men from North Russia.

The president was also adverse to the continued Siberian action, but was particularly incensed with the attitude of the Japanese who behaved as if they owned the region. With respect to the other areas of Russia, the US president and British prime minister had come to no consensus, since much of the information available was unreliable. This was also the case for the new states on Russia’s borders.¹² When the question was broached of having Russia officially attend the Paris Peace Conference, Woodrow Wilson opposed any formal representation. He had suggested that the Allies approach the Bolshevik representative, Maxim Litvinov, to ask what were the Soviet proposals. Wilson already knew the answer because he had received a letter from Litvinov in late December, but had not shared it with his Allies.¹³

Lord Curzon’s position on the subject, backed by Lloyd George, was that President Wilson should not be regarded as the sole arbiter since he would be only one of the Allied leaders at the Peace Conference. Prime Minister William “Billy” Hughes of Australia angrily warned that the British Empire could be “dragged quite unnecessarily behind the wheels of President Wilson’s chariot”.¹⁴ Many others in the IWC echoed Hughes’s views. Such discussions exposed the underlying antagonism many in the British leadership felt for President Wilson and his appropriation for himself the mantle of leader of the Western Democracies. Nevertheless, Sir Robert Borden, speaking for Canada and, no doubt, as a North American living next to the Great Republic, believed the British Empire should not start the Peace Conference with antagonism towards the United States. If future Imperial policies meant working against the United States, Canada would not support it. His view was that the Empire should avoid European entanglements as much as possible.¹⁵ Given the current Russian debacle, Borden could not see the war as ended if states were still fighting in Russia when the Peace Conference concluded. Nations had either to intervene forcefully or to bring all the Russian factions to Paris to confer with the Allies. Borden preferred the latter, as the Allies could pressure all sides to make peace and form a stable government overseen by the League of Nations.¹⁶ It was a common-sense view, but to little avail.

Nothing was resolved, and the IWC continued to debate until the very last day of 1918. At that session, the CIGS feared having to replace British troops in North Russia with conscripts. It would be very unpopular with the public. The two battalions at Omsk in Siberia were to be replaced by Canadians, but Canada had refused to allow its soldiers to move from Vladivostok. Borden was adamant that

Canada would not send its force inland until a decision was made on a definite Allied policy in Siberia.¹⁷ Policy decisions were also sought for other areas of Russian territory.

With the onset of winter, the Royal Navy feared their ships at Riga would be trapped by ice, but if they left Riga, there was a significant danger the Bolsheviks would rise again and massacre the local government. Faced with these two military dilemmas, the Cabinet ordered the Royal Navy south to the ice-free port of Libau. As to British forces in Russia, the CIGS was told not to send further reinforcements for the contingent in place nor to demobilize the British soldiers there until an Allied policy for Russia had been made.¹⁸ That day, a disgusted General Wilson noted, “This all comes of *no* policy in our Russian theatre which at this time of day after all our discussions for months and months is an absolute *disgrace*.”¹⁹

As the IWC debate continued, once again Churchill put forward his strong anti-Bolshevik view, however impractical it might be. If ignored, the Bolshevik problem would get worse. He was in favour of joint action by all five of the Great Powers, but, if the United States refused to join in the fight, the other four should persevere with a collective intervention themselves. The Russians needed to be told that the Allies would support them coming together for a peace settlement. However, if they continued to fight, the Allies would forcibly impose a democratic government on Russia.²⁰

Although Lloyd George knew Churchill was right and that further delay could lead to disaster, he was adamantly opposed to military intervention in any form. With only 100,000 men available to face a 300,000-man Red Army that was continuing to grow, the prime minister was at a loss as to where more Allied soldiers could be found. Without conscription, no British force could be mustered for a Russian mission, but even with conscription, Lloyd George doubted that the troops would go. He was also worried that further military incursions would strengthen Bolshevism rather than destroy it. The prime minister, however, did back economic sanctions. He called on the Cabinet to support him in opposing a military operation and for Borden’s proposal to bring all Russian parties to the negotiation table.²¹

As the IWC debated in the last throes of 1918, Russia continued to stagger on indecisively and blindly. Yet Britain had continuing obligations to the Czech Legion still in Siberia, as well as to other anti-Bolshevik groups, which could not be abandoned easily or quickly. Lord Cecil cautioned that the Bolsheviks could be raising an army to invade its neighbours and the country must be prepared to help the new states on Russia’s borders. The Cabinet agreed, only stopping short of military action.²² The Cabinet adopted Lloyd George’s position on Russia, but as General Wilson had disgustingly observed, it was no policy at all.²³ It left British soldiers in Russia with no planned reinforcements. It pledged to support White governments and newly formed nations bordering Russia, but without sending troops. At best, it was a “non-decision”. While it would not abandon the anti-Bolsheviks outright, it left British and other Allied militaries fighting Bolsheviks with minimum means and with no intention of expanding those forces remaining

in Russia. It was a policy based on half-measures and would result in tragedy, chaos and, ultimately, failure.

Nevertheless, on 2 January 1919 the British tried to organize talks among all the belligerent Russian parties, hopefully to meet in Paris. They also suggested an armistice during these negotiations. However, such a plan would require the support of the other Allies. The Foreign Office asked the British ambassadors in Rome, Paris, Tokyo and Washington to circulate the draft British offer to Lenin, Kolchak, Denikin and Chaikovsky, and seek the backing of the other governments.²⁴ The invitation to the Russians gained immediate support from Japan.²⁵ As fate would have it, due to a mix-up in communications, the United States never replied.²⁶ However, the proposal was completely dismissed by the French. On 7 January 1919, Stéphan Pichon, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, vigorously denounced the British proposals.²⁷ Although Pichon had penned the reply to London, it was really Clemenceau's, and stemmed from his determination to maintain a hostile front to the Bolsheviks.²⁸ The French remained constant in their political feelings towards the Reds, while the British position was completely opposite and sprang from disagreement internally on a policy towards Russia.

Commenting on the French view of Britain's proposal, Sir Ronald Graham at the Foreign Office said, "In any case, we have to let the matter drop & no further action on this telegram seems required."²⁹ Meanwhile, Clemenceau's government had its own domestic problems, all of which affected the Russia question. On 11 January, the Socialist newspaper *L'Humanité* printed an altered version of Pichon's letter, which was translated and published in *The Times* in London. The wording was altered to make it more provocative and the date was changed to "5 December 1918".³⁰ This was done to undermine Clemenceau and to make it appear that the French Prime Minister had had the British proposal in his possession when he made a speech in the French Parliament at the end of December criticizing the Bolsheviks.³¹ The publication of Pichon's reply ended any hope of a Russian peace conference in Paris.

While all of this Allied reaction was happening, on 10 January, in London, the War Cabinet once again tackled the thorny Russian policy question. It was the eve of the British delegation's departure for the Paris Peace Conference, and the CIGS was deeply worried that the Cabinet decision not to reinforce the British contingents in various Russian theatres had created certain dilemmas for the British commanders *in situ*. In North Russia, General Maynard needed an additional 1000 personnel just to maintain his current position. Without additional troops, he would be required to retreat to Kandalaksha. In Siberia, the US and Japanese troops still refused to move west of Lake Baikal. As a result, Indian troops had to be found to reinforce the two British battalions at Omsk, or they would have to be withdrawn to Vladivostok. He was also worried about unrest in the army at home. The prospect of men being sent to Russia was "immensely unpopular". Consequently, it was impossible to reinforce the British in either North Russia or Siberia.³² Debate among ministers continued with Winston Churchill convinced that the removal of the British battalions at Omsk would cause "the fabric we had been trying to construct to fall to pieces. The Czechs would go, Kolchak's army

would disappear, and the French would withdraw.”³³ Despite these dire predictions, no decision was made on British forces in Russia and no action was ordered to succour or reinforce them. Once again the British Cabinet did nothing and awaited any decisions to come from the Allies at the Peace Conference.

The highly fluid situation in Russia provided its own obstacles against definitive British Cabinet decision-making. The possibility of Bolshevism moves against the Poles was one scenario. Marshal Foch had lobbied Lord Cecil on the necessity of stopping the advance of Bolshevism into central Europe and urged that a Polish army be organized immediately. To get this army to the eastern areas of Europe, the Allies would have to occupy the Danzig–Thorn Railway. This would require a combination of US, British, French and Italian forces. Once again, whether British troops could be made available, especially in this additional area, became the chronic British Cabinet question. As far as Curzon was concerned, His Majesty’s army could not intervene, but would assist in any other way possible. Volunteers were the only soldiers available, but he was doubtful any would be forthcoming. Churchill hoped that Lord Curzon was wrong. He believed that “it was quite impossible for us to stand aside and let Poland go to pieces”. Churchill argued that there were only two questions to be answered – What was the Allied policy to be in Russia and how would the men necessary to execute that policy be supplied?³⁴

None of this War Cabinet debate was of much help as guidance for the British delegation to the Peace Conference. Although London had agreed to commit no more British soldiers to Russia, it had no stance on what to do with those already in the various Russian theatres. Moreover, British authorities were still contemplating whether and how to aid Poland. The chaotic situation was aggravated by the French rejection of the proposal for an all-Russian conference in Paris. Added to this disagreement between the French and the British was Woodrow Wilson’s moralistic penchant to act independently and contrarily on any issue that came to his attention.

While the French rejected the British overture to the various Russian factions and the British continued to discuss Russian strategy in Cabinet, President Wilson dispatched W. H. Buckler, a special assistant at the US Embassy in London, to confer with Litvinov on what the Bolshevism peace proposals were.³⁵ Wilson did this without telling any of his Allies, although the British already knew of Litvinov’s proposals.

The president’s independent attitude was not the only factor preventing the creation of a common Allied policy towards the Bolsheviks. Lloyd George’s apparent belief that Bolshevism could co-exist with democratic nations added to the chaos. On 12 January 1919, the CIGS had a sombre discussion about Russia with his prime minister and Canadian-born Andrew Bonar Law, the British Conservative Party leader. Writing in his diary that evening, Wilson (now Field Marshal) observed that Lloyd George was opposed to knocking out Bolshevism. “This tacit agreement to Bolshevism”, the CIGS angrily penned, “is a most dangerous thing.”³⁶ The same night the Field Marshal produced a lengthy report on Russia for both the British War Cabinet and the IWC. Lloyd George’s attitude was in complete opposition to General Wilson’s report. The CIGS had proposed

two courses of action: come to terms with the Bolsheviks; or blockade them and assist the Whites to achieve a cordon sanitaire. He reminded Cabinet that Lenin's avowed aim was to spread Bolshevism throughout the world. For that reason, the latter course was the recommended policy.³⁷

This was a change from Wilson's earlier attitude of November 1918, when he was in agreement with Lord Milner that Britain should get out of Eastern Europe but retain the Caucasus and the areas in Russia from the left bank, which is the eastern bank of the Don River, to protect India. And it was a volte-face from his rejection of the cordon sanitaire. It was also in disagreement with his prime minister's view of leaving Bolshevism alone. The next day, 13 January, Lloyd George chaired a meeting of the IWC in Paris with the CIGS present. The Field Marshal angrily stated later that "It was quite clear that the meeting favoured *no* troops being sent to fight Bolshevists, but on the other hand to help those States which we considered were independent States by giving them arms, etc."³⁸

Despite this confusion and disagreement in the British attitude toward Bolshevism and the apparent collapse of the British plan to organize a Russian peace council, efforts in Paris were increased to attempt to find common ground among the Allies. On 16 January, at a meeting of the Council of Ten, Lloyd George explained the reasons and views for a British invitation to all the Russian factions.³⁹ Immediately there was a serious misconception on the part of the French government as to the character of the British proposal. The French feared that the invitation would lead to formal recognition of the Bolshevik government. But there was no intention to recognize the Moscow government or for the Bolsheviks to attend the peace conference. It was, in the words of Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the British Imperial War Cabinet, an invitation to all the different governments now at war within the old Russian Empire "to a truce of God, to stop reprisals and outrages and to send men here to give ... an account of themselves. The Great Powers would then try to find a way to bring order out of the chaos."⁴⁰

Lloyd George's commentary at the Council of Ten was a bleak picture of a Russia starving, but still carrying on a cruel civil war, with Bolshevism still strong. He then framed three possible courses of action: one, use military force; two, employ a cordon sanitaire; or, three, invite all Russian factions to meet in Paris after agreeing to a truce.⁴¹ Lloyd George derided option one, asking who had a million men to fight in Russia – Britain certainly hadn't. He also denounced option two as killing Russian civilians rather than Bolsheviks. This left option three as the only one he could back.⁴² Woodrow Wilson quickly endorsed Lloyd George's position. He was adamant that the Allies would be going against the principle of freedom if they did not give Russia a chance "to find herself along the lines of utter freedom". Lloyd George's third alternative was, to the president's mind, the only one possible. That it did not disturb any of the American's earlier views was equally obvious.⁴³ Pichon suggested that before any decision was made, the Council should hear from Joseph Noulens, the just-returned French Ambassador to Russia.⁴⁴ This was agreed.

But before Noulens could be called to the Council, Lloyd George and Clemenceau quarrelled bitterly. Clemenceau bluntly threatened to resign if

Bolsheviks were invited to Paris.⁴⁵ Making matters worse, the French prime minister sought to undermine Lloyd George by seeking support first from the British Ambassador to France, Lord Derby, and then from Balfour.⁴⁶ In a threat by way of a warning, the old “Tiger” told his surprised equals that a Bolshevik delegation in Paris could cause violent street demonstrations and strong opposition from the French Right.⁴⁷ No doubt this had its desired effect because Balfour advised Lloyd George that Bolshevik delegates not be invited to Paris. Rather, he suggested, an economic mission could go to Moscow as a front to confer with the Soviet leadership on peace issues. Now British Cabinet solidarity was at stake.

Lloyd George was irate with Clemenceau for attempting to split the British delegation. This time it was the British prime minister who threatened to quit Paris for London. However, Bonar Law brought things back to the hard political reality by reminding Lloyd George, who was always sniffing the political air, that the Conservative Party was strongly opposed to Bolshevism and if he broke with the French premier, the British coalition government would fall.⁴⁸ A compromise was needed to prevent this critical schism among the Allied leaders. Meanwhile, the Council of Ten heard from Noulens and Harald da Scavenius, who had been Danish Ambassador to Russia. Both men were dedicated anti-Bolsheviks and supported the White Russians.⁴⁹ Having these two men make presentations to the senior Western leaders was Clemenceau’s way of presenting White Russia’s political message in the face of the Anglo–US opposition to having one side represented without hearing from the other.⁵⁰ Neither method was a good way of making sound intelligence analysis.

On 20 January, when Noulens finally spoke to the Council, it was a litany of horrors, citing well-to-do classes opposed to the Reds and describing the Bolshevik government as imperialist intent on conquering the world.⁵¹ But Noulens’s graphic lop-sided story disappointed even the French.⁵² The next day, Ambassador Scavenius gave his presentation. Despite the apparent importance of the Dane’s testimony, President Wilson did not participate in the discussion.⁵³ Perhaps it was a message he did not want to hear. Scavenius urged immediate Allied intervention to aid Denikin to attack Moscow and re-establish the Russian Constituent Assembly.⁵⁴ Clemenceau wanted to know whether Denikin’s forces were unwilling to go to Moscow and Scavenius answered in the affirmative “if they had to do all the fighting”, but Moscow’s capture would end Bolshevism, though the Constituent Assembly could not meet at once.⁵⁵ Yet the Council of Ten worried that the Allies would have to shoulder the burden of maintaining security in Russia for a long time and did not have the force or political will for the task.⁵⁶ Noulens and Scavenius were so blatantly anti-Bolshevik that they lost all credibility in the eyes of President Wilson and Lloyd George. Following the Dane’s presentation, the US president read from a much different assessment that Buckler had sent after he had met with Litvinov and the *Daily Mail’s* correspondent, Arthur Ransome, an intimate of the Bolsheviks.

Buckler quoted Litvinov as endorsing all the statements made in the 24 December 1918 letter to President Wilson.⁵⁷ The letter had been sent only to the US president and may have been a Soviet ploy to split the Allies. The Russians

promised to cease all propaganda in the Allied countries when the war ended and to grant an amnesty to all Russians opposing the Bolsheviks. The Reds' spokesman denied any imperialistic ambitions towards Finland, Poland or the Ukraine and pronounced that only a minority in South Russia, Siberia and Archangel opposed them. Ransome thought that the Soviets would compromise on the Ural and other frontiers. The journalist believed that continued efforts by the Entente would overthrow the Reds, but a greater intervention for an indefinite period would be necessary to overcome the anarchy following the Bolshevik collapse.⁵⁸

This analysis impressed both Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson and acted as a sobering counter to the views expressed by Noulens and Scavenius. It also gave "last word" credibility to the idea that Wilson and Lloyd George had already accepted. Accommodation and consultation with all parties in Russia would be the only way ahead. It now seemed so simple. But it was not. After the Council adjourned this controversial morning session of 21 January, Lloyd George met with the rest of the Empire's delegation. The United States, he said, supported the British proposal for a Conference of Russian factions, but the French still wished to crush Bolshevism. Since the United States would not send more troops to Russia, Lloyd George asked if Canada would supply soldiers. Borden answered "no". Military intervention was impossible, the Canadian said, and the Allies must deal with the Bolsheviks. If they refused to stop fighting, then economic pressure must be brought to bear.

The Australian prime minister, Hughes, backed Borden refusing Australians for any intervention. Fighting should only be used if the Soviets tried to extend their philosophy into other areas of the world. Lloyd George then insisted on deciding whether the British Empire should retain its military in Russia or withdraw. Although Borden first refused to keep Canadians in Russia and urged negotiations, under pressure he softened and finally agreed to retain Canadian soldiers there until June 1919. This was Borden's one limited compromise to bolster Lloyd George's larger policy of no military intervention. One advantage for the Canadian prime minister was that by compromising a bit, he was first to set a specific date for the withdrawal of any Allied force from Russia. In the end, Lloyd George had achieved his aim: unless the Russian factions all met, Britain would cease supporting the Whites and withdraw all her battalions.⁵⁹

When the Council of Ten met that afternoon, Woodrow Wilson proposed that Lloyd George's motion be amended so that the Russian factions would send representatives, not to Paris but to some other location. But the Italians and the French adamantly opposed such talks with the Bolsheviks. The British and United States wished to invite all sides involved in the Russian civil war. The best that could be agreed was that President Wilson should draft a proclamation to all Russian factions for the next meeting.⁶⁰ It was all a slow and painful process, with no guarantee of success. Wilson's draft invited the Russians to send representatives to the Prinkipo (Prince) Islands in the Sea of Marmara once a truce among all factions had been established. At Prinkipo, Allied representatives would help the different factions come to an understanding to end the civil war. A prompt reply was called for and 15 February 1919 was set for the conference.⁶¹ All the Allied

leaders accepted the draft as written. The invitation was transmitted to all Russian factions that evening.

This was, at best, a compromise between the Anglo–US wish to halt further military intervention and the French and Italian policy to nip Bolshevism in the bud. It was also a suspicious device on the part of the Europeans, especially Clemenceau. He had no intention of meeting with the Bolsheviks and both he and the Italians firmly believed the Reds would decline any negotiations with the Whites.⁶² Perhaps more importantly, it exposed President Wilson's naiveté and ignorance of the real situation in Russia. Furthermore, the invitees' list was vague and the meeting date set too soon. Three weeks was hardly enough time for the various groups to receive and discuss the invitation, much less answer the message, arrange a truce, select representatives and then have them travel across the vastness of hostile Russia to the Sea of Marmara off Constantinople. The decision to invite unspecified groups rather than specific Russian governments was "chicanery", since no one knew just how many organizations were involved or where they were.⁶³ This was another example of bad intelligence and worse communications. Calling for a quick truce among all factions was probably the most naïve if not cynical factor in the invitation, coming at a time when some of the Whites were actually making military progress against the Bolsheviks. Moreover, French telegraph stations broadcast the message to all factions in Russia, but, it appears, not to Moscow.⁶⁴

Clemenceau's support for the Prinkipo scheme was a formality observed more in the breach. The Quay d'Orsay, in fact, worked behind the scenes to sabotage any possible meeting with the Russians.⁶⁵ There was also resentment aimed at Woodrow Wilson for usurping the leadership of the Paris negotiations. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to Great Britain, complained about the slow progress being made, which he blamed on "the unfortunate lead which had been given to the proceedings by President Wilson". Cambon described the American as an academic out of touch with the world, who trusted no one, knew nothing of Europe and who espoused theories divorced from reality.⁶⁶ This was a picture Cambon shared with others of the often-pontificating US president. One could also add that Wilson considered no one at the conference to be his intellectual equal. As Cambon told Curzon, the decision to call the hurried Russian Peace Conference at Prinkipo Island and its ill-thought out invitation list was the product of the "Utopian and idealistic promptings of President Wilson's mind".⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Lloyd George asked Sir Robert Borden to be the chief delegate for the British Empire at Prinkipo. Borden was reluctant and queried his Canadian Cabinet whether he should accept the responsibility.⁶⁸ In Ottawa, Acting Prime Minister White personally thought it inopportune for Borden to be the Chief British Delegate, given that the political situation in Canada was heating up and Borden should be available to return home at short notice. White complained that if Borden went to Prinkipo, Canada would not be fully represented at the Paris Peace Conference.⁶⁹ There could be little doubt that was true given that a major aim of Canada being in Paris was to assert its sovereign national status and protect its self-interest. But, in the end, the Canadian Cabinet was split on

whether Borden should go. The final decision was left to him and Borden decided to accept, but doubted that the Prinkipo conference would succeed.⁷⁰ And perhaps he knew this all along.

As for the British position, the CIGS once again privately recorded the internal cleavages in their ranks. On 27 January, Balfour told Field Marshal Wilson that he did not approve of the Prinkipo proposal. As was his wont, that evening the CIGS committed Balfour's opinion to his diary and observed that no one was going to Prinkipo except the Great Powers. If the Russians did not show up, the whole concept would damage the larger Peace Conference. The Field Marshal also was hopeful that Prinkipo would fail for, to his thinking, it was just part of the foolish naïveté of Woodrow Wilson, which would only lead the world into endless wars. The sooner the process was "smashed up" the sooner the world would get back to the realism of Great Power balances.⁷¹

On 29 January 1919, shortly after Lloyd George had met with the Empire's leaders, Churchill wrote an angry letter to his prime minister charging that Britain was abandoning Russia to a brutish Bolshevik fate. A clear strategy is what he wanted.⁷² He then described various policy alternatives ranging from immediate withdrawal to full military intervention, but admitted that the latter was unrealistic. He therefore proposed a modest stratagem of withdrawing from North Russia and supporting South Russia, Siberia and Transcaspia with volunteers and materiel. The Whites would be informed that Britain would continue to support them with arms as long as they continued to oppose the Bolsheviks. Clearly Churchill's ideas were in stark contrast to both Lloyd George's and President Wilson's.

But it was not only the internal divisions in British and French circles; it was both their concerns over President Wilson's attitude and the ideas he pushed in Paris. They had little faith that the Prinkipo conference would occur, much less succeed. The French and Italians hated the idea of having any discussions with the Bolsheviks, as did many of the British leadership. Only Lloyd George (and perhaps Borden) on the British side and the United States believed that such talks could achieve peace. Many of the other politicians and advisors in Paris believed that the Bolsheviks would in fact reject the proposal outright and there would be no need to urge the other factions to comply with the request. In fact, the initial Soviet reply arrived in Allied capitals as a complaint.

A telegram from Chicherin, published in the French press 25 January, protested that the invitation had not been addressed to the Moscow government specifically, and that the Allies did not understand the complicated political situation in Russia.⁷³ Moscow complained of no formal communications to the Bolsheviks, but indicated they would go to Prinkipo if officially asked.⁷⁴ The British Foreign Office considered the Soviet reply to be arrogant and simply out to score propaganda points.⁷⁵ The Allies still did not send an explicit invitation to Moscow. They had no intention of recognizing the Bolshevik government and a direct invitation would give the appearance of legitimacy to the Soviets. However, Moscow had now called the Allies' bluff. And so by the end of January 1919, the Allied leaders seemed only able to debate endlessly while combat and chaos in Russia intensified daily.

Denikin in South Russia

Early in the New Year, the fighting in North Russia was brutal and made more difficult with the extreme winter weather. Siberia was little better. In South Russia, the Whites took the offensive. On 3 January 1919, Denikin and his Volunteer Army began attacks that initially rolled back the Red Army. Denikin appeared to have the best chance of defeating the Bolsheviks, assuming he could achieve unity of command and unity of purpose with the other anti-Bolshevik elements.

Earlier, in late 1918, in an attempt to gain some accurate intelligence on the Whites' situation, the British had sent a military mission to Denikin. Major General Poole, the former British commander in North Russia, went to South Russia to gather first-hand information on Denikin's operations. In November 1918, prior to Poole's arrival, Lieutenant Colonel A. P. Blackwood had submitted a detailed report to the War Office, which advised, "to achieve any results unity of command and unity of purpose are essential".⁷⁶ Blackwood considered it equally important for the Allies to declare their policy as soon as possible.⁷⁷ It was a tall order, since the British could not agree on a Russian strategy within Cabinet itself. Privately, Blackwood held out no promise to the Whites of Allied troops. Still, Denikin sought military help to provide rear-guard control of any conquered territory in order to free his Russians for operations. Lord Hardinge recognized the importance of the recommendations and passed them to the War Cabinet.⁷⁸

Before Blackwood's report reached London, General Poole arrived at Denikin's headquarters in early December 1918. He quickly produced a more detailed assessment. It compared Denikin's forces to the Don Cossacks and perceived that while the Don Cossacks were comparatively superior, their leader, Ataman Krasnov, although a talented officer, was possibly unreliable and would be led by self-interest. He considered Denikin as reliable, but not brilliant, while other Russian officers were very capable. He singled out General Baron P. N. Wrangel as the best.⁷⁹

To Poole's credit, he had succeeded in having the South Russian leadership consolidated under Denikin. In the process, when Krasnov had asked for Allied support, both in materiel and troops, Poole made it clear that nothing would come unless there was unity of command in the White forces.⁸⁰ As a result, Krasnov agreed to submit to Denikin's control. Thus, Denikin became Commander-in-Chief of all the White forces in South Russia, with Krasnov as leader of the Don Army and Wrangel as head of the Volunteer Army.⁸¹ Poole urged that a small British contingent be despatched to support Denikin. This was done contrary to Lloyd George's order, once again demonstrating the internal division between British policy-makers and those in the field.

Unified command now established, Denikin launched his offensive early in 1919. To position himself for his march on Moscow, the White C-in-C decided to concentrate his efforts around Kharkov and the Donetz Basin. Although Wrangle argued for a thrust up the Volga to link with Kolchak, the C-in-C stuck to his new plan.⁸² To protect his right flank, Denikin needed the Bolsheviks cleared from the region all the way east to the shores of the Caspian Sea. Wrangle directed this campaign, and by the end of January 1919, the Reds had been routed, their

morale broken and a 150,000-man army destroyed.⁸³ In the Donetz, Denikin had moved east, evicting the Bolsheviks while holding the line on the Don River.⁸⁴

Given these successes, at the end of January 1919 the White C-in-C was in no mood to negotiate a truce with the Reds. For the South Russian Whites, the invitation to Prinkipo came at an inopportune time. Meanwhile, the British appointed General Charles Briggs as Chief of the British Mission to Denikin. The War Office also insisted that the boundaries of French and British spheres of influence established 14 months earlier be rigorously adhered to. This increased problems: the Donetz Basin was considered part of the Ukraine, which was in the French sphere; moreover, the French and Denikin were bickering over the conduct of the war.⁸⁵

Due to the political wrangling in Paris, French policy in the Ukraine and South Russia appeared paralysed. The intensity of the Peace Conference negotiations and the emphasis placed by President Wilson on the creation of the League of Nations seemed to sidetrack the French from the military and political actions that they had initiated in the Ukraine at the end of December. A French anarchist's wounding of Clemenceau on 19 February 1919 also delayed French decisions. Yet its military weakness prevented any further action on the part of France. Domestic opposition to intervention meant the only option left was withdrawal, something that Paris was loath to do.⁸⁶ It was within this charged atmosphere that Denikin had to consider his response to the Prinkipo proposal. Through his proxies at Paris, he agreed to a joint reply with the Archangel and Omsk governments, which reiterated that no accord could or would be struck between the Bolsheviks and other Russian national groups.⁸⁷ Denikin's intransigence did not help the Allied chances in Russia.

In Siberia, the Prinkipo pre-requisite for a cease-fire incensed Kolchak. In early January, prior to the Allied invitation, Denikin had wired Kolchak that, while recognizing the admiral as the supreme authority for the White Russians, the final form of government in Russia should be delayed until the Bolsheviks had been defeated. Denikin asked that Kolchak cooperate with him in military matters.⁸⁸ This seemed like progress towards a united Russian government. The Prinkipo proposal would halt this progress and was not acceptable to the White Russians. It also seemed at odds with British policy. On 15 January 1919 the Foreign Office had wired Sir Charles Eliot that he could congratulate Admiral Kolchak and express "warm sympathy with every effort to establish a free Russian Government".⁸⁹ Any requirement for a cease-fire would undermine Kolchak if he were to attempt to meet this prerequisite. The admiral could not afford to antagonize his supporters.

Moreover, his government was also at odds with the Czechoslovak Legion that had had the most success vis-à-vis the Red Army. The Czechs had supported the Directorate and felt betrayed by Kolchak's coup of November 1918, yet they were willing to maintain a working relationship to defeat Bolshevism. Kolchak's Russian support was centred among reactionary elements of the Russian military and the propertied classes, but the middle class did not trust him. The Cossacks west of Lake Baikal were loyal, but those east of the Lake and commanded by Semenov were openly opposed to the Omsk government and were encouraged in this by the Japanese.⁹⁰ There was some evidence that Semenov sought

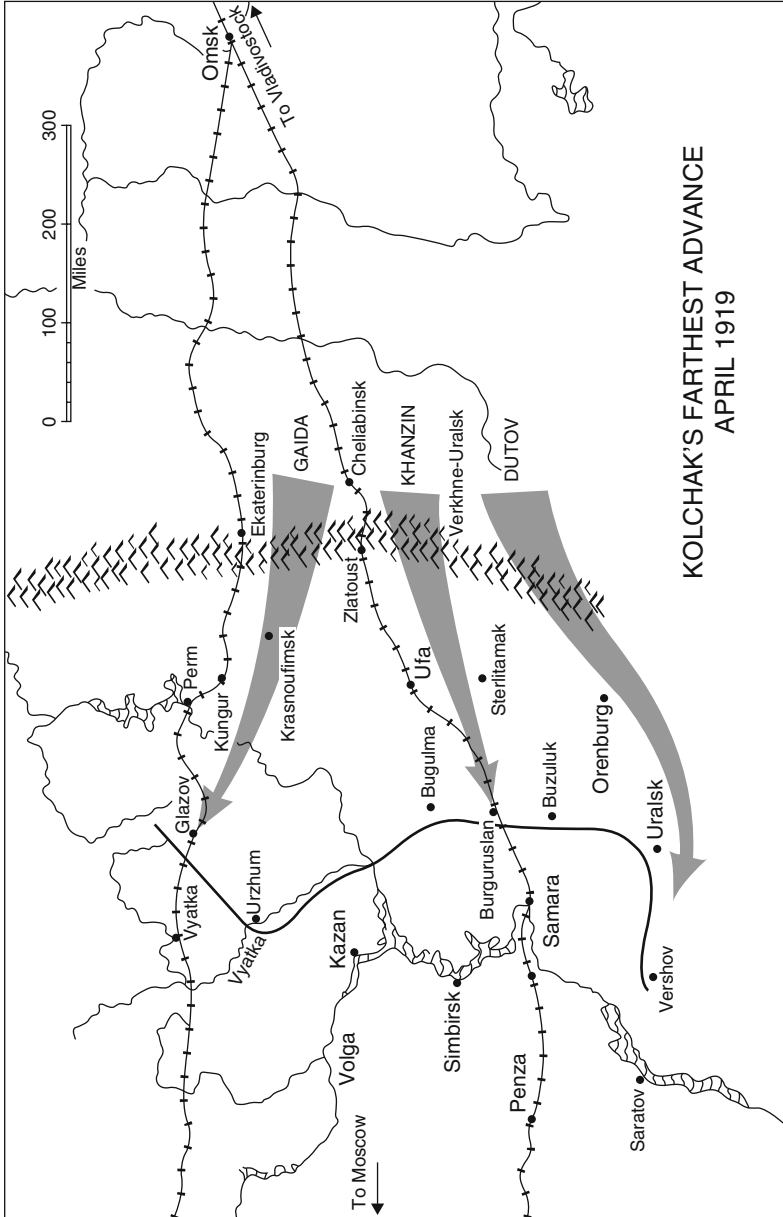
reconciliation with Kolchak, but the admiral's personal antipathy towards the ataman, along with Semenov's increasing barbarity against all who opposed him, made any reconciliation difficult. After visiting Semenov at Chita, General Knox reported that the Cossack leader seemed to realize his resistance to Kolchak had gained him nothing despite the Japanese support he had received.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Semenov continued to resist Kolchak.

At the beginning of 1919, militarily, Kolchak's government was at a standstill. The admiral was in dispute with French General Janin over the latter's role in the Siberian struggle. Kolchak refused to have his Russian forces be subordinated to Janin and Allied Command.⁹² Finally, in mid-January, a compromise was worked out. Janin was acknowledged as the Allied C-in-C west of Lake Baikal. He could then issue general orders for the conduct of the war and other White forces would, hopefully, then conform to the general operation plan.⁹³ This compromise saved face for both parties and allowed the Russians to run their own military affairs. This was important for Kolchak's acceptability in the eyes of a majority of White Russians. Clearly as an individual he would have a great influence on the fate of Russia. His capture of Perm in late December had bolstered the possibility that he could lead a White government, but the Russian troops behind the front could not be trusted to maintain order as contact with Bolsheviks in the towns increased.⁹⁴ All was not as well as it seemed.

Some White Russian units refused to fight in the face of the Czechs' lack of support for Kolchak.⁹⁵ In mid-January, the Czech Commander, Milan Stefanik, painted a pessimistic picture of the Russians to the British High Commissioner. He believed that the Whites were incapable of carrying out any offensives without Allied military backing. If the Allies did not actively support Kolchak, the Czechs would claim the same rights as other Allied forces and demand to be evacuated.⁹⁶ It must be remembered that the White Siberian army had lost Ufa to the Reds at the same time Kolchak had captured Perm (see Map 5).⁹⁷ As a result, the admiral's forces had been unable to link up with Denikin in South Russia. In light of these setbacks, any apparent lessening of vigour in the fight against Bolshevism would endanger the continued existence of the Kolchak-led Omsk government. The Allies' Prinkipo proposition was just such a danger.

Kolchak had already rejected any armistice or agreement with the Reds. The admiral now noted that talks could be opened with other temporary Russian governments, but no discussions could be held "with dishonourable and criminal Bolsheviks whose leaders are assassins and rascals".⁹⁸ On 30 January, in a blatant rejection of Prinkipo, Cossack officers in Omsk voted for a rapprochement with the Japanese.⁹⁹ Moreover, now Kolchak believed that the Allied invitation had undermined his authority and endangered his government.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, Siberian support for Prinkipo was non-existent. Elsewhere, it was the same.

In early 1919, in North Russia, the Bolsheviks continued to press the Allies hard, despite the apparent willingness of the Moscow government to participate in Prinkipo. Prime Minister Chaikovsky had departed Archangel for the Paris Peace Conference before the Prinkipo invitation was received and had left his new Governor General, Eugene K. Miller, in charge.¹⁰¹ However, overall control



Map 5 Central Asia – The Urals
Source: John A. Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (1967), 234. Reproduced with permission.

of the Allied fighting troops remained in the hands of British Generals Maynard at Murmansk and Ironside at Archangel. Chaikovsky received the Prinkipo invitation on his way to Murmansk and was incensed (as was his entire government at Archangel) that the Allies would consider negotiating with the Reds.¹⁰² On 25 January Miller called a meeting to discuss the Prinkipo invitation. The meeting unanimously rejected the proposal and this decision was passed to the Allied diplomats two days later.¹⁰³ Most of the North Russia populace fully supported this course.¹⁰⁴ This public reflection of the provisional government's position may also have stemmed from the continued fighting that the Bolsheviks pressed during the first months of 1919. Despite the Prinkipo invitation and the requirement for a cease-fire prior to the start of the conference, fighting between Allied troops and the Bolsheviks continued in the North as it did in other regions of Russia. North Russia, with a scattered and small population, presented ongoing challenges to the Allied commanders.

Ironside had remained on the defensive in the areas around Archangel, although some minor attempts in late December 1918 had been made to neutralize the Reds. However, the Bolsheviks were increasing their forces in the area and were ordered to go on the offensive on 7 January 1919.¹⁰⁵ The temporary lull that Archangel had been experiencing since the beginning of the New Year was shattered on 19 January when the Bolsheviks launched a major offensive against the Allied outposts at Shenkursk, 200 miles from Archangel. The mixed Allied force of Americans, Canadians and White Russians held the position for five days.¹⁰⁶ However, on 24 January the Allies were forced to abandon Shenkursk and retreat down the Vaga River to Kitsa.¹⁰⁷ The loss of Shenkursk was a blow to Allied prestige and the effects extended beyond the Archangel area.¹⁰⁸ At a larger level, this setback and resultant chaos produced more cracks in the Allied effort for North Russia.

These successful Bolshevik attacks caused the United States to complain that its troops were squandered in small units and, as a result, their morale was affected. The retreat revealed clearly the peril of them being overwhelmed and that there was a danger that emergency evacuation would be needed, resulting in high casualties. The US Consul criticized British leadership, claiming that military intervention would be more palatable to the Russians if command was under US control.¹⁰⁹ To some strategists and politicians in London, the retreat from Shenhurst threatened Archangel itself and more troops were needed there.¹¹⁰ But any reinforcements for Ironside could only come from Murmansk, since the British War Cabinet had decided not to augment North Russia.¹¹¹ However, in Murmansk, General Maynard had his own concerns for the defence of his vast Murman Region, which encompassed Karelia, bordering Finland.

Murman Region

The Karelian territory stretched from Petrograd to Murmansk for 430 miles and was dominated by the railroad built during the war to service the Arctic Ocean port. Petrograd was the terminus for this railroad. Although now a political

backwater since the Soviet move to Moscow, the old capital remained a transportation hub with rail links to every region in Russia. Whoever controlled the Northern Railway also controlled the Karelian Region north to the Arctic, as well as west to the Baltic Sea and those new nations established from the old Imperial Russian provinces – Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Both the Finns and Estonians coveted control of Petrograd as a means to cement their newfound freedom from Russia. The Finns also wished to expand into Karelia to join with their ethnic cousins.

While the Bolsheviks had recognized an independent Finland on 31 December 1917, the White Russians had not. The Allies, so far, had not formally recognized Finland as an independent state either. Any expansion of Finland would have to be carried out before the Whites captured Moscow. Kolchak's capture of Perm in late December 1918 made a link-up of his Siberian army with the Archangel-based forces a distinct possibility. This forced the Finns to act. Their leader, Marshal Karl Mannerheim, proceeded cautiously, using irregular forces to attack the Bolsheviks in the southern part of the region. The British watched these actions with a degree of apprehension and concern.¹¹² The irregular Finnish forces were backed by regular Finnish cavalry, which remained close to, and sometimes crossed, the Finnish–Russian border into Karelia.¹¹³ As a counter, the Reds moved the 7th Army's headquarters to Novgorod. The rest of their force was split, with half covering the North and, significantly, half moving towards the Baltic States.¹¹⁴

In the Murman, Maynard was more fortunate than Ironside. He had consolidated his position by mid-January.¹¹⁵ Yet Ironside's retreat from Shenkursk forced Maynard to send some of his limited manpower to Archangel to bolster its defence against the Bolsheviks. More importantly, attempts by Allied troops deployed from Archangel to link with the White forces and the Czechs in Siberia had to be abandoned. Maynard was then expected to move south towards Lake Onega to protect the railway linking Murmansk to Archangel.¹¹⁶ This would ensure that Archangel was not cut off by the Bolsheviks. The safety of Allied military forces remained Britain's pragmatic priority despite the political imperative to seek a peaceful resolution to the Russian civil war.

The loss of a substantial part of his forces to Archangel hampered Maynard in his preparations to expand his area of operations southward. Nevertheless, planning went forward. Maynard masked his offensive preparations as a staging for troops moving to Archangel. When the offensive south against the Bolsheviks began on 15 February it was a complete surprise.¹¹⁷ General Maynard won a solid victory, gaining a further 100 miles of territory and securing his lines of communication to Archangel.¹¹⁸ But this great victory, followed by more Allied operations, both defensive and offensive, alarmed Allied negotiators, especially in Paris. Such military operations always raised the spectre of more casualties and the need for reinforcements. Those in Paris wanted a cease-fire and all-party talks at Prinkipo. Even in far-off Ottawa there were calls to bring home the troops.¹¹⁹

Similar questions had been ongoing in the US Congress and the Red offensives in the North prompted President Wilson to promise publicly that US soldiers in North Russia would be withdrawn as soon as the weather permitted in the

spring.¹²⁰ Allied solidarity on Russia, which had taken months to achieve during the war, was breaking down. Within the Allied camps, different and very divisive views of the Bolsheviks were rife. One effect was that the US chargé, Dewitt Poole, resigned over his president's willingness, in his Prinkipo invitation, to treat the thuggish Bolsheviks equally to the White governments.¹²¹ But Prinkipo was anathema to the Whites, who refused any dealings with the Reds. Time now favoured the Bolsheviks.

Notes

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11

Retreat, Abandonment and Bolshevik Victory, February–April 1919

The Prinkipo proposal had been an attempt to let diplomacy find a solution to Russia. But everyone and everything seemed to defy success. By February 1919, Prinkipo was dead; it just had not been buried. With its demise, the hope for a peaceful conclusion to the Russian civil war quickly faded. Each of the Allies went its own way in dealing with the Russian debacle, but all in the name of the Alliance. Never good at most times, coordination among the Allies seemed to disappear altogether as winter wore on. At first, though, it did not seem to matter. The White Russians appeared on the brink of success. During these early months, the Allied forces in Russia, along with the White Russians, attempted to push the Soviets back towards Moscow. However, the collapse of the Prinkipo initiative had disheartened the Allied leaders and they began to plan for the withdrawal of Allied military forces. The Americans and Canadians were both very vocal in their desire to get their soldiers out of harm's way, while the political leadership in both France and Britain had various factions that, at the same time, advocated either increased military action or complete withdrawal. The chaos in politics, diplomacy and military operations continued apace, made more so by even poorer communications and inaccurate intelligence.

The most pressing problem for the Allies, especially Britain, was the shortage of manpower for garrison duties around the world while the Peace Conference hammered out the details of the treaties that would finally end the Great War. Without manpower, the Allies could not maintain the peace in Europe nor support the White forces still fighting in Russia. The need for large armies of occupation came into direct conflict with the demand for the immediate de-mobilization made by the soldiers and populace of the victorious nations. So great had been the trials and travails of the Great War that politicians and society at large were struck nearly dumb by the *malaise militaire*. Yet some tried to act.

Churchill and Lloyd George Differ on Russia

In mid-January 1919 Winston Churchill had produced two papers outlining the military manpower needs of Britain and calling for the extension in service of those conscripts who had joined the army after January 1916.¹ The CIGS supported this

plan, but warned that the scheme was like sitting on a public-relations powder keg waiting to explode.² Initially Lloyd George reprimanded Churchill for circulating the plan to Cabinet Ministers before consulting with him.³ However, once in Paris, on 23 January the prime minister quickly agreed to the Churchill–Wilson scheme. So, despite his desire to prevent military intervention in Russia, Lloyd George had agreed to maintain a large army, ostensibly for occupation tasks, but still available for any military need.⁴ It was an immense political gamble. There would have to be concessions eventually, but on 28 January the Cabinet approved the proposal as presented. This gave Churchill a potential opening to press for military operations in Russia when, as he anticipated, Prinkipo, only a week old, collapsed. But Churchill was now in direct conflict with Lloyd George since, despite the prime minister's concurrence to a large standing army, he was adamant in his opposition to Allied military adventures in Russia. His opposition to war of any kind was long-standing, although he was no pacifist.⁵

Opposing the prime minister was neither wise nor good politics. Churchill was making the same mistakes as he had in the first two years of the War. He was trying to make government policy when only the prime minister, in this case Lloyd George, could do so. The time-honoured principle of collective Cabinet responsibility for great critical and national decisions was being ignored with Churchill playing lone wolf. Although he had initially been ambivalent to the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin's traitorous adoption of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty turned Churchill into a die-hard anti-Bolshevik.⁶ The Reds' extremes were what aroused his antipathy. In speeches in Parliament, Churchill described Bolshevism as "a ghoul descending from a pile of skulls. It is not a policy; it is a disease. It is not a creed; it is a pestilence."⁷ This extreme attitude was not one Lloyd George could afford to accept. Churchill was also at odds with the Canadian government and its General Staff. On 6 February, the Acting Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Thomas White, asked Robert Borden when the Canadian soldiers in Russia would return to Canada.⁸ Borden told Lloyd George a day later that April would be the time to withdraw the Canadians from Siberia.⁹ There is no indication that Lloyd George informed Churchill of Canada's wishes.

At the 12 February War Cabinet meeting, Churchill worriedly observed that British soldiers were fighting all over Russia, but that their endeavours appeared to be crumbling. The Bolsheviks were getting stronger, and both Denikin and Kolchak had suffered serious setbacks. He blamed the Allies' procrastination in establishing a clear Russian strategy. If withdrawal was to be adopted, it should happen immediately, but if intervention was to be the policy, larger forces had to be sent. The Allies, he insisted, must intervene. Instantly, the prime minister opposed the idea, perhaps finally realizing the potential implications of Churchill's and the CIGS's large army scheme. It would require a million men, including 150,000 just to supply the Whites with material. The personnel, not to mention the national will, were not there for this enormous effort. Other Ministers expressed doubt in both Denikin and the Cossacks and believed the North would only survive as long as Allied forces remained. They also feared that the Greeks and French in the Crimea would need British help if that already shaky front collapsed.¹⁰

Whether it was the attractive cogency of Churchill's argument or a desire to prevent a complete Cabinet rupture over the divisive Russia issue, the prime minister delayed any decision by asking for further study. He insisted on a review of all the alternatives, including total costs, and proposed complete withdrawal as an option. The War Office, he ordered, would prepare the paper. If Churchill realized he had been hived off, it did not show; he pressed, insisting that if the conclusion was that the Allies could no longer aid the Whites, then they should be informed immediately. He also warned that if Britain chose not to re-enforce the White forces, Japan and Germany would eventually unite with Russia and form one of the most powerful combinations the world had ever seen.¹¹ Churchill then asked that the War Office be informed of what strategy to pursue: full intervention, material support only or withdrawal. Yet Lloyd George said that there would be no such decision before the military analysis was presented. He was a master at that form of political control, but it did not help the immediate problems about Russia.

Later the same day, Lord Curzon had another private discussion with the French Ambassador. At the meeting, Cambon indicated a shift in French thinking. Now they seemed not to support intervention, but saw withdrawal as the only feasible policy.¹² The debate continued in the British War Cabinet. Churchill tabled the requested papers and again insisted that the only way of making headway in Russia was to employ the White armies. He was unable to vouch for the anti-Bolshevik capabilities, but said that unless a clear policy was articulated, there was no point in continuing.¹³ The prime minister recognized the danger to the world of the continuing civil war in Russia, but had no desire to send British forces to fight there. He feared social disorder in Britain and bankruptcy for the country. For Lloyd George, social unrest would be the beginning of a Bolshevik-type revolution in England.¹⁴ The prime minister was not alone in these fears as both Walter Long and Lord Curzon held much the same views.¹⁵

Picking out potential flaws in the interventionists' case, Lloyd George emphasized that the General Staff was unwilling to predict what would happen if intervention took place as there were too many variables. In his view, this reluctance to predict an outcome was telling in itself.¹⁶ Churchill countered that Russia was no longer a military force and as soon as the British and Americans quit the Western Front, Germany would begin to menace Europe. With no proper government in Russia, that nation would soon fall prey to Germany.¹⁷

By predicting a pact of evil between the Germans and the Bolsheviks, Churchill was trying to get his policy adopted by any means possible. But evidence to fear Germany did not exist, and so his scare tactic did not work; the War Cabinet made no decision other than to have the General Staff produce another military analysis. Lloyd George had also asked the British delegation in Paris to raise the Russian policy question again before President Wilson left for the United States on 15 February.¹⁸ With the latter's departure looming, Lloyd George hurriedly met with Churchill and the CIGS the evening of 13 February. At this point, Lloyd George still had full trust in Churchill, not only as a Cabinet colleague, but also as a friend of long-standing.¹⁹

At that meeting, both the prime minister and Churchill admitted to each other that they were “baffled by the Russian situation”.²⁰ Churchill argued that the president should be made to face the problem before he left for the United States. Lloyd George then directed him and the CIGS to go immediately to Paris and try personally to intervene with Woodrow Wilson. “There must be some intelligible policy”, Churchill said, “which could be explained and defended in the House of Commons.”²¹ So the two men departed for Paris early on the morning of 14 February, ostensibly to ask Clemenceau and President Wilson what stratagems Britain should pursue.²² On the surface, this appears to be an abrogation of British decision-making, if not the prime minister’s leadership. However, Churchill was actually looking for support for his view of what policy should be implemented for Russia. And Lloyd George likely knew that his impetuous War Secretary would get nowhere with the US president.

Churchill’s Plans for Russia

Once in Paris, Churchill quickly broadcast all his plans. He was armed with a proposal urging the creation of a Russian Council to coordinate Allied strategy, as well as a War Office memorandum asking for more men for North Russia.²³ However, he was unaware that two days before President Wilson had approved the sending of two companies of a US Railway battalion to North Russia solely to maintain the Murmansk–Archangel railway for the complete withdrawal of the Allies that coming spring.²⁴ In short, Churchill was about to assail the Allied Council when one of its key players had already decided to end military intervention, albeit without informing any other Allied leaders. Nevertheless, on 14 February 1919, with the two requests in mind – one for additional manpower and one for a Russia Council – Churchill put his case before the Supreme War Council. The War Cabinet, he said, had requested that he obtain some Allied strategic decision concerning the Russian situation, particularly what policy would govern Prinkipo if pursued, and if not, what would be the substitute.²⁵

Woodrow Wilson responded with two points. The first was that he was convinced that the Allied military in Russia was doing “no sort of good” and that they should be withdrawn from all of that country. As to Prinkipo, the president said that he would support US agents meeting informally with the Reds or the Whites, but only to gain information.²⁶ Once again it was not the answer Churchill wanted. If the Allies withdrew completely, the dire consequences would be the destruction of all the White armies resulting in “an interminable vista of violence and misery ... for the whole of Russia”. But Woodrow Wilson was firm. Not one Ally, he retorted, was willing to reinforce its contingent already in Russia. He understood the problems and felt personally guilty that the United States had inadequate forces, but it was impossible to increase them. If the Allies withdrew, White Russians would be killed. The Allies had to leave some day, and by staying the consequences would only be deferred.²⁷ What the president should have added was that, by staying, the later withdrawal would be much more costly.

Blocked, Churchill finally asked if the Council would approve of arming the Whites if Prinkipo failed. Wilson hesitated to express any definite opinion on the question, but he had explained what he would do if he was acting alone: “He would, however, cast in his lot with the rest.”²⁸ The meeting now ended and the president left for the United States. As for the redoubtable Churchill, he did not quit so easily. That evening he discussed the options available with the CIGS and Philip Kerr, Lloyd George’s personal secretary. Churchill proposed that the Council of Ten be asked to agree to two decisions: first, that an Allied Commission go to Prinkipo in ten days provided the fighting in Russia had ceased; and second, that an Inter-Allied Council be set up to decide what military and economic action would end the Bolshevik Regime. He and Kerr drafted communiqués on these subjects for presentation to the Council the next day.²⁹ With the Council’s approval, the communiqués would be transmitted to the Russian protagonists.

The next morning, 15 February, Foch’s Chief of Staff, General Henri Albi, presented the Peace Conference with the French military proposal that envisioned a “well-led” Allied force to defeat the Bolsheviks. It is of note that the French had waited until President Wilson had departed before making the presentation, likely because Wilson knew that the French could not do it for many of the same reasons England was discovering. Even if it were possible, it would have been a French show with Britain sidelined – and that was not likely acceptable either.³⁰ Apparently Clemenceau knew such was the case, for he stopped Albi before the presentation was complete.

Meanwhile, waiting his turn to appear before the Council of Ten, Churchill was inclined to favour action similar to that proposed by the French staff. The draft communiqué that he prepared was aimed only at the Bolsheviks and demanded an end to all fighting and withdrawal of five miles from their opposing forces. Philip Kerr had also prepared a similar note, but of a more general nature. Balfour favoured Churchill’s, which was then presented to the Council that morning.³¹ When Kerr reported privately to his prime minister, he thought that Churchill’s approach to Prinkipo was “the right one” provided the communiqué was written such that it offered the Bolsheviks “every inducement to accept a cease-fire”.³² However, Kerr warned that, in his opinion, Churchill was bent on a campaign against Bolshevik Russia by any means available.³³ The wary Kerr had recognized Churchill’s intentions outright. By this time, however, Churchill had gained Balfour’s backing to offer the Whites immediate, extra and substantial Allied support if the Reds refused to attend Prinkipo.³⁴ With this powerful endorsement, Churchill brought it all before the Council of Ten that morning of 15 February.

Apparently unaware that the deadline in the original Prinkipo invitation was to expire that day, Churchill pushed on. Everyone knew, he told the Council, the reasons for the Prinkipo policy, but almost a month had passed and no decision on the role of the Allied forces had been made. If Prinkipo was going to fail, then the sooner it was ended the better. Churchill then proposed that his draft communiqué be discussed and then transmitted to the Bolsheviks, which put a time limit for fighting to cease and discussions to begin.³⁵ In place of Prinkipo, Churchill also submitted that a Russia Council be set up immediately, with political, economic

and military sections, which would have limited executive powers. Under the direction of the Allied governments, this Council would prepare plans for dealing with Russia, regardless of the outcome of Prinkipo. The first priority would be to prepare an Allied military strategy using the resources available.³⁶

The Council members then voiced their views. The Americans, Lansing and House, agreed that the telegram should be sent, but other issues were more important. Baron Sydney Sonnino and Clemenceau both wanted immediate resolution of the military question. Prinkipo, Clemenceau said, was a failure with all the White factions refusing the invitation. As for the Italians, the Prinkipo deadline would expire in a few hours, Sonnino said, without the Bolsheviks complying with a cease-fire. Why, then, should the Bolsheviks be given any more time to disrupt White and Allied operations? At that point the Council abruptly adjourned.³⁷ The reason seems to have been the expiration of the Prinkipo deadline. And so it was dead, but no one in Paris or elsewhere could agree on its passing or even what would take its place.

But for the irrepressible Churchill, it seemed an opportunity to renew his efforts. The same day he spoke at the Council, he sent instructions to General Ironside: "As question of Russia is still under discussion at Paris, we cannot give you definite statement of policy. You should therefore make preparations for an active defence on the Dvina River pending further instructions".³⁸ Thus, without waiting for any Allied consensus, Churchill tried to commit Allied forces in North Russia to continue fighting the Bolsheviks for the rest of the winter. Churchill also sent a long telegram to Lloyd George summarizing the Paris events. This included his personal interpretation of what President Wilson had told him. As we know, Wilson would not commit himself to arming the Whites, but said he would "cast in his lot with the rest".³⁹ Churchill deceptively added his own spin:

while anxious to clear out of Russia altogether and willing ... to meet the Bolsheviks alone at Prinkipo, he [President Wilson] would nevertheless if Prinkipo came to nothing do his share with the other allies in *any military measures* which they considered necessary and practicable to support the Russian armies now in the field.⁴⁰

Clearly Wilson had not said this, but Lloyd George was left with the impression that the United States would participate in military operations. Churchill then went on to advise his prime minister about his two-pronged approach to Russian policy. He strongly urged the creation of an Allied Council on Russian Affairs immediately. The military component of this Council should prepare, at once, draft plans of intervention. To give his scheme weight, Churchill told Lloyd George that Clemenceau, Sonnino and the Japanese all said that Prinkipo was finished and it was time to act.⁴¹

When Prinkipo failed, both Balfour and Churchill believed that it was important to show the British public and the whole world that the Allies had made an extra effort to "end the bloodshed in Russia" and promote peace. It was not the Allies breaking off talks. Both House and Lansing thought this sort of public-relations message was necessary and Sonnino, Churchill said, had told him that with the

expiration of the Prinkipo deadline, the Allies were at “a perfectly fair and reasonable breaking-off point”.⁴² In his reply from London, Lloyd George warned his Secretary of War not to commit Britain to any costly operation, either in men or money. Russia must save itself and the Allies would only support those efforts to do so. If Russians did not work to save themselves, it would be “an outrage on every British principle of freedom that we should use foreign armies to force upon Russia a government which is repugnant to its people”.⁴³

But before Churchill received Lloyd George’s rebuttal, he sent his prime minister a second more detailed elaboration of his intervention scheme.⁴⁴ Once Lloyd George read it, he seemed to have had about enough of Churchill’s obstreperous tactics and unacceptable ideas. There would be no Allied war in Russia, he shot back.⁴⁵ He then went on to warn Churchill that military intervention would strengthen Bolshevism in Britain and he reminded him of the grave labour situation in the country.⁴⁶ Churchill clearly had been trying to coerce both the prime minister and the British Cabinet into making a decision for military intervention. Lloyd George was having none of it. And to ensure that he stopped his over-zealous minister, he sent copies of his rebuttal to the US special presidential advisor, Colonel House.⁴⁷ The CIGS considered this a low blow and Churchill was furious. Once again General Wilson’s diary told the story: “Winston & I found that LG had wired to Philip Kerr to send copies of these telegrams to Colonel House. This is a lowdown trick, as this general tenor showed that LG did not trust Winston. Winston very angry.”⁴⁸ To Churchill, the disclosure was a complete loss of confidence in him as a minister.⁴⁹

Clearly Churchill was incensed. But if it was meant to result in his resignation, that did not happen either, likely because he knew that if he quit, Lloyd George would get his way. While Churchill could not proceed with his efforts to gain support for his scheme, nevertheless he did not give up trying. He had the issue discussed with the British Empire’s delegation before the Council of Ten met again on Monday afternoon, 17 February. At the Empire meeting, both Balfour and Churchill argued again for a clear policy and that any withdrawal by the Allies would destroy the morale of the Whites.⁵⁰ Withdrawal would mean the Japanese would support Kolchak in Siberia with the result that both the United States and England would oppose Japan. Ultimately, Germany would step into the political vacuum and become Russia’s ally together with Japan in what Churchill warned would be a carnivorous expansionist union threatening India.⁵¹

But Canada’s Sir Robert Borden was not convinced. Churchill’s pleadings would not carry any weight with the Canadian population for further Canadian military effort in Russia.⁵² “The Russian pot”, Borden declared, “would simply have to boil, that Russia would have to work out her own salvation.” All Canadian and Allied troops should leave Russia immediately.⁵³ There is no indication that Borden told Churchill that he had already informed Lloyd George of Canada’s decision to have its contingent vacate Siberia in just over a month. However, the Canadian Chief of the General Staff in Ottawa had telegraphed the War Office of Canada’s intention on 16 February, the day before the Empire meeting.⁵⁴ So perhaps the indefatigable Churchill was trying to frighten the Canadians at least into changing their mind. But, it was to no avail.

Churchill did not take Borden's rebuff lightly. He retorted that the Murmansk and Archangel troops were bound together and could not be extracted before June. Concerning Siberia, the Canadians had already been withdrawn to Vladivostok and the vast area from Perm to the Pacific was being kept Bolshevik-free by a small number of Allies and White Russians. If the Dominion's force let the side down, Churchill warned Borden, then the British contingent would have to leave as well, opening the entire region to an advance of the Reds until they reached the Japanese east of Lake Baikal.⁵⁵

Some of these assertions were simply not true since no British or Canadian troops were engaged in the fighting in this area. Again Churchill was being manipulative, since he had been kept fully aware of the Siberian situation. However, it was true that a Canadian withdrawal would cause the current British units to leave since there were only two British battalions present among the 6000-man British Empire contingent, the majority of which were Canadians. But if volunteers were forthcoming, as Churchill believed, they could replace the Canadians. In addition, the withdrawal of the British would not automatically allow the Bolsheviks to advance since the majority of the anti-Bolshevik forces were White Russian and Czechoslovakian soldiers. But these implications in no way made the Empire meeting less stormy and it did not stop there. When Balfour picked up Churchill's case, the Australian prime minister curtly said that Allied policy on Russia had already been made in London and Paris, that military intervention was impossible and that "No one would dispute this."⁵⁶ Plainly the Imperial delegates were not impressed by Churchill's oratory.

At the Council of Ten's session later that day, Churchill once again pushed the interventionist message. Having been forewarned about this and knowing the British prime minister's opposition, Colonel House was against even the creation of an Allied Russia Commission and held that "neither American men nor material would be allowed to go to Russia".⁵⁷ Surprisingly, but perhaps seeing it as a lost cause, Balfour supported House, much to Churchill's chagrin. That the Allies would discuss Russia without the United States caused Clemenceau to explode.⁵⁸

After that excited session, General Wilson quietly suggested that Churchill quit Paris, as he was doing no good there. Churchill took his advice, but not before sending an angry telegram to Lloyd George on the results of the meeting.⁵⁹ He was not alone in reporting to his boss. Both Lansing and House gave detailed assessments of Churchill's scheme to Woodrow Wilson who was still at sea on his way home. The president responded in what was tantamount to a refutation of Churchill's case and a clarification of what he had actually said: "I would not take any hasty separate action myself, but would not be in favor of any course which would not mean the earliest practicable withdrawal of military forces."⁶⁰

And so Churchill's efforts to ensure the Allies were prepared for military action in Russia had come to naught. But this failure paved the way for a US-sponsored, and Lloyd George-approved, unofficial fact-finding visit to the Moscow government, headed by the young US diplomat William C. Bullitt.⁶¹ Twenty-seven at the time, Bullitt was a close associate of Colonel House and an anti-interventionist. In March 1918 he had been instrumental in convincing the president not to support

the initial Japanese landings at Vladivostok in February of that year.⁶² He had been conferring with Lloyd George's secretary, Phillip Kerr, since January 1919 on a non-interventionist policy and had the unofficial support of the British prime minister.⁶³

US Secret Diplomatic Mission to Russia

By late February, with Churchill's plans effectively scuppered, the way was clear for Bullitt to proceed on his mission, albeit in secret and especially unknown to the French. He conferred with Kerr and Sir Maurice Hankey on what peace terms should be presented to the Soviets.⁶⁴ The gist of it required the cessation of all fighting, the retention of all the *de facto* Russian governments currently in existence, open trade, free access by Allied subjects to Russia for business, amnesty for all prisoners and the withdrawal of all Allied troops after all the opposing Russian armies had been demobilized.⁶⁵ On 24 February, Bullitt's party departed for Russia.

The US government took pains to ensure the Bullitt mission stayed unofficial. The US Ambassador in Stockholm was advised not to take part in Bullitt's negotiations to avoid the appearance of official sanction.⁶⁶ Bullitt and his party arrived in Petrograd on 8 March and were escorted by Chicherin and Litvinov to Moscow to confer with Lenin.⁶⁷ Bullitt was impressed with the organization in Petrograd and reported that news "of frightful conditions here [were] ridiculously exaggerated". In conversation with the Reds, Bullitt reported that both the Russian ministers had said that the Soviet government was very favourable to ending hostilities and attending a peace conference, although it would be difficult to control all factions. They were afraid that during the time away the Whites would be allowed to consolidate gains and increase their forces against the Bolshevik governments in Russia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and Estonia. While they had good will towards the United States, they distrusted the French.⁶⁸ This was an obvious ploy to split the Allies.

Bullitt met with Lenin as well as the non-Bolshevik leaders, Volsky of the right Social Revolutionary Party and Iuri Martov of the Mensheviks. Both men said they supported the Bolshevik government and denounced any foreign intervention in Russia.⁶⁹ Bullitt forwarded to President Wilson the terms for peace that Lenin had drawn up. These terms were similar to those that Kerr had given to Bullitt, but with subtle differences that favoured the advance of the Bolshevik strategy.

Lenin's proposals called for the retention of all the *de facto* Russian governments until changed by the people living in the territories so governed. This would include Allied recognition of the Bolshevik regime; the lifting of the economic blockade by the Allies; the free passage of both Allied citizens and Russians into all territories, including Allied countries; amnesty for all prisoners-of-war and repatriation of same; immediate withdrawal of all Allied troops from Russia; and military assistance to White factions to cease. Finally, Russia, as well as the break-away portions of the old Russian Empire together would be responsible for the Russian foreign debt.⁷⁰ Obviously these terms, if accepted, would play to the Bolsheviks' strength. They had a strong propaganda apparatus throughout Russia and, with the official Allied recognition of the Bolshevik government,

the anti-Bolsheviks would become demoralized. Without military and materiel support, the White armies would be easily defeated. Lenin's terms also spread responsibility for the foreign debt not only to all de facto Russian governments, but also to the governments of the new border nations carved out of the former Russian Empire, including Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the newly independent Caucasus nations and the Ukraine. It seems that these implications escaped Bullitt.

Impressed by these ideas and fully supporting them, Bullitt told his President that the Soviet government was the only constructive force in Russia. Surely, he thought, the Allies could overthrow the communists, but that any government that followed would survive only as long as the Allies remained in Russia, after which it would be immediately overthrown. The only other course was to accept the peace terms offered.⁷¹ Perhaps in his naïve enthusiasm, Bullitt believed the Bolshevik case completely. Lenin was trading land to retain power as he had done in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations with Germany almost exactly a year before. However, unlike the German delegation, Bullitt was not in a position to accept the terms no matter how much he wished for peace.

Back in various Allied capitals, few were prepared to accept these Bolshevik proposals, regardless of how high Bullitt sang their praises. Unlike the Reds, there was no united Allied front. The French were not willing to treat with the Bolsheviks, the British still had not come to grips with a form of grand strategy for Russia among themselves and President Wilson refused to see Bullitt on his return. Lloyd George did, but did nothing with the information given to him. Only House displayed any enthusiasm for Bullitt's work. Moreover, Russia was quickly placed on the backburner at the Peace Conference because the central question was about Germany. The main Allies were at odds on how to treat the defeated "Boches". Nevertheless, fighting continued in Russia in the winter of 1919 and the White forces began their offensives against the Bolsheviks, although setbacks still occurred.

Lenin was desperate to blunt the Whites' military ability. The Whites had begun, once again, to advance in various regions of Russia, notably in western Siberia and South Russia. Despite Moscow's avowed willingness to participate at Prinkipo, many in the Allied camp were dubious of the communist leader's motives. The Soviet goal was still worldwide revolution.⁷² So, to many outside Russia, the Bolsheviks' focus was clear and dangerous – worldwide revolution, regardless of their official correspondence with the Allies and the obvious naiveté of both Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson. Yet the British prime minister would not take a final stand, and a strong-willed and still un-muzzled Churchill continued to seek a basic policy for dealing with Russia. In a glaring contrast of intelligence appreciation, Churchill's distrust of Lenin was the polar opposite of Bullitt's wholesale acceptance of the Bolsheviks.

British Policy for Russia

In late February 1919, despite the setback he had suffered at the hands of the non-interventionists or the advocates of withdrawal in Paris, Churchill returned

to London determined to push for a clear strategy. Once back, the irate Churchill went directly to the prime minister's office, furious about Lloyd George's undermining of his Russian efforts. But Lloyd George was just as dextrous as his Secretary of War, and, without any qualms, quietly told Winston that he had not intended that House be shown the telegrams, only that the American be apprised of Lloyd George's views.⁷³ This was, of course, not true, given the prime minister's instructions to Kerr to show the correspondence to House.⁷⁴ As if to placate his angry minister, Lloyd George said that he was favourable to indirect intervention, whatever that meant.⁷⁵

However, once again the prime minister told Churchill that he must have a detailed cost analysis for this, since the one he had demanded earlier had not been supplied. "Why" he did this was the question. By shifting the responsibility to Churchill, Lloyd George was stalling in the hope that Russia would resolve itself, which allowed him to avoid a politically dangerous decision. The prime minister continued his delay tactic by asking why no conclusion on Russia had been made in Paris; this despite knowing full well that Kerr's showing the US delegation Lloyd George's telegrams had undermined Churchill.⁷⁶ In a fit of frustration, Churchill drafted an accusatory letter to Lloyd George about his underhanded tactics and inability to decide. It likely would have got Winston fired. But after some second thoughts, and still determined to militarily aid the White Russians, he did not send it.⁷⁷ On the same day, the CIGS showed him a plan for the complete withdrawal of British forces from Russia.

Churchill was against Field Marshal Wilson's new scheme, and, at the War Cabinet meeting on 24 February, he once again pressed the prime minister for a policy on Russia. And once again Lloyd George put him off. He told the assembled members that this issue had been discussed three times in Paris without result, but it was not the fault of the British delegation as British strategy on Russia was agreed and set in writing. Nevertheless, it was a question that had to be dealt with by the five governments involved. He promised that on his return to Paris, he would press for the Allied adoption of the British view. Churchill then put forward four proposals to implement that policy, but a decision was needed, as a serious disaster at Archangel could await the Allies come the spring. However, the prime minister was adamant that a decision could only be reached in Paris among all five of the Great Allies.⁷⁸ This was Lloyd George both at his worst and his best. The policy referred to by the prime minister was that which the War Cabinet had ostensibly adopted on 31 December 1918. The CIGS had called it "no policy", since it opted for no further reinforcements, but left British forces in Russia *in situ*. It supported aiding the new states on Russia's borders if attacked by the Bolsheviks, but only with materiel and no manpower.

Two days later, Churchill tried again with the War Cabinet, pleading for a definite stratagem for each locale in Russia. Nevertheless, Cabinet did nothing save order his ministry to supply the prime minister with the costing for supporting the Whites prior to his return to Paris.⁷⁹ The required information came three days later and with it came Churchill's last plea for more men for Russia.⁸⁰ This *crie de coeur* came after news of a near mutiny at Archangel. In the last week of February,

Ironside had wired that mutinous action had occurred in a British battalion newly arrived from Murmansk.⁸¹

The general might have anticipated the British battalion's revolt. All knew the United States was planning a withdrawal from the area. Washington had already sent a letter to their chargé, Dewitt Poole, saying so and meant for publication. It outlined, as previously mentioned, that two companies of US railway troops were being sent to Murmansk to secure the railroad for evacuations. Their efforts were to help support the combat units in place and to prepare for the removal of all US and Allied military forces at the earliest possible moment, in the coming spring.⁸² The information was also published in the English soldiers' newspaper and in *The Times* of London, 20 February. Since the revelations included Allied as well as US withdrawals, the commanders in Murmansk and Archangel were very upset. The French were especially shocked since they had been expecting reinforcements.

A second incident at the beginning of March 1919 involved the French 21st battalion on leave in Archangel. On 2 March the soldiers refused to return to the front lines and were put under arrest by French marines until the unit was returned to France.⁸³ The close proximity of both these incidents showed the necessity of relief troops for North Russia. Three days earlier Churchill, immediately after being informed of the British incident, pressed Lloyd George yet again for Allied military aid. Receiving no reply, the inexhaustible War Minister wrote again on 2 March offering up a compromise. British forces in the Caucasus and Caspian Sea areas could be withdrawn if North Russia and Siberia were maintained. It was a change of position, but, to Churchill, far better than complete abandonment of Russia. These ideas were then hashed out in the War Cabinet two days later – with Churchill making special pleadings for North Russia and the Caucasus. But it was soon clear that the Cabinet would not agree. With Curzon's forceful contrary arguments, the decision was for a pull-out from North Russia as soon as possible and another study to look for a solution in the Caucasus. This was passed to Paris.⁸⁴

With the new Russia strategy hammered out so painfully in Cabinet, Lloyd George left for Paris the next day. There, he duly informed his Allied colleagues of this policy and also supplied the estimates for the cost. The proposals and estimates staggered Clemenceau.⁸⁵ President Wilson was not present, but was expected back in Paris seven days hence. Nothing in official US correspondence or in Wilson's private papers refers to a British pull-out. It seems he was not told. Nevertheless, Britain's new Russia policy was far more open to the other Allies than the US one. Clearly the president had failed earlier to warn his colleagues of his intent to evacuate North Russia.

And so, by early March 1919, the British finally had a policy on Russia. However, there was no *Allied* policy on Russia. The British War Cabinet had hammered theirs out independently. This was problematic, especially in light of ongoing events in South Russia with the French command at Odessa and, of course, with the Americans and Japanese, let alone the Canadians in Siberia. There was no Allied consensus on anything. The diplomatic chaos of self-interest continued to the detriment of any cooperative Allied action.

Beginning of Allied Withdrawal from Russia

While the politicians argued, the Allied troops scattered across Russia, along with their White confrères, continued to fight the Red forces. Nonetheless, the groundwork had begun for the Allied withdrawal. The United States was the most vociferous in its desire to quit the Russian field, and the British politicians acknowledged among themselves that continued military operations were unsustainable and ultimately a losing proposition. The general intention of the British government “was to withdraw the armies from every part of Russia as soon as practicable”.⁸⁶ Later that month, Canada informed the War Office that the evacuation of Canadians from North Russia was required as early as possible.⁸⁷

However, it was the French who were the first to begin the exodus, which was caused by their ineffectual strategy of supporting the Ukrainian secessionists against Denikin’s Volunteer Army. South Russia and the Ukraine had remained volatile throughout the first months of 1919. The French at Odessa kept the situation on the boil by playing the Ukrainians against Denikin’s White Russians. In so doing, they were unable to stabilize South Russia.

Ukraine and French Intervention

In January 1919, the French began treating with the Ukrainian Directorate, which was under pressure from Bolshevik forces advancing from the north. Taking advantage of the Ukrainian Nationalists’ predicament, General Philippe Henri Joseph d’Anselme took over strategic strong points from the Ukrainians, relieving Odessa’s blockade and occupying Nikolaev and Kherson.⁸⁸

This arrangement was of mutual benefit. In January the Ukrainians were being pressed by the Bolsheviks from the north and the Poles from the west. They could not withstand facing a third enemy – the French. However, the French position in Odessa was also weak and the Ukrainian army was actually a shield. If the Reds overran the Ukrainians, the French would have to employ their own *poilus*, who were none too happy fighting in Russia.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Nationalists continued to give way to the Bolsheviks.⁹⁰ Yet the French continued to negotiate with the rump of the Ukrainian government while Denikin’s Whites proved more successful than Petlyura’s Nationalists.

During February 1919 the White Volunteer Army was victorious in destroying the Red forces in South Russia up to the Caspian Sea. However, in the Donetz region, the Don Cossacks were forced back across the Donetz and Manytsch Rivers in the face of a Bolshevik surprise attack on 19 February.⁹¹ Only the White cavalry stopped a complete rout.⁹² While Denikin fought to hold the Donetz front and consolidate his gains in South East Russia, the French were aggravating the crisis in the Ukraine and alienating Denikin’s Whites. The French refused to allow the White general to set up his headquarters in Sebastopol. Instead, General Berthelot sent emissaries to Denikin with the arrogant demand that mixed French and Russian units be formed with French officers in command. With equal hauteur, he also insisted that the White Commander in South-West Russia, General A. S. Sannikov, be placed under French command. To add insult to injury, Colonel

Henri Freidenburg, d'Anselm's Chief of Staff, made the same request to Sannikov as an ultimatum to be agreed to within 24 hours.⁹³ Denikin refused.

The French arrogance and Denikin's obstinacy stemmed from each other's weakness. Neither side wished to be subordinate to the other, but both needed to cooperate to face the Bolshevik offensive. The French had turned to the Ukrainians because they thought these Slavs needed them more. But to Denikin, they were traitors to Greater Russia, and French actions only encouraged Ukrainian separation. French demand for mixed Russian-French battalions under their command just exacerbated the problem. When the personalities of the players were added to this volatile mix, disaster was inevitable. D'Anselme was worn out, and, as he had opposed intervention from the beginning, he was discouraged as a result of seeing his initial assessment of intervention as a mistake come to fruition. Moreover, he was disgusted with Denikin.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, the real problem for the French command was the unreliability of its own *poilus*.⁹⁵ As for the British consuls watching this deteriorating drama, they reported the collapsing situation to London and blamed the French military leadership for most of the problems. The French were obdurate.⁹⁶ It became obvious that the French would not assist Denikin, regardless of the harmful effect on their strategy or the White cause.

The British Foreign Office complained that the French were playing into the hands of the Bolsheviks.⁹⁷ They sent a strongly worded *démarche* to the French government.⁹⁸ The British worried that what the French were doing in the Crimea was being done in the name of the Alliance and based on a two-year-old agreement of "spheres of influence" made in December 1917. There was no consultation, nor any Gallic appreciation that the conditions for these old "spheres of influence" had changed. Once again this was symptomatic of the fundamental flaw of the Allied intervention. And in March 1919, this flaw meant it was too late to salvage the Ukraine or Odessa.

On 8 March the Reds moved against South Russia, starting at Kherson, and besieged the area. With the fall of Kherson, D'Anselme immediately ordered the evacuation of Nicolaev. This retreat caused a contraction of the French zone of occupation around Odessa and the Bolsheviks promptly filled the void. D'Anselme warned Berthelot in Bucharest that a continued deterioration of the military situation would require the evacuation of French forces from the entire region.⁹⁹ He complained of the reduction in his troops and the unreliability of his remaining soldiers.¹⁰⁰

The French position was becoming desperate, but still they refused to work with Denikin, believing that Odessa was secure as long as they held the village of Berezovka north of Odessa, the only route the Reds could use to attack south. However, on 19 March 12,000 Bolsheviks attacked the village, forcing the Greeks and French to abandon their position and retreat 30 miles south.¹⁰¹ With this setback, General Berthelot had had enough. He was in overall command of French forces in Russia and, having missed glory on the Western Front, had hoped to gain it in a crusade against the godless Bolsheviks. But as the adventure turned to debacle, he sought refuge by resigning and trying to make General Louis François Franchet d'Esperey a scapegoat for the disaster. He asked to be relieved. On 14 March his request was granted and Franchet d'Esperey was given the responsibility.¹⁰²

Franchet d'Esperey was furious. The victorious commander of l'Armée d'Orient held a great disdain for Berthelot, whom he considered to be a pretentious and impractical officer. He saw Berthelot's resignation and recall as a means of his escaping responsibility for failure.¹⁰³ This was doubly galling, since Franchet d'Esperey had advised against French intervention from the start.¹⁰⁴ Now, with the collapse of France's position in the Crimea and the Ukraine, he had been proved correct. Moreover, he would have to bear the responsibility for the failure on his shoulders. Chaos was freeing the rash and trapping the wise.

On 20 March 1919 General Franchet d'Esperey arrived at Odessa. While he was no doubt mollified to have his views confirmed, his personality did not help to find a better solution. With his record of success in war, and a natural tendency to be haughty and intolerant of failure, he did not hide his disdain for the White Volunteer Army. He was also rude to Denikin's representatives and very vocal in his contempt for them. Russia, he said, was really responsible for the prolongation of the Great War. His attitude towards the Russians was very antagonistic. To his own officers he proclaimed in no uncertain terms that "The Russians are barbarians and villains."¹⁰⁵ This attitude did not endear any Frenchmen to Denikin. Nevertheless, the Odessa press reported on the day of the new French general's arrival that Paris had decided to defend Odessa and would provide the city's inhabitants with all necessary supplies.¹⁰⁶ The French did not deny these statements. In fact, the command had reported that the military situation in Odessa was satisfactory and that all Red attempts to advance down the railway from Berezovka had been defeated.¹⁰⁷ It was not so.

Regardless of the French staff's view of holding South Russia, the Allied Council in Paris discussed that region's situation on 25 March. The catalyst for the discussion was whether they could sustain Odessa with enough supplies while at the same time backing Romania against the Bolshevik pressure from the Ukraine and Hungary.¹⁰⁸ When the Council asked General Foch what value Odessa had to the Allies, he answered that it had no value except for morale, but he wished to hold it as long as possible. Lloyd George responded that the Allies should not waste resources in maintaining a "hopeless position". Quickly Foch retorted that "To abandon Odessa is to abandon southern Russia; but, to tell the truth, it is already lost, we cannot lose it a second time." That was enough for the Council. Foch was to prepare a plan to support Romania and evacuate Odessa, but to keep it secret for the time.¹⁰⁹

On 27 March, Foch returned with an elaborate and wildly ambitious plan to organize two Allied armies to hold Romania and to occupy Vienna.¹¹⁰ The Council recoiled at Foch's "grandeur" in planning and President Wilson flatly refused US soldiers for Vienna's occupation.¹¹¹ They ordered Foch to limit his proposal to the reinforcement of Romania only. This would require the evacuation of Odessa.¹¹²

Consequently the die was cast for the South Russia Allied forces by the strategic leaders at Paris, but Clemenceau did not send the message for two days and it was only received at Odessa on 2 April.¹¹³ However, the French decision to abandon Odessa was announced in the French Chamber of Deputies and published in the French press on 31 March. Importantly, when Pichon told the Chamber of Deputies of the plan for Odessa, he went so far as to announce a general withdrawal of French forces from Russia. He stated, "From today, not a man will go to

Russia, and those who are serving there are being relieved.”¹¹⁴ When the British War Cabinet met the same day, Churchill angrily retorted that the announcement completely compromised Britain’s position in North Russia and might well have greatly endangered the lives of the British troops there.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the War Cabinet reaffirmed the decision to withdraw British forces from North Russia as soon as practicable and required the War Office to provide a paper detailing what preparations were being taken for the evacuation.¹¹⁶ Despite the War Cabinet commitment to withdraw, again the actions of one Ally – in this case, the French – had undermined the policy of another in the Russian imbroglio. Regardless, the French were set to abandon their area of operations in South Russia.

General d’Anselme began the exit of White and Allied troops on 2 April, immediately on receipt of the order from Paris.¹¹⁷ Despite an appeal for calm, pandemonium ensued. The local Soviet rose to take power and was only restrained by D’Anselme’s threat to bombard the city. Nevertheless, the pull-out was chaotic and many White Russians were left behind.¹¹⁸ Yet Odessa’s evacuation was not the final signal for the French to leave South Russia, as there was still a Gallic force holding Sebastopol. Nevertheless, despite a strong position there, the French were undermined by the war-weariness of their sailors.

In early spring 1919, although the Bolsheviks had surrounded Sebastopol on three sides, an Algerian Regiment had beaten back three Red regiments and the Bolsheviks had requested an armistice. By 17 April both the French and British navies were in position to hold the port and bombarded Bolshevik positions.¹¹⁹ When the Quai d’Orsay received this news it ordered Sebastopol to be held, but it was too late. On 19 April the French fleet in the Black Sea mutinied, demanding to be demobilized and returned to France, refusing to fight against the Reds.¹²⁰ Although the French officers regained control of the fleet within three days, it was too late to continue holding the Crimean naval port and so, ignominiously, the French abandoned their South Russia bridgehead completely. The French had become the first of the Allies to give up those areas of Russia under their control, despite their desire to retain some influence over any future Russian government. Disaster was the result of poor planning, bad intelligence, arrogant French commanders and a complete lack of diplomatic forbearance on the part of both the French and White Russian senior leadership.

The French abandonment of South Russia had a far-reaching effect on the Allied support for the White cause and increased the chaos in fighting Bolshevism in Russia. But as tragic as the French exit from South Russia was, the political chaos among Allied leaders was of more importance to Russia’s crisis. And the Allied withdrawal had begun.

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12

Allied Evacuation and White Victories, March–June 1919

In the early spring of 1919, Russia was still a morass of military, political and diplomatic activity loosely divided into Reds and Whites. However, there was little unity in any of the internal groups struggling for mastery of the land. And foreign involvement only made it worse. The various fronts were spread thousands of miles apart and they were all happening at once. Notwithstanding the Allied diplomatic and governmental contortions and the continuing arguments at the Paris Peace Conference, the Whites fought on through the late spring and into early summer.

White Offensives, 1919

Although the Bolsheviks had commenced an offensive to crush the White forces in South Russia, they had not succeeded.¹ By April Denikin had halted the Red advance. Bolshevik morale was low, and hundreds deserted to the Whites.² Moreover, supplies approved for Denikin by the British War Cabinet started to arrive.³ They tipped the balance in Denikin's favour, allowing him first to hold the Reds and then to go on the offensive.⁴ Denikin's success occurred partly because Kolchak was also advancing in Siberia. On 2 March Kolchak attacked towards Viatka. In the process, a junction between small parties from the Siberian and Archangel forces was accomplished. In the centre, the Whites reoccupied Ufa, which had been taken by the Bolsheviks early in the year. On his southern front, Kolchak's armies moved to unite with Denikin's.⁵

The Reds were unpleasantly surprised. Kolchak had taken advantage of Lenin's and Trotsky's concentrations on other fronts and pushed his forces towards the Urals. Demoralized, the communists retreated along the entire Eastern Front. No reinforcements were forthcoming. Trotsky inspected the Front and considered the situation, while serious, was not catastrophic. The Soviet command expected the spring thaw to halt this White advance.⁶ Yet Kolchak's offensive did not stop. From the beginning of March through to the middle of April, his armies captured over 16,000 prisoners along with materiel and guns. Large contingents of Reds deserted to the Whites.⁷ Back in London, Kolchak's prowess heartened Churchill in his belief that the Whites could yet be successful, but it did not change the

British War Cabinet's decision to pull out of North Russia. Before an exit could occur, though, the Reds had to be suppressed and the fronts stabilized in both the Archangel and Murman regions.

At Murmansk, General Maynard had been on the defensive throughout the winter, despite his successful occupation of Segeja. He had had his own tribulations with mutinous Allies similar to what Ironside was experiencing. A section of French *skieurs* refused to relieve their confrères at Segeja after it was captured.⁸ However, as intelligence reports had warned him, his greatest challenge was an anticipated uprising in Murmansk that was to coincide with a Bolshevik attack.⁹ But in late March, Maynard was able to forestall the rebellion, arresting the conspirators.¹⁰ Lindley, the British Consul at Archangel, thought Maynard had overreacted. Consequently he wanted Maynard relieved and the two North Russia commands amalgamated under Ironside.¹¹

Lindley's view was based on his admiration for Ironside, coupled with his advice to the War Cabinet that withdrawal should be delayed until the fall. This would allow for the removal of the 13,000 British soldiers, the other Allies stationed in the region and give fair warning of the evacuation to the North Russian provisional government. He urged London to send 3000 fresh replacements to relieve the British military and to cover the pull-out.¹²

Need for Reinforcements

The need for new troops was pressing. Even British soldiers were subject to mutinous actions. However, Ironside's major concern was with the French who had revolted in early March and who were still in Archangel. He advised that if the French were to remain part of the North Russia force, a complete new contingent be sent immediately and the old contingent be withdrawn.¹³ To add to Ironside's worries, near the end of March, albeit unbeknownst to the general, Canada had again pressed the War Office hard for the removal of the Canadians.¹⁴ This would be devastating for Ironside since they formed his only artillery brigade.

No less worrisome was the state of the Americans in Ironside's command. US soldiers had helped repel a Bolshevik attack, but had suffered some casualties.¹⁵ Then, on 29 March a company of US infantry refused, for a time, to return to the front lines. Although their commanding officer downplayed the insubordination, the US consul, Dewitt Poole, believed it was a sign of a much deeper unrest. He urged that a message be sent that would tell the US troops that they would all be evacuated by 30 June.¹⁶ Obviously, reinforcements or relief was needed for all Allied military in North Russia. And at the beginning of April, Churchill took concrete steps to send a relief force there. His first action was to seek political support both at home and from Allies.

Reinforcement Planning for North Russia

On 1 April the War Secretary complained to Clemenceau about Pichon's speech in the French Chamber of Deputies at the end of March concerning the willingness

of the French to abandon Russia.¹⁷ Churchill was angry that the French were ready to pull all their forces from Russia, not just the Crimea, and told the French premier that even British opponents to the expeditions in North Russia still supported sending reinforcements there to extricate the Allied contingents. "I should have thought you would meet with similar support as long as the operations were clearly defined as one of succour and extrication."¹⁸ Similarly, he assailed Lloyd George, demanding that no barrier be erected in sending reinforcements to North Russia to support the evacuation.¹⁹ The prime minister quickly assured Churchill that there would be no interference on his part in North Russia's evacuation.²⁰ This guarantee from Lloyd George gave Churchill clear authority to send a relief force to Archangel. He wasted no time in ordering the General Staff to proceed. This was timely, since some US senior officers now feared that the US soldiers could defect to the Reds. The CIGS, conferring with US General Bliss, advised Churchill to tell Allied soldiers in North Russia that they would soon be relieved.²¹ Lloyd George gave his blessing, provided the message came from the War Office and not personally from Churchill.²² Yet Ironside did not promulgate this message, because it was addressed only to the British.²³

With the permission of Lloyd George in his pocket, the expansive Churchill once again ordered additional manpower for North Russia. He also planned for a robust and aggressive operation to keep the Bolsheviks at bay, while at the same time attempting to support Kolchak's offensive in western Siberia. The War Office informed both North Russia commanders that two brigades, each with 5000 volunteers, were being assembled. The first brigade was expected to embark for Archangel on 1 May 1919 and the second two weeks later. In conjunction with the relief brigades, the Admiralty was dispatching a strong expedition to reinforce the river flotilla set to engage Bolshevik forces on the Dvina.²⁴ The French also intended to send a battalion of infantry along with the personnel for three batteries of artillery.²⁵

Certainly encouraged by its political chief, the War Office was convinced that a stable White Russian government was needed in the North to ensure a safe withdrawal of the Allies. To establish this, three conditions were necessary: strike a successful blow on the Bolsheviks; effect a permanent junction of North Russian and Siberian forces; and provide a British cadre to train and lead White units.²⁶ The Staff was realistic; if neither of the first two conditions could be achieved, the fall of the North Russia government and the disintegration of the White forces was a certainty. To achieve union with the Siberian army, Viatka had to be occupied by Whites and control of the Kotlas–Viatka Railway won. They would also need to hold a line along the Archangel–Vologda Railway far enough south to prevent the Red Army advancing towards Archangel. Ideally, Vologda should be secured, but that was beyond the capability of the combined Allied–White forces.²⁷

These War Office conclusions mirrored the views of Ironside and Lindley. They informed the US Consul, Poole, that it was expected that a union with Kolchak's forces could occur through Kotlas by the summer. Poole, in turn, told Washington that a successful junction with the White Siberian Army would permit the ending of the Allied mission in North Russia without sacrificing the loyal Russians

to the Bolsheviks.²⁸ He asked what the US policy was to be towards North Russia and whether the US Railway units would remain at Archangel when the infantry shipped home. If so, could they help prepare the railway for the British offensive towards Kotlas?²⁹

In a cold reply, Washington told Poole that no military intelligence would be transmitted to him because both Ironside and Maynard had all the necessary information.³⁰ However, Ironside confided to Poole that he did not have definite instructions from London, but the plan to move on Kotlas appeared to have been approved.³¹ Strangely, Poole then informed Washington that he understood from Polk's reply that there was unity of policy with Great Britain concerning North Russia and, according to Ironside, the US troops would be the first to leave Archangel.³² The ships bringing Ironside's relief battalions would be used to evacuate the current force. This information came as a surprise to the United States.³³

Put simply, the British had not conveyed their intentions in North Russia to the United States. The reason seems to be that Lloyd George did not fully realize the implications of Churchill's plan, despite having given his sanction to his War Minister back on 3 April. It was another example of the British (at least Churchill and the War Office) trying to continue supporting the Whites in the face of US opposition to intervention, and of a sometimes-critical communication problem within the British government itself. In Paris, both Lloyd George and Clemenceau acted surprised when Woodrow Wilson told them that one of his generals was convinced that both Britain and France were trying to keep their forces in North Russia. The two men quickly denied it, and said they were committed to a timely and safe withdrawal.³⁴ The United States was not the only Ally incompletely informed of British intentions in North Russia.

It was ironic that the War Office was contemplating offensive action in the North, ostensibly to ensure a safe withdrawal of the Allies. For the day after the staff study was completed, the Canadian Minister Sir Edward Kemp instructed the War Office that all the Canadians at Murmansk be evacuated at the earliest date in the spring. The 92 Canadians had been employed in operations continuously since their arrival the previous September.³⁵ However, offensive actions led by Canadians were still happening. On 11 April a Canadian commander captured Urosozero, routing a larger force.³⁶ Clearly the Murman region was still a volatile area.

Defending the Murman and Archangel Regions

Maynard determined that the further south his defensive line was, the safer Murmansk would be. He decided that controlling the head of Lake Onega would strengthen his position, preventing the Reds from advancing on a wide front. Nonetheless, any action in that direction would be considered offensive, needed detailed planning and required the permission of the War Office. The latter prerequisite was not a foregone conclusion since the decision to evacuate North Russia had been made. On 25 April, Maynard wired London with his plan.³⁷ Four

days later, the War Office acquiesced, yet it warned that the operation would have to be carried out only with the resources Maynard had at hand.³⁸ Coincidentally, on 30 April the War Office replied to Minister Kemp's request for the withdrawal of Canadians from Murmansk, saying it was impossible at that time, but should be possible by the summer or autumn.³⁹ This outraged many in Ottawa. Moreover, they considered the new timeline for withdrawal as too indefinite, but there was little they could do but complain.⁴⁰ The War Office still needed the Canadians and simply refused to pull them out. They were part of vital resources Maynard had at hand and the Canadian government lacked the means to carry out its own evacuation.

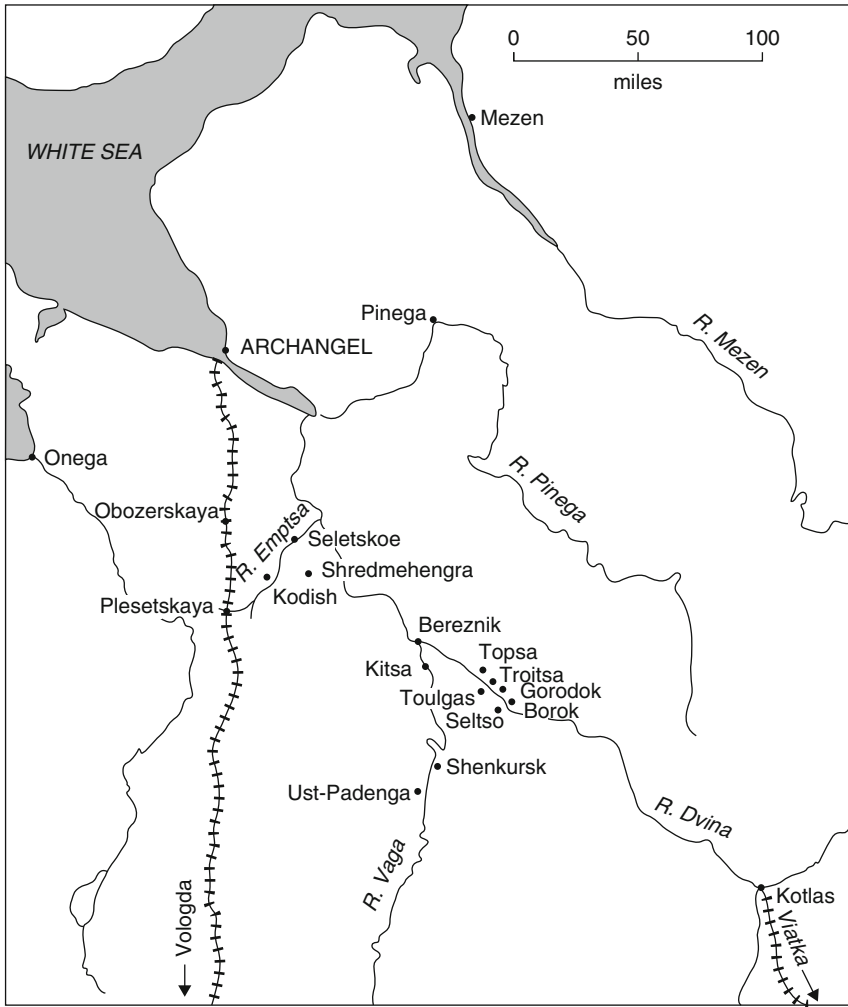
On 1 May Maynard began his offensive south and in three weeks traversed the 50 miles to the head of Lake Onega, while fighting continuously the complete distance (see Map 3). By 21 May all objectives had been captured.⁴¹ However, Archangel was still key to holding the North and operations began in that region in late April, about the same time as Maynard had received permission to carry out manoeuvres towards Lake Onega.

On 25 April 1919 Ironside received the War Office's North Russia plan, but was disappointed that it did not contain direct orders for execution. Nevertheless, he believed he had permission to take the offensive to prepare for the peaceful withdrawal of all Allied forces prior to the coming winter.⁴² The next day, the river flotilla went up the Dvina River to push the Allied line further towards Kotlas (see Map 6).⁴³ The objective was to stabilize the fronts and deprive the Bolsheviks of offensive action. This was necessary since the White brigades at Tulgas had mutinied and gone over to the Reds. Fighting continued for the next three weeks before the Allies could again secure the town.⁴⁴

All this combat was necessary to preserve the safety of Archangel in anticipation of the Allied withdrawal. However, further advances were needed to ensure that the North Russia government would survive after the Allies had departed. And the aggressive Ironside was preparing for even greater offensives, in spite of not having received British Cabinet approval to do so.

While the military actions were happening in North Russia, back in London the CIGS was pressing Lloyd George to allow British soldiers to effect a junction of Chaikovsky's North Russians with Kolchak's Siberian army.⁴⁵ Again, Churchill's enthusiasm for a White success was weakly acquiesced to by the prime minister, which allowed action to proceed.

It was clear by late spring 1919 that public opinion in the Allied nations demanded the withdrawal of the troops from North Russia before the onset of winter. Before that happened, Britain hoped to enable the Archangel government to stand alone without Allied support. To that end, Ironside planned to utilize his Russian force at Archangel combined with the British relief force due in May to deliver a "really hard blow" to the Reds, "which might in certain circumstances enable him to reach Kotlas". However, his success and the extent of his advance were dependent on cooperation from Kolchak. This expected cooperation rested on Kolchak's scheme of operations for the summer and fall of 1919. The War Office asked Knox what the Admiral planned.⁴⁶



Map 6 River Dvina, Archangel to Kotlas

Source: Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia 1918–1920* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 37, by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Kolchak's schemes included capturing both Kazan and Vyatka, then sending a detachment north to Kotlas to join with the Archangel units. This linkage, the Admiral believed, was essential to free him from dependence on the Trans-Siberian Railway. It was even more important than a junction with Denikin, although that was still part of his overall strategy. Kolchak expected that the two main White Russian armies would continue to advance upon Moscow and he suggested that the Finns could combine with General N. N. Yudenitch in the west of Russia for an advance on Petrograd.⁴⁷ These were ambitious goals. Ironically, Knox went on

to remind London that Russian plans generally did not include the means to carry them out; yet he still believed that the Allies and the Whites had to proceed.

Churchill, like Knox, also was convinced that the Allies had to stay the course, backing Kolchak. On 1 May, prior to receipt of Knox's reply, Churchill personally petitioned Sir Robert Borden to authorize more Canadian volunteers for the final push to bring various White forces together in Russia. Finding enough fighting men was still a major problem. As usual, the optimistic Churchill emphasized the successes Kolchak was having in Siberia and predicted that the Admiral's fighters would push through to Vyatka and Vologda connecting with Ironside. Ignoring the fact that the French had withdrawn from South Russia, Churchill went on to tell the Canadian prime minister that he was confident that the Siberian army would join with Denikin. Perhaps as a sop, he acknowledged Borden's request to withdraw the Canadians from Vladivostok, having previously agreed since the Canadians were forbidden, like the United States, to move inland. Churchill then tried to set the scenario and financial hook for volunteers from the "Canadian Forces". "It may well be", he wrote as if talking about future trade benefits, "that our future friendly relations with a regenerated Russian State, with all its immense commercial and military possibilities, may depend upon action now."⁴⁸

Borden's answer was clearly a quick put-off. Churchill, he said, should communicate with Ottawa on the subject. And it would be a Cabinet discussion, which Borden knew would take longer than the planned offensive could allow, and would eventually be rejected. This was much the same answer as Borden was receiving from Arthur Sifton, a close political confidant, then in Paris with the Canadian prime minister. The net result was that Borden did nothing save confirm the right of Canadians to volunteer, if they so wished, as British subjects.⁴⁹ For Churchill, the Dominion's response was tantamount to rejection. How Churchill felt about the Canadian refusal is not known, but can be imagined.

Nevertheless, the same day Churchill wrote to Borden, Sir Henry Wilson personally pressured Lloyd George to allow General Ironside to take the offensive in North Russia. The CIGS wanted the Allies to fight through to General Gajda, Kolchak's commander in Siberia.⁵⁰ During the conversation, Field Marshal Wilson and the prime minister also discussed the plans of White General Yudenitch joining with Finnish Marshal Mannerheim to capture Petrograd, striking from both Estonia and Finland. This was the same operation Knox mentioned in his telegram. Lloyd George reluctantly agreed to Ironside's offensive and the CIGS conveyed this news to Churchill immediately.⁵¹ This was enough for Churchill. On 4 May the War Office instructed Ironside to prepare an attack on Kotlas and a juncture with Gajda, but to take no action without Cabinet approval.⁵²

US and British Mistrust of Kolchak

The Secretary of State for War also pushed Lloyd George for official recognition of the Omsk government.⁵³ Over the next four days, from 5 to 9 May 1919, Churchill badgered his prime minister in Paris by telegraph, letter and through intermediaries to have Kolchak's government officially recognized by the Allies as Russia's national

government.⁵⁴ At the same time, Churchill also promoted Yudenitch's proposal to capture Petrograd. He was not alone in his wish for official recognition of Kolchak, as the Foreign Office had been contemplating this since April.⁵⁵ It was important that the Admiral be acknowledged in some official form to strengthen his position.

However, Lloyd George was not one to be pressed. Neither he nor Woodrow Wilson trusted the Siberian dictator and Lloyd George went so far as to tell Churchill that North Russia's president, Chaikovsky, had misgivings about Kolchak, when in fact the Russian was a firm supporter of the Omsk leader.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Kolchak's army was nearing a position where it could join forces with those at Archangel and the Russians still needed Allied supplies to continue the fight. Both Lloyd George and Wilson wanted some authority over the Russians in exchange for this Allied help.⁵⁷ The Allies still thought they could control the White Admiral.

President Wilson was worried that if the Allies supported Kolchak, the United States would be required to send more troops to Siberia. He feared that the Japanese would then increase their contingent, sparking a military race. If the United States withdrew, the field would be left to the Japanese. In either case, the president dreaded a possible clash between US and Japanese forces. Wilson believed the proper plan was for the Allies to leave Russia and let the Russians fight it out among themselves.⁵⁸ Once again Woodrow Wilson did not vary from his often-stated policy that the Allies should never have intervened.⁵⁹ However, without an agreed strategy, continued chaos in Russia was inevitable. After Wilson's declared policy wishes, the Council of Four (Japan was absent) agreed to hear from Chaikovsky the next day.

During the 10 May meeting, Wilson quizzed the North Russia president on Kolchak's intentions. Chaikovsky vigorously defended Kolchak. He reminded the Council that the Admiral had vowed to resign immediately when the Constituent Assembly was called.⁶⁰ Moreover, both Kolchak and Denikin had committed themselves to a national policy for any White government: the suppression of Bolshevik anarchy; the re-construction of the Russian Army; the convocation of the Russian National Assembly; decentralization of administration; religious liberty; land reform; and labour legislation.⁶¹ This was certainly a different story to what Lloyd George had told Churchill.

But Woodrow Wilson was not convinced of Chaikovsky's faith in either Kolchak or Denikin. Lloyd George also maintained his misgivings. However, the prime minister observed that public opinion would not allow the Allies to abandon the Siberian White leader.⁶² Still, the US president and British prime minister needed to know Kolchak's intentions. Wilson ordered his ambassador in Tokyo to go to Vladivostok to confer with General Graves and then on to Omsk to learn personally "the influences that Kolchak is under". He was to determine "whether the Kolchak government deserves the recognition ... of our [US] government."⁶³

At the end of the Council of Four meeting, it was clear that Woodrow Wilson was loath to alter his opinion of Kolchak; still, the British War Cabinet believed that the US attitude was ripe for change. Lansing had said that his government was prepared to reconsider its attitude towards Kolchak and his government.⁶⁴

Despite presidential doubts, the British continued to organize support for the White Admiral's advance in western Siberia. The first step was fresh reinforcements for Archangel, ostensibly to ensure a safe exit for the Allies. But all of this meant that there was no resolution or unity on Russia in the Council of Four that May. Still, events in each Allied capital and in each region of Russia continued to move inexorably on.

Relief for North Russia

In May 1919 preparations for the withdrawal of all Allied forces from North Russia proceeded. The relief contingent was on its way to Archangel.⁶⁵ However, Churchill's search for more volunteers from the Dominions was dealt a blow by Canada. On 18 May Borden informed Churchill that Canadians in North Russia must be withdrawn immediately since their confrères in Siberia were leaving.⁶⁶ This reflected what the United States had been insisting for their men. Even Ironside was resigned to the fact that the long-serving British units in the North would leave as well, but only after reliefs arrived.⁶⁷ However, knowing that Ottawa had no transport to get Canadians out, Churchill was in no hurry to comply with Borden's demand and phrased his response to make it appear that any Canadian withdrawal would be tantamount to deserting fellow soldiers, if not sealing their fate.⁶⁸ Churchill wanted to ensure that proven steady troops such as the Canadians remained for as long as possible. He may also have felt that the British public was turning in favour of the White Russian crusade.

British public opinion towards White Russia appeared to have begun to alter at this time, even if Lloyd George hadn't quite accepted a White government's official recognition. Constantine Nabokov, the White Russian Ambassador in London, wired Omsk in May, "Lately there can be noticed in the press a sharp change in our favor." Nabokov hoped for official recognition of the Omsk government, which surely would ensure active Allied military aid.⁶⁹ However, he recognized that President Wilson was a stumbling block. He complained that Wilson was systematically obstructing all political attempts at regenerating a Russian government.⁷⁰

Despite Wilson's apparent obstructionism, some relief forces for North Russia were beginning to arrive. The first brigade disembarked at Archangel on 27 May and the Canadian gunners readied for evacuation.⁷¹ The United States also prepared to leave, having been withdrawn from the front lines throughout May. The departure of the Americans had been anticipated for some time. In addition, the US press had been reporting, falsely, that British command in North Russia had treated the Americans there badly.⁷² One other factor dictating the pull-out of these forces was the law requiring all US draftees to be returned home and mustered out within four months of the signing of the peace treaty.⁷³ Despite the law, or in ignorance of it, General Ironside asked that the US engineers be allowed to stay until all Allied contingents left. However, US General Bliss at Versailles opposed this, for legal reasons and because he believed the engineers would be employed in tasks not directly supporting either Russian or US interests.⁷⁴ Once

British relief troops arrived, the Americans quickly left. Throughout June, they departed without replacement, the first ships leaving Archangel on 3 June with both French and US units on board.⁷⁵

The original British contingent in the North also began leaving, including the Canadian Field Artillery's 16th Brigade, which had been Ironside's backbone for all his artillery support. The arrival of fresh British gun batteries with the reinforcements had allowed for the Canadian withdrawal. The second wave of relief regiments arrived on 5 June.⁷⁶ These new battalions were made up solely of volunteers of whom between 200 and 300 were Australians. This was the only instance of Antipodeans serving in North Russia. And, as the senior British Dominion left North Russia, soldiers from the next senior one arrived to replace them.⁷⁷

On 11 June the Canadians embarked for England and arrived on the 19th.⁷⁸ The only Canadians left in North Russia were at Murmansk and they were expected to be out shortly. Nonetheless, the evacuation of the worn-out Allied troops did not alter Ironside's (or Churchill's) efforts to strengthen the White advance towards European Russia. The day before the second relief's arrival in Archangel, Ironside had received tentative permission to prepare attacks against the Reds, but was warned that recent reverses to the Admiral's southern White forces could delay progress towards Viatka. On 4 May Kolchak had been stopped by a Bolshevik counter-attack and had been steadily pushed back in the centre and south since then.⁷⁹ Regardless of these setbacks, the War Office ordered, Ironside must prepare to inflict a heavy blow of his own on the Reds.⁸⁰ The second brigade's arrival allowed Ironside to proceed with these plans. In approving Ironside's operation, but no doubt adding a twist of confusion, Major General P. de B. Radcliffe warned that Cabinet still had the final authority before any action could be taken.⁸¹ However, neither this warning nor his reduced forces failed to dampen Ironside's enthusiasm to attack.

On 19 June preparations for the assault on Kotlas were almost complete. The capture of the town, Ironside reported, would strengthen Russian resolve and could pull in Kolchak's right wing and reinforce the Russian Siberian army by supplying it with arms. Regardless of the aid to Kolchak, Ironside promoted the idea that to safely pull out British forces from Archangel he had to establish secure conditions. To achieve this, he must render the Bolsheviks impotent through the capture of Kotlas and Plesetskaya, and clear the Pinega region of the enemy. These victories would ensure the peaceful evacuation from Archangel before the onset of winter.⁸² It was nearing the end of June 1919 and the question of striking a blow against the Bolsheviks in the North had been decided. Whether this blow would lead to a juncture of White Russian forces or act as only a diversion to ensure the safe withdrawal of Allied forces from North Russia was the only question.

Despite the May 1919 White setbacks, there was still optimism that they were rallying and making some progress; indeed, enough to be optimistic that Siberian White forces would eventually be successful in destroying the Reds. And Kolchak's was not the only front where the Whites were engaging the Bolsheviks. Since late April, Denikin had been advancing northward while the Finns and Estonians had been pushing Soviet forces back towards Petrograd.

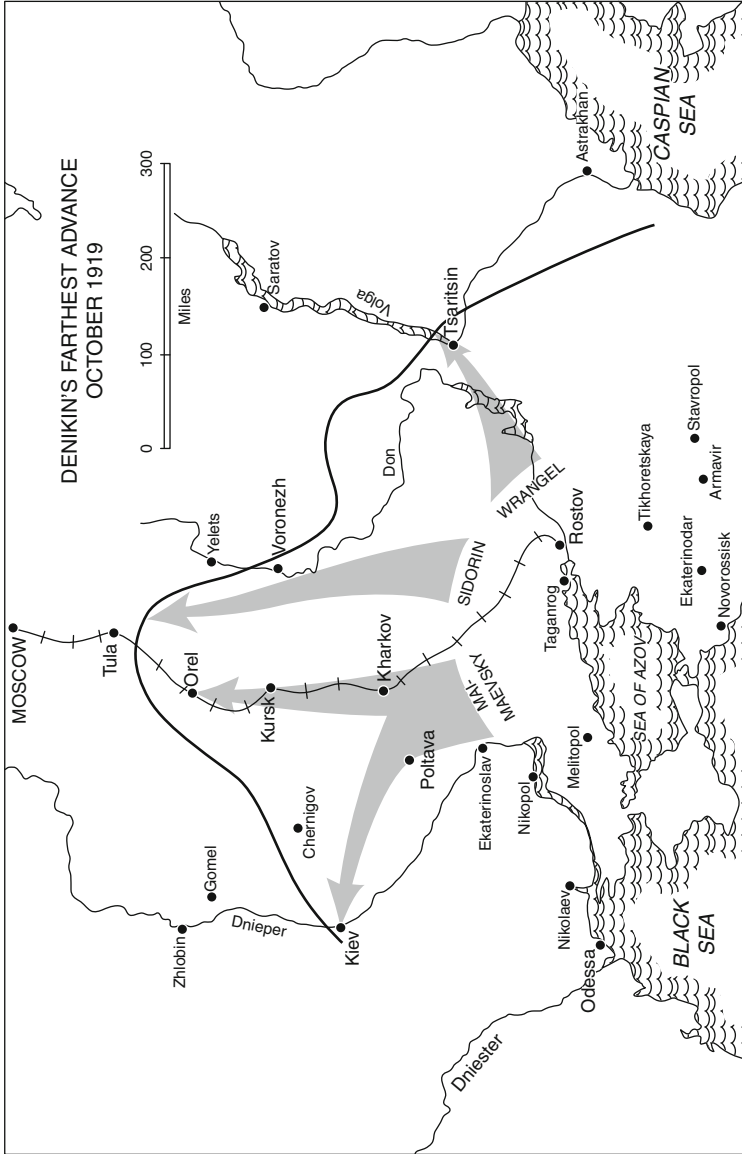
South Russia and the Ukraine

Denikin had been hard-pressed since the French abandoned South Russia at the beginning of April, but had survived enemy attempts throughout that month to destroy his Volunteer Army.⁸³ The Whites, although bending, did not break. A Donetz Cossack revolt behind Bolshevik lines helped Denikin turn the tide.⁸⁴ The Reds were being pressed everywhere. The reason things seemed to favour the White Russian forces that spring was an equal amount of chaos on the Red side.

In April the Hungarian Bolsheviks were asking for help in their fight against the Romanians. The Soviet Commander-in-Chief, General Vatsetis, called for strategic direction from Moscow, specifically, whether he was to continue his advance towards Hungary.⁸⁵ Lenin declared the defeat of Denikin as Vatsetis's premier task. Linkage with the Hungarians was secondary. Lenin then demanded that the Ukraine Bolsheviks aid Vatsetis.⁸⁶ Yet no sooner had Lenin conveyed his priorities to his commander than Trotsky asked Vatsetis to take command of the forces facing Kolchak.⁸⁷ By demanding that Ukrainian Bolsheviks move to help crush Denikin, Lenin did not appreciate the chaos that the Red advances had engendered in that old Russian province. The Ukrainian Bolshevik army was not an ideological entity, but rather an amalgamation of independent partisan bands seeking freedom from the Russian yoke and the puppet governments set up in Kiev by, first, the Germans, and now the Bolshevik Russians.⁸⁸ With the unpopularity of the Ukrainian Soviet growing, the Ukrainian army began to disintegrate as the peasant detachments recognized the communist policies for what they were and reacted negatively.⁸⁹ A concentrated Soviet Ukrainian force to help fight Denikin in South Russia was now an impossibility.

The Red Army was fighting on too many fronts, and only Vatsetis recognized the danger Denikin presented. Since October 1918, he had urged Moscow to destroy Denikin first, but had been overruled continuously. Battalions needed to defeat the Whites in South Russia had been transferred to other fronts, allowing Denikin to survive.⁹⁰ What was left to face Denikin was disorganized. This situation allowed the Whites to hold on until the British supplies needed for an offensive began arriving in April.

At the beginning of May 1919, the South Russia White lines stretched like a bubble, starting in the west just outside Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, stretching north of Taganrog and around east past Novocherkassk towards Velikokniazheskaia on the Manytsch River (see Map 7).⁹¹ From this disposition Denikin launched his three-pronged offensive with Moscow as his strategic target.⁹² Throughout May, White forces pushed the Bolsheviks back on all three fronts. These attacks shattered the Red morale. In the west, the Ukrainians withdrew completely and retreated towards the Dnieper River in the Ukraine.⁹³ At first, Denikin's advances continued through June, and the Bolsheviks recoiled in the face of the onslaught. However, unlike the Allied nations, which could not agree on what military backing would be given the Whites, Lenin managed to overcome the chaos; he took decisive action to minimize the damage and prepared to go on the offensive.



Map 7 South Russia and Ukraine
Source: John A. Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (1967), 255. Reproduced with permission.

In the previous six weeks, Lenin had put in place the authority to draw back military units from the peripheries to the centre of the country where they were most needed. The unification of all the armies of the Soviet republics, including that of the Ukraine, became effective 1 June 1919, and gave the Bolshevik leadership the authority to enforce military priorities dictated by the Politburo. Lenin then ruthlessly abandoned his allies in Poland, Hungary, Ukraine and the Baltic States to reinforce the heart of Bolshevik power – Russia proper.⁹⁴ It would take time to organize the armies to meet the danger in the south, but Vatsetis started immediately by abolishing the Ukrainian Front and transferring the men to South Russia. For despite Denikin's victories, the Allies had not supplied him with fighting troops, only materiel. Reserves were Denikin's weakness. Trotsky knew this and chided, "Denikin has nothing behind him, indeed his rear is hostile."⁹⁵ Yet Denikin's attacks continued throughout June, just as the Allies had begun to evacuate North Russia. And also in Northern climes, but in the newly formed Baltic States, starting February 1919 the Reds were faced with another White attempt at destroying the Bolshevik regime.

White Plan to Attack Petrograd

White Russian General N. N. Yudenitch had planned to launch an attack on Petrograd from Estonia. To do so he had sought British aid through very high channels. In early February, King George V asked Lloyd George what British assistance had been given to Yudenitch, and if none, the reasons for not doing so.⁹⁶ To this none-too-subtle royal hint, the Foreign Office replied that Britain could not support Russian reactionaries, even though Yudenitch had broken with his reactionary supporters.⁹⁷ Also in February 1919, and independent of the King's query, Foch's Chief of Staff, General Albi, briefed the Peace Conference and proposed that the Allies support a Yudenitch-led attack on Petrograd from the Baltic States.⁹⁸ Although Clemenceau dismissed Albi's plan, the idea of attacking the Reds from Finland and Estonia did not disappear.

In late February, the Finnish leader, Marshal Mannerheim, approached US diplomats with an assurance that his army was willing and able to defeat the Bolsheviks in North Russia and needed neither Allied men nor materiel, but only Allied moral support.⁹⁹ Then, on 27 February, Sir Samuel Hoare, a Conservative Member of Parliament and Chairman of the "Coalition Group on Foreign Affairs", told Churchill that the Russian problem was growing more military than political. For that reason, he said, it should be removed from the Peace Council discussions and handed to the military Chiefs of Staff for action.¹⁰⁰ Hoare had discussed the situation with the Russians in Paris and he suggested that the Allied military staff draw up plans with the White Russians and back the Yudenitch force with material support.¹⁰¹ Churchill thought so too, and eagerly endorsed Hoare's letter to the prime minister. However, likely wanting to avoid another form of his War Secretary's enthusiasm for Russian commitments, Lloyd George ignored Churchill's solicitation and distracted him with other minor matters.¹⁰² Yet the scheme did not go away.

On 2 March Robert Imbrie, the US Consul at Viborg, informed Washington that he had been discussing an offensive from Finland with the White delegation. The Whites had 10,000 men, had the implicit support of the Finnish government and were fully equipped to capture Petrograd. The anti-Bolsheviks asked the United States to feed Petrograd's citizens once it had been captured, nothing more.¹⁰³ Other US diplomats thought the scheme to be the "height of folly and do irreparable harm", but Polk told Imbrie to report developments without committing his government.¹⁰⁴

As the US administration was being briefed on the US plans for the capture of Petrograd, Yudenitch approached the British seeking arms and supplies for an assault. The War Office promptly said no, since they were currently equipping Denikin and Kolchak.¹⁰⁵ Later in the month, Polk told his president that Marshal Mannerheim thought that it was imperative that Petrograd be captured to save Finland from the Bolsheviks. The Finns did not see the capture as a military problem, but believed that any continued occupation of the old Russian capital depended on obtaining provisions for the city. In exchange for capturing Petrograd, the Finns wanted the Murman region to be ceded to Finland.¹⁰⁶ The plan was progressing for the capture of Petrograd by striking from the Baltic States, even in the absence of Allied direction or assistance. Yet there was no firm view in the Allied camps on whether to back the operation, even though the idea continued to have supporters.

On 17 March the War Office was once again pressed for action in the Baltic States. A. E. Lessing, Lloyd George's liaison to the Russian bankers, gave all the reasons for the British to get involved in the region against the Bolsheviks. Seizing Petrograd was critically important, he claimed, for the safety of Finland. Moreover, Yudenitch was the only realistic link that could ensure cooperation between the Estonians, Finns and Whites.¹⁰⁷ Then, from Murmansk, General Maynard put his thumb on the scale; he urged that Yudenitch move to the northern port where he could organize his attack on Petrograd. Before he was actually told to prepare for withdrawal, Maynard advised London that even if Archangel were to be abandoned, the British ought to remain at Murmansk and that, for sound strategic reasons, the Whites should operate from there.¹⁰⁸ On seeing this suggestion, Churchill growled that it would be ill-advised for Yudenitch to abandon his Finnish location close to Petrograd to relocate to faraway Murmansk. He did ask his staff to investigate the options. They then referred the issue to the British Mission at the Paris Peace Conference. Late in March the Paris delegation advised against Yudenitch saying it would only lead to a later war between Finland and Russia no matter if the attack was successful or not.¹⁰⁹ Despite this advice, the Petrograd operation continued apace.

Once again Lloyd George was purposely ambivalent and certainly was focused on the larger subject of the Paris Peace Conference. Still, he feared that Churchill was stirring the pot and believed he was to blame for a pro-Yudenitch article in London's *Daily Mail*.¹¹⁰ On 9 April Churchill quickly denied all and told his prime minister that "My advisors are very doubtful about the Petrograd plan".¹¹¹ And at that moment Churchill's attention was concentrated on North Russia and

Kolchak's Siberian advance, lobbying hard for official recognition of Kolchak as the head of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Russia. Yet the plan for taking Petrograd still lingered on the periphery of Churchill's attention. However, it was the Finns themselves that forced the issue. On 30 April London heard the startling news that Finnish forces were advancing on Petrograd between Lakes Ladoga and Onega, the latter lake being the goal of Maynard's force moving south at the same time.¹¹²

By the end of April, the Finns had overrun the Petrozavodsk-Olonetz district with little resistance.¹¹³ This was a first step to capture Petrograd before Yudenitch and force the Soviet and White Russian governments to recognize Finnish independence. This information spurred the War office into considering what would happen if Petrograd were to fall to the Finns without White Russian participation. The British General Staff doubted that the Finns were strong enough to capture Petrograd, even if they wished to. In their assessment they believed that the majority of Finns were against an aggressive policy towards the Bolsheviks and any attack would be opposed in the Finnish Diet. Opposition to the campaign was also the view of the majority of the regular Finnish army. The analysis did acknowledge that the close proximity of anti-Bolshevik forces to Petrograd could encourage a local White uprising. If this were to occur while the Finns advanced, the city could easily fall into the Whites' hands, which would create a need to feed the populace. Since supporting the 800,000 people in the old Russian capital was beyond the Finns' capacity, the Allies would have to consider a contingency operation to supply food to the city.¹¹⁴ Churchill had already brought this possibility to the attention of Lloyd George. The prime minister, however, declined to agree to feed Petrograd's population.¹¹⁵ Lloyd George remained too preoccupied with the larger issues being hammered out in Paris and the problem of recognition of the Kolchak government to be bothered with the potential humanitarian disaster of a captured Russian capital. Moreover, if accepted, it would be an easy way to slide into agreeing to more disastrous involvement in Russia.

It was at this time, early May 1919, that General Golovin, Yudenitch's representative in London, presented his detailed plan to Churchill. No doubt he made it more attractive by laying it out for the eager War Secretary in strategic terms. With Denikin stalled at the moment in the south due to the French debacle at Odessa, Golovin emphasized that Kolchak was the only hope for a White victory. This would happen only if the Allies stayed in North Russia. However, those troops remained weak at that moment, allowing the Bolsheviks to concentrate against Kolchak. To relieve pressure on the Admiral, Golovin argued that a new front should be created using Yudenitch's force for an offensive on Petrograd from the Baltic States.¹¹⁶ Russian prisoners held in Germany, he said, could be transferred to Finland and Estonia to form two attacking forces. The Allied fleet in the Baltic was also to blockade the Red ships at Kronstadt.¹¹⁷

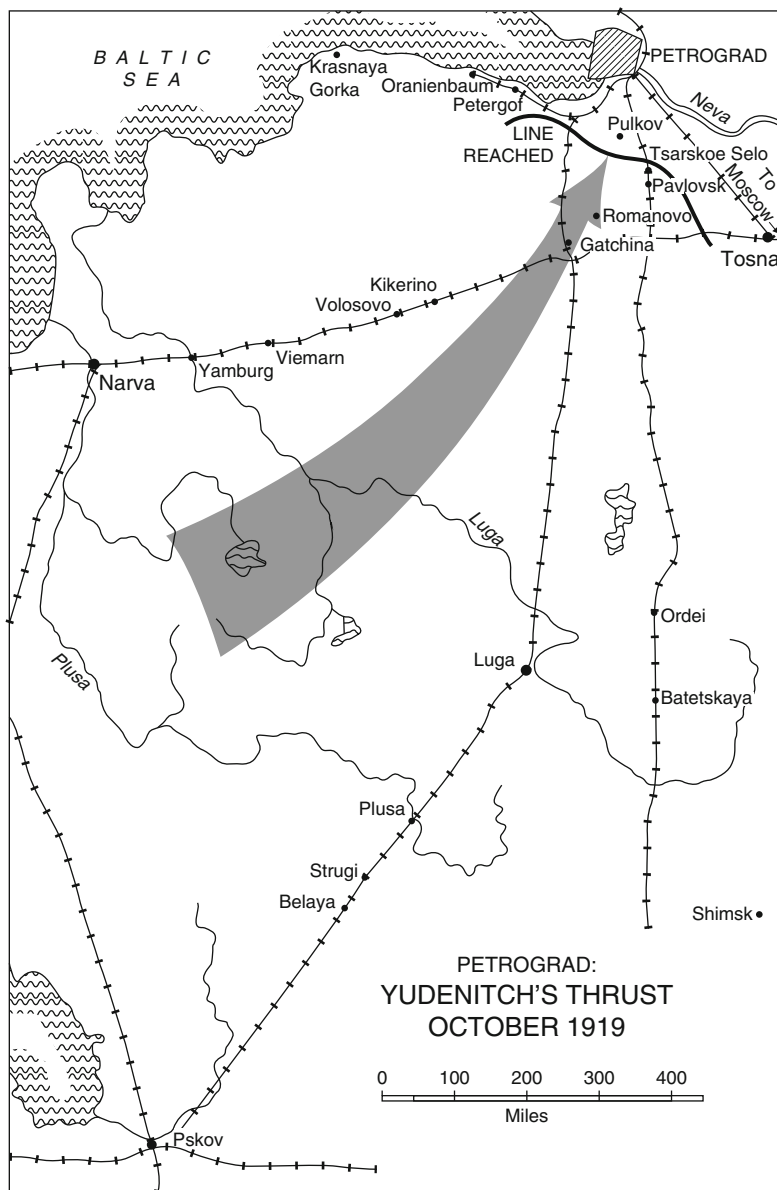
Such strategic thinking was hard to deny in the existing chaos, and Churchill readily passed this scheme to the Director of Military Operations (DMO), who gave it a perfunctory review and replied that the Staff was in agreement with the aims and was "already doing everything possible to give effect to them".¹¹⁸ This

seemed strange, since the Staff paper on the Finns' Petrograd offensive had previously given it little chance for success. The DMO then listed various problems the plan could cause. But Churchill noted in the margins that the Allies could not take "no" for an answer. He then arranged for Golovin to see the DMO with Hoare on 5 May. At this meeting, Radcliffe expressed doubt that all the Russian prisoners in Germany could be transferred soon enough. Quickly the Russian said his general would accept less than the 50,000 in the plan, but 500 officers had to be sent immediately to Archangel to bolster the White forces there. Radcliffe's response was to agree to send a British Mission directly to Yudenitch to discuss further details; then Churchill confirmed everything Radcliffe had said and that he would ensure the dispatch of the 500 officers to Archangel immediately.¹¹⁹ Churchill believed that the best turn of events would be for Yudenitch to cooperate with Mannerheim in Petrograd's capture. This would please both Kolchak and Denikin by making the operation a joint Russian-Finnish affair rather than a purely Finnish one. He then told General Sir Hubert Gough to head the mission to Yudenitch.¹²⁰

Once again the War Secretary seemed to be manipulating the government process. Without consulting Lloyd George or the Cabinet, Churchill had promised to help open another Russian front against the Bolsheviks. He did present the scheme for sending Russian officers to both Archangel and Vladivostok to the War Cabinet the next day, perhaps because Lloyd George was not present.¹²¹ And he couched the necessity for this as being part of the strategy to withdraw Allied contingents from Russia. However, he did not mention the offensive against Petrograd nor the military mission being sent to Yudenitch. Given these "tailored" pieces of information, Cabinet agreed to fund the transfer and support of the Russian officers, although it was for 1200 rather than the original 500 Golovin had asked for. The 1200 officers would be split between Archangel and Vladivostok. In the end, and despite the addition of these officers to the White cause, Russian enthusiasm soon overrode the Allied need for good planning.

On learning that the British had approved some support, Yudenitch was spurred to take action that was hard to stop or even control. Knowing that the British naval squadron in the Baltic would support their efforts, General M. V. Rodzianko, Yudenitch's Chief of Staff and the *de facto* commander of the White Northern Corps in Estonia, moved his troops to the Narva front closer to Petrograd. He was aided by the Estonian army. On 10 May, with the British naval squadron backing them, the Estonians landed behind the Bolshevik lines and covered Rodzianko's left flank.¹²² On 13 May the Northern Corps started its offensive. Taking the Reds by surprise, Rodzianko's forces quickly advanced.¹²³ The Bolsheviks were in complete rout. However, Rodzianko's main concern was his left flank, covered by the Estonians.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, he continued his military success much to his own and his enemies' surprise.¹²⁵ Defections from the Bolsheviks swelled the White forces.¹²⁶ By the end of May, the Whites had advanced to within 30 miles of Petrograd (see Map 8).¹²⁷

While these Baltic operations progressed, in London, Lord Curzon briefed General Gough prior to his departure to Yudenitch. The General was told



Map 8 Baltic Region and the Yudenitch Offensive

Source: John A. Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (1967), 262. Reproduced with permission.

to evaluate Yudenitch's ability to take Petrograd. He was also to convince Mannerheim to halt his advance and ensure that the Finns alone did not capture the old Russian Imperial capital. Curzon emphasized that British policy in the Baltic was one of non-interference, and told Gough that he was not to make any British commitments, despite Churchill's efforts to the contrary. The general was then summoned to see Churchill. At this meeting Gough did not inform Churchill of the meeting with Curzon or its limitations. For his part, Churchill told the general that Yudenitch's efforts, with the coordinated operations of the other White forces, would ensure the destruction of the Bolsheviks.¹²⁸ Gough left confused. Again, the decision-makers in the British government were at odds with each other, and what policy there was remained contradictory and chaotic.

But there would be other problems that victory at Petrograd would bring, not all of them carefully considered. For instance, the provisions needed to feed the populace of a captured Petrograd had not been guaranteed and were not yet available. Without these supplies, the capture of the city would be a pyrrhic victory. Moreover, the Estonians did not intend to move any further beyond their borders, as they were very concerned over the actions of the German Freikorps in Latvia.¹²⁹ The Estonians now had the impression that there was a connection between the Germans and Yudenitch's Northern Corps. This resulted in the Estonians cutting support to the White Russians, forcing Yudenitch to turn to the Finns for military assistance.¹³⁰ At this point, General Gough arrived in Helsingfors (Helsinki). He found the Finnish government divided over an attack on Petrograd, with only Marshal Mannerheim fully supportive.¹³¹ Nevertheless, he was convinced that Yudenitch could capture Petrograd quickly if given food and arms sufficient to equip his army. The War Office agreed, provided the War Cabinet approved. It was decided, though, that the White Northern Corps should advance no further until food for Petrograd was assured. Churchill noted on the plan that Lloyd George had no objections to it.¹³² However, the supplies had to be shipped in US transports and any relief for Petrograd would have to follow the same way. Herbert Hoover, the man President Wilson had placed in charge of food relief for Europe, then further complicated things by insisting that supplies would be made available to the citizens only after they had forsaken or been liberated from Bolshevik control.¹³³ But Petrograd's capture was not a foregone conclusion.

Finnish support for Yudenitch came at a steep price. Mannerheim demanded that the Russian Baltic Fleet be disarmed, the Kronstadt naval base and Finnish forts demolished, the northern port of Pechanga be ceded to Finland along with a narrow strip of territory, a neutral area between Petrograd and the Finnish frontier be established, and a plebiscite be held in Karelia to determine which country would govern it. In addition, Mannerheim wanted financial support and military supplies from the Allies.¹³⁴ No doubt stunned by the breadth of the Finnish demands, Yudenitch dithered, while the Finns continued to control the Olonetz region with no guarantee that Russian territory occupied in this operation would be returned to Russia at the end of the fighting.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks began to react to the danger presented by the Northern Corps.

In Moscow, Lenin was surprised at the blow from the Baltic, having been preoccupied with Kolchak and Denikin. To meet those eastern and southern dangers, he had previously stripped Petrograd of its best fighters. By May, when Yudenitch's attack began, there were fewer than 25,000 Red soldiers available for the city's defence, although still more than the White and Estonian armies facing them. Moscow ordered more troops to the west when the attack began, but Kolchak's continuing offensive prevented their timely arrival.¹³⁶ Some Soviet military leaders believed the Yudenitch attack was no military threat, but only one to ease the pressure on Kolchak.¹³⁷ Lenin, however, recognized the political significance that Petrograd's loss would have on the Bolshevik prestige and control of Russia. Consequently, he ordered Joseph Stalin to hold the city.¹³⁸

The Whites continued to advance, and many Bolshevik soldiers deserted to them. By 10 June the Red 7th Army was no longer battle-worthy. A gap now opened in the Soviet line through which the Whites could advance on Petrograd. This alarmed Lenin and Stalin.¹³⁹ Lenin lectured the Central Committee on the political importance of Petrograd, demanding more resources for its defence.¹⁴⁰ The Committee complied, ordering two of every three divisions transferred from Siberia to Petrograd.¹⁴¹ However, the crisis was beginning to wane just as this decision was made. Ironically, help came from the enemy.

The Estonian distrust of the White Russians caused them to cut support to the Whites, with strategic consequences. The Estonians supported the Ingermanlanders, natives of the region who wished independence from Russia. This ethnic minority held the coast for the anti-Bolsheviks, compounding Rodzianko's deteriorating relations with them and the Estonians. To try and salvage the situation, General Gough now intervened. He arranged that the Northern Corps would be independent of Estonian command and the Estonians would allow supplies for Rodzianko's forces to be unloaded at Reval and passed to the front.¹⁴² Despite this agreement, the Estonians had no desire to see the White Russians in control of the approaches to Petrograd. Still, the White attack continued.

On 10 June 1919 the Red commander of the fort of Krasnaya Gorka revolted and begged for Northern Corps support. Stalin was desperate to prevent the loss of the fort and besieged Krasnaya Gorka, since its loss left wide the approaches to both Kronstadt and Petrograd.¹⁴³ If the Whites held this stronghold, it would almost guarantee the fall of Kronstadt and then Petrograd. But the Estonians did not tell Rodzianko of this turn of events for four days and instead sent Ingermanlanders to support the mutinous defenders of the fortress. Clearly the Estonians wanted to limit White control of the defences guarding Petrograd. Nor did British General Gough inform Rodzianko of the collapse of Krasnaya Gorka.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, on 14 June Gough also failed to tell Churchill anything of the battle raging for control of the region.¹⁴⁵ In short, the chaos of battle was compounded by the chaos of politics in the Baltic region. Without greater support, the Krasnaya Gorka fort's capture could not be sustained. Yet small regional politics interfered with the larger strategic goals of capturing Petrograd and the destruction of Bolshevism.¹⁴⁶

Late on 14 June the Estonians finally told Rodzianko of the situation in the fort. He immediately ordered the mutineers to hold, but it was too late. The now re-inspired gunners from Kronstadt and the Red warships bombarded the fort's mutineers into submission. As a result, the fort was abandoned. The Soviet artillery continued to blast the now empty stronghold.¹⁴⁷ In the end, the Reds recovered the citadel. The recovery of the fort heartened the Petrograd Bolsheviks. On 21 June Stalin launched his counter-attacks. Although he believed that massive forces were no longer required, Stalin still concentrated an army twice the size of the Whites.¹⁴⁸ This was necessary, as Red regiments continued to defect in large numbers.¹⁴⁹ Despite the desertions, the Bolshevik units forced the Whites to dig in and their momentum was lost. Then Stalin began to attack with fresh forces transferred from the Siberian front and drove his enemy back.¹⁵⁰ There was now no White strength left to capture Petrograd. Yudenitch's only hope was with Mannerheim and assaults from Finland.

The desperate Yudenitch only agreed to Mannerheim's conditions as the Whites were reeling from the Red counter-attack. By now it was still questionable whether Finnish support could save the Northern Corps. The Finns controlled the Olonetz region, but were stalled. They had asked General Maynard at Murmansk to join forces at the end of May, but Maynard remained sceptical, as he believed the Finns wanted to seize Karelia and were not working solely to evict Bolsheviks from Finland.¹⁵¹ Likely he was correct, since Mannerheim's goal was Petrograd and his demands for support of Yudenitch clearly showed territorial ambitions elsewhere at the expense of Russia.

So, at the end of June 1919 the Soviets had halted the Finns' advance, but were not able to push them back; efforts to aid Kolchak to connect with the Allied forces at Archangel were still inconclusive; and Yudenitch's White army south of Petrograd was in retreat. The Russian endgame approached at locomotive speed with the Allied decision-makers completely unprepared for the consequences.

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13

Allied Retreat and White Defeat, May–October 1919

The summer of 1919 emerged as the decisive time for the Russian Civil War. The military intervention became a political millstone for the Allied leaders and demands for the return of the troops grew apace. Nevertheless, the Kolchak regime in Siberia became the key to any White success. The ultimate Allied goal was to leave the White Russians in a position to defeat the Reds while extricating themselves from Russia. However, Allied forces strong enough or numerous enough to achieve this lofty aim did not exist. This was made much more acute since the White armies were not led by competent general officers until it was too late.

The steady decline in White fortunes actually began with surprising military achievements. During the spring of 1919, both Kolchak and Denikin had successfully attacked the Reds and pushed their fronts closer to Moscow. However, the areas behind these fronts were not stable and White success did not last long.

Siberia and Kolchak's Operations

Kolchak blamed unrest between Lake Baikal and Vladivostok on the United States who, he believed, were encouraging the Bolsheviks, and on the Japanese, who were supporting the Cossack Atamans Semenov and Kalmykov.¹ Kolchak's worry over Japanese and US actions was based on fact, but there was also some "petty treason" among the Admiral's supporters.

While the average Siberian harkened to the Bolshevik propaganda, being sick of White taxes, conscription and petty politics, Kolchak's representatives – D. L. Horvat in Harbin and General P. P. Ivanov-Rinov in Vladivostok – were plotting against him with the Japanese and Semenov; all this while the Reds urged the peasantry to revolt. Meanwhile, US General Graves maintained his strict neutrality, which actually helped the Reds and made Kolchak's worries fact.² Nevertheless, despite concern over issues east of Lake Baikal, Kolchak remained preoccupied with his, so far successful, western Siberian offensive.

Notwithstanding the White victories, the United States continued its opposition to any official recognition of the Omsk government. After visiting Siberia, Roland Morris, the US Ambassador to Japan, advised that the United States should

only encourage the White leader after he committed his regime to policies satisfactory to the United States. Moreover, he added, the United States should not formally acknowledge Kolchak's government, but only give financial aid, and this only in loan form.³ The ambassador had doubts as to whether the Kolchak administration would survive.⁴ These views were contrary to the advice that the British Foreign Office was then giving to Lloyd George. This difference between US and British attitudes undermined the pro-Kolchak people in the British camp and helped Lloyd George to delay recognition with the encouragement of President Wilson.

In Siberia, British High Commissioner Sir Charles Eliot's support for the Admiral was not without reservation either. He damned the Russian with faint praise, saying his military leadership was mediocre and his political skills minimal, but he was the only White leader available in Siberia. Nevertheless, he was actually succeeding militarily and the time was now right to recognize the Siberian government in order to advance the anti-Bolshevik cause.⁵ General Knox was more optimistic about Kolchak and even the London *Times* correspondent in Siberia predicted his victory.⁶ However, the White victories in spring 1919 were due more to poor performance by Red armies than White military brilliance. Earlier, Moscow had shifted troops to meet Denikin in South Russia. Now it was time to move them back to block Kolchak.⁷ In May all available units were repositioned to face the Siberian Whites. In addition, Trotsky identified the Eastern Front as having the highest priority.⁸ Moscow had also discovered that behind Kolchak's front there were no reserves. Once the White line was breached, collapse would ensue.⁹

Stability in the Admiral's rear areas was non-existent. Trained reinforcements were in short supply, in spite of conscription. Allied military support for Kolchak, other than British, was lukewarm at best and, in the case of the United States, openly hostile. East of Lake Baikal, there was little actual governance by the Whites and in many places anarchy reigned.¹⁰ US and Japanese antagonism towards each other and Japanese support for rogue Russian elements hostile to Kolchak added to the weak position of the Omsk government.

General Knox blamed Kolchak's problems on the lack of an Allied strategy in Siberia and the absence of military cooperation: French General Janin, the nominal Allied commander west of Lake Baikal, could not order the Czechs to cooperate with the Russians; the Canadians could not be employed in combat; the United States would not assist the Japanese in fighting Bolsheviks; and the Italians showed "no practical eagerness to send out punitive expeditions".¹¹ The chaotic Trans-Siberian Railway security arrangements best illustrated the lack of Allied cooperation.

US Resistance to Cooperation in Siberia

Supplies and reinforcements for the front depended on the Railway and its control was engulfed in political turmoil.¹² Responsibility for the rail line's protection was divided among the Allies whose military was often antagonistic towards each other. There was no active plan to interfere with supplies going to the front, but

the attitude of the US commander and the support which the Japanese gave to the Cossack leaders, Semenov and Kalmykov, effectively prevented the smooth administration of the Railway, thereby disrupting the supply line to the front. No Ally wished to allow any other Ally sole control of the vital transportation link across Russia. In addition, both the Russians and Chinese demanded authority over the portions of the Railway that ran through their respective countries.¹³ Struggles over administration and control of the Railway were symptomatic of the larger strain existing between Japanese and the Americans.

Sir Charles Eliot had informed London of these tensions.¹⁴ He was highly critical of US General Graves, who adamantly refused to put himself under the orders of the Japanese Commander-in-Chief. This added another element of chaos into the unsettled political climate. In light of the US general's declaration, General Elmsley, the Canadian commander of all British forces in Siberia, had asked Eliot for clarification of his orders concerning General Otani. Elmsley was particularly worried that any clash between US and Japanese soldiers would see the Canadians siding with the United States, causing further complications for the Allies. Eliot reiterated Elmsley's original orders, which put him under General Otani's command for operational purposes. Elmsley was to interpret these orders to include ensuring the safety of life and property and the free passage of the Czechoslovaks to Vladivostok from the interior. Elmsley accepted this interpretation, but expressed sympathy with General Graves.¹⁵ When General Knox told Graves that the British and US generals should see themselves more eye-to-eye and support Kolchak, the American replied, "As to support of Kolchak, I do not feel under my orders that I can support or interfere with any individual."¹⁶

Graves's attitude was known in Washington, and had been conveyed unofficially to the British. He did not have the confidence in Kolchak that Knox did and believed that Kolchak's subordinates were too reactionary.¹⁷ The American's posture of remaining strictly neutral in matters concerning the Whites-versus-the-Reds effectively aided the Bolsheviks far more than the Whites. The British High Commissioner wanted Graves removed.¹⁸ But when Lord Reading aired Britain's worries in Washington, the United States said they had to wait on decisions in Paris. London, too, expected little would be done about the intransigent Graves. Conditions between two major Allies in Siberia continued to be awkward and uncooperative; it was no milieu for sound planning.¹⁹

Such instability became of major importance when consideration was given to who would guard various sections of the vital Trans-Siberian Railway. The Allies in Siberia had agreed to the civilian administration of the rail line in January 1919. It was to be overseen by a committee with members from all the nations with troops in Siberia, but chaired by a Russian. However, being a civilian organization, the committee had no responsibility for the safeguarding of the line.²⁰ The military was given that duty from Vladivostok to Omsk. This led to friction among the Allied armies, especially between the Japanese and the Americans.²¹

The scarcity of British Imperial forces in Siberia coupled with the restriction by Ottawa on Canadian troops to remain in Vladivostok prompted the British High Commissioner, Eliot, to advise London to leave the guarding of the Railway

to the Japanese and Americans.²² Eliot was even more convinced of this advice when the Foreign Office told him of the departure of the Canadians beginning in April.²³ Nevertheless, London did not agree with Eliot, fearing that without an Englishman as a calming third party, the conflict between the two larger allies would boil over. Any conflict between these allies would allow Semenov to avoid actively supporting Kolchak. Rather, the Cossack would continue to disrupt the Railway with Japan's backing.²⁴

Meanwhile, lacking direction from their political masters, the Allied Military Council in Siberia tried to solve the Railway's security problem by assigning each nation a section of the rail line to guard. General Graves, once again, would not cooperate with the Japanese and persisted in his independence to act as he saw fit.²⁵ The section of the line assigned to the United States became Graves's own fiefdom, controlled solely as the American general decided. This 'snafu' produced even more chaos along the supply line to Omsk.²⁶

Graves's attitude towards the Japanese and his insistence on maintaining absolute neutrality in Russian internal affairs alerted Polk in Washington that the general needed guidance in interpreting his presidential instructions.²⁷ Yet Polk never mentioned the earlier British request for Graves's removal to either Lansing or the president. Lansing thought more of Graves's abilities than Polk, and so he only recommended that Graves be instructed to ensure uninterrupted operation of the Railway in cooperation with all the Allies.²⁸ For his part, the president still wanted little to do with anything that would increase US involvement.²⁹ However, Lansing did not change his advice and continued to believe General Graves would "carry out efficiently the mission outlined".³⁰

Rather than recalling Graves, the US administration left him in command. In addition, they did not clarify his instructions on neutrality when involved with Bolshevik military actions. The result was that chaos continued in Kolchak's rear areas. The US refusal to get involved also emboldened the Admiral's enemies who stepped up their attacks on the Japanese as well as the Railway. These raids only cemented Tokyo's view that the whole of the Amur province was Bolshevik. Unrest among the civilian populace only gave support to this belief.

Neither Kolchak nor the Allies could or would do much to improve the growing lack of confidence among Russians inside the White sphere of influence. The British saw the increasing unrest behind Kolchak's lines as a result of Bolshevik propaganda. They were worried that if the discontent continued to grow, it would destroy Kolchak's regime. Advice from the Czechs suggested it could be overcome because they had confidence that only a small portion of the local populace was Bolshevik. However, the remainder were susceptible to the Red's message because they had no faith in the Kolchak administration. What was needed was for Kolchak to make a gesture to show that he truly was liberal. The calling of a Siberian Duma would be such an act, and it would be a relief valve to let citizens air their grievances. However, creating a Siberian Duma would lose Kolchak many of his monarchist backers unless he had strong Allied support. Most Allies, except the Japanese, agreed with all these points.³¹ Nonetheless, it was only the Allied heads of government that could decide to recognize Kolchak and there was no

consensus to do so. This lack of Allied unity exacerbated the entire Siberian situation. And General Graves's continued lack of cooperation with Kolchak, all in the name of US non-involvement, seemed to support suspicions of US bias towards the Bolsheviks.

Graves's insistence that the United States remain neutral in all Russian internal disputes appeared to tar all factions as equally bad. He seemed to believe that the Omsk government was no more legitimate than the Bolsheviks or any other Russian group fighting for supremacy. In his neutrality, he prevented Kolchak's troops from using the Railway in his region against the Reds. This soured White Russians against the Americans.³²

For his part, General Graves was aware of the alienation with the Whites. Indeed, he feared that Americans would soon be involved in armed clashes with Kolchak's forces. If so, there were then two choices for the United States – withdraw or fight to maintain the US position.³³ But in Washington, Secretary of War Baker wanted Graves to cooperate with Kolchak or leave. However, President Wilson rejected this counsel, even though he had strong doubts about Kolchak's competence. He was neither prepared to pull his general out nor order him to actively support the Admiral.³⁴ The net result was that the United States did nothing, and this drove the Whites into the arms of the Japanese.³⁵ This certainly augmented Japan's importance in the Allies' Siberian puzzle. A more immediate effect was on the Cossack Semenov, Kolchak's rear-area thorn, who continued to receive Japan's help.

While everyone seemed to be waiting on one another, the Japanese continued to sustain Semenov, who still refused to cooperate with the Admiral.³⁶ He did agree to be subordinate to General Ivanov-Rinov, who, in turn, asked Kolchak to make himself commander of an army. Ivanov-Rinov did not believe that the Admiral understood the deteriorating political situation in his rear areas, and feared that, without a satisfactory resolution, Semenov would return to his marauding ways.³⁷ This possibility caused the Japanese to think that maybe Kolchak was the only non-Bolshevik capable of maintaining order in Siberia.³⁸

In Japan, Baron Giichi Tanaka, the War Minister, denied any desire to control Siberia. His government, he declared, only supported Semenov to help stop anarchy in a lawless region. Japan strongly supported Kolchak, and he feared the Admiral's fall would plunge Siberia into lawlessness. Japanese aid for Semenov was conditional on him joining the Admiral and having his Cossacks deployed wherever needed. However, Tanaka also believed that the independent attitude of the United States complicated matters and only encouraged the Bolsheviks. The best way to counter this, the Minister suggested, was for Britain and Japan to have their own agreed strategy for the region.³⁹ But little came of it. Even in Paris, where all the Allied leaders could discuss such things in person, they could not decide on any unified policy. Notwithstanding, President Wilson seemed to finally recognize that General Graves was part of the problem in Siberia. On 19 May, he asked the US Ambassador in Tokyo to "form a judgement ... as to whether it would relieve unnecessary friction at Vladivostok if someone else should take the place of Graves".⁴⁰ But time was of the essence and support for Kolchak was still divided.

Allied Conditions for Recognition of Omsk Government

In the middle of May 1919, while Tokyo contemplated the best way to control Siberia, the Allied leaders in Paris agonized over what conditions to impose on Kolchak before giving formal recognition of his government. This was the time when the Council of Four received North Russia President Chaikovsky's pleas to support Kolchak and all the White factions while Churchill pressed Lloyd George on this same subject.⁴¹ Despite US antipathy for Kolchak, the Group of Four undertook to set conditions for official recognition of the Omsk government. They asked Philip Kerr to draft them. Significantly, the proposal was to be only for Siberia and not for a government for all of Russia.

However, on 23 May Japan, to add to the chaos, unilaterally announced that it was giving formal acknowledgement to Kolchak subject to certain constraints that would "safeguard the legitimate interests of foreign nations, including the definite assurance of indebtedness undertaken by the Russians before the overthrow of the Kerensky Government".⁴² No doubt this spurred the other Allies, for, coincidentally on the same day, the Group of Four began discussions on Kerr's draft document.⁴³ After three days of debate and re-drafting, with additions from the Japanese, the Allied leaders finalized those conditions Kolchak must meet in return for Allied recognition. They included convening the Constituent Assembly, free elections, no re-establishing privilege for any social class, recognizing the breakaway border states as independent and paying Russia's debts.⁴⁴ The final version was forwarded to Kolchak on 27 May 1919.

While this laboriously created Allied missive was wending its way slowly to Omsk, complaints from Eliot showed all was not well inside the British camp. He protested: first, that Churchill and others were usurping his position as the chief political advisor in Siberia; and second, by doing this Churchill was making policy without his government's approval. With critical information from the War Office going directly to Kolchak through Knox, Eliot was being sidelined. Moreover, he warned that he could not influence the Admiral on reform plans if the Allies recognized the Omsk government.⁴⁵

Eliot may have been correct about Churchill or he may simply have had his nose out of joint. Yet within a week, in early June, Kolchak replied to the Allied conditions.⁴⁶ He agreed to all except the calling back of the 1917 Constituent Assembly, which, he countered, "the majority of whose members are now in the Sovietist [*sic*] ranks".⁴⁷ He obfuscated about the freedom of the Border States. While explicitly accepting Polish and Finnish independence, the Admiral would agree only to autonomy for the other breakaway territories. Nevertheless, the reply was an acceptance of the Allied terms; something the White leader had no choice in deciding since he needed the Allied support to overthrow the Bolsheviks. Ironically, it was too late by several weeks. By mid-May 1919, Kolchak's forces had severely over-extended themselves. The Red Army saw this weakness and began its counter-offensive shortly thereafter. At the time, unrest among the White soldiers at the front caused some to desert to the Bolsheviks.⁴⁸ By 17 May the Reds threatened the major city of Ufa.⁴⁹

Bolshevik Counter Offensives Begin

Knowledge of the pending official recognition of Kolchak's government was the catalyst for the Bolsheviks to concentrate their efforts against the Siberian army. Trotsky was key to awakening the Soviets to recognize this danger. On 1 June he issued the ominous prediction that Allied recognition of Kolchak would force them to flood Siberia with men and supplies.⁵⁰ Trotsky likely knew that Siberia was not unified behind the Whites.

In Vladivostok that June, regardless what image the Reds projected about the threat, the British Consul, in typical understatement, reported that the situation was "not satisfactory".⁵¹ Colonel Robertson was convinced that Kolchak's retreat could not be reversed despite its slowing because his rear area was unstable. The Omsk government was incapable of improving the economic or social conditions of the populace and most of its ministers were not fit to govern. It was a bleak picture, indeed.

Given the serious reverses to Kolchak's forces and the growing instability of his hinterland, the Allies had to rethink their Siberian position, and some suspected that Kolchak's government was not the right choice. General Knox summed up the problem. Failure in Siberia, he declared, was due to the "usual Russian incompetent leading".⁵² Full Allied military intervention was now needed. But, put simply, there were neither Allied armies nor domestic support for such a large operation. In addition, Allied withdrawal from Siberia had commenced, first with Canada's contingent. The Canadians' withdrawal had been agreed by the War Office earlier that February, marking April as the month for them to leave Siberia.⁵³ The first group had departed Vladivostok 21 April 1919.⁵⁴ The last Canadian soldiers embarked for home on 5 June, three days after Knox had urged the British government to send a massive influx of Allied military into Russia.⁵⁵ Only a small Canadian rear-party remained until August.

Yet, in spite of these departures, the need for a massive Allied troop build-up was still being promoted by some on the spot. Major General Elmsley, on his leaving with the Canadian contingent, said success could still be achieved if all the Allies accepted military intervention, but any policy needed both Japanese and US backing or it would fail.⁵⁶ In his opinion, Japan was the only nation able to defeat the Reds.⁵⁷ However, the delay in creating a common policy had already dealt a fatal blow to any White victory. In early June 1919, the Red Army continued its string of successes well into Kolchak's domain.⁵⁸ On 6 June a disappointed Churchill told Parliament of the White reverses. He then warned the House not to expect Kolchak at Moscow's gates any time soon.⁵⁹ He was obviously trying to cool public expectations and perhaps prepare for the worst. It came quickly. On 9 June the Reds recaptured Ufa and the White Siberian army was in full retreat to the east (see Map 5).⁶⁰ Ufa's capture and the subsequent occupation of Sterlitamak denied Kolchak the opportunity to join with Denikin's Southern Volunteer Army.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Churchill still pushed Ironside to link-up with Kolchak through Kotlas.

The same day Churchill aired Kolchak's setbacks to the House of Commons, in North Russia, Ironside announced that he would be ready to start his operation

in the first week of July.⁶² Having waited five days for whatever reason, Churchill then brought the news to the War Cabinet, reminding them that the prime minister had sanctioned the operation provided that the War Cabinet gave its approval.⁶³ He did not emphasize Ironside's thrust south was to link with Kolchak; rather, he said it was to deny Kotlas to the Reds as a base for winter operations, protecting the evacuation of the Allied forces from North Russia (see Map 6). And so, the War Cabinet approved the operation.⁶⁴

No sooner had they done so, reports arrived in London of Kolchak's reversals. The Admiral's southern front had lost half its effective strength and the White's War Minister was forced to resign with no replacement. This left General Lebedev, the White Chief of Staff, directly responsible to Kolchak. This officer was considered to be incompetent by Knox; moreover, he did not get along with Gajda, Kolchak's most able and experienced commander.⁶⁵ The retreat had lost all the gains made earlier, including Ufa. Eliot blamed the debacle on bad White leadership rather than overwhelming Red forces.⁶⁶ He did not expect much from Kolchak's army unless there were successes on other fronts or if there was a widespread revolt against the Moscow government.

In Paris, the Group of Four was also alarmed at Kolchak's losses. Still, they were prepared to support the Russian Admiral, but, with his military defeats, they were not yet prepared to recognize his government as one for all of Russia.⁶⁷ Perhaps looking for a reason not to acknowledge Kolchak's legitimacy, Lloyd George told his three colleagues, "We do not know what will happen after the fall of the Bolsheviks."⁶⁸ Significantly, Lloyd George's concerns also extended to the pending operation in North Russia.

On 16 June the prime minister complained to Field Marshal Wilson that Ironside would over extend himself and would need rescuing when there were no forces for the task. He wanted Wilson to tell Ironside the facts.⁶⁹ The next day came more details of Kolchak defeats, and this spawned an emergency meeting of the War Cabinet to re-assess Ironside's planned southerly offensive.

In Paris, the Allied heads of government learned of the Siberian upsets at the same time as the British War Cabinet in London. Lloyd George, now openly pessimistic, told his colleagues that Kolchak would not beat Lenin.⁷⁰ The four Allied leaders then decided, without any evidence and perhaps with some self-delusion, that pure Bolshevik policy was being abandoned and that a state not too much different from a bourgeois one was being created. Still, they agreed to continue to support Kolchak with materiel.

Meanwhile, in London, several War Cabinet Ministers were very worried about what the Siberian retreat would mean for Ironside's operation and challenged Churchill. In response, he read the message to Ironside ordered by Lloyd George: "under no circumstances were British troops to become so embroiled ... as to necessitate a relief column being sent out from England, as no such troops could or would be sent". All British military had to be withdrawn before winter and the White Sea's freeze-up. That being made clear, Churchill assured them again that Ironside's operation was only to support a safe evacuation of North Russia and not Kolchak. Besides, he said, military experts thought the Admiral's travails

were ending because the Reds had over-extended. He also praised Denikin's South Russia successes. But Lord Curzon believed none of it.

Even though Denikin was then winning, Curzon observed that Kolchak had lost to a much smaller force than his own. He would not sanction military action that sent British soldiers 200 miles into Russia and was doomed to failure. Despite military advice that a hard blow against the Reds first would ensure a safe withdrawal from North Russia, many in the War Cabinet remained unconvinced. But Churchill bought more time by persuading them to delay their decision on the operation for two weeks. They did agree to let Ironside prepare, but he was not to take one step south until the War Cabinet made its final decision.⁷¹

In North Russia, preparations were well advanced for the Kotlas mission.⁷² On 15 June Ironside moved to capture Troitsa, despite not having Cabinet permission.⁷³ Royal Navy minesweeping operations supporting this offensive were reported as only minor activities that were not part of Ironside's offensive.⁷⁴ Although technically true, it was not completely accurate, as Ironside had actually advanced along the Dvina towards Kotlas, in spite of direct orders not to.

On 19 June Ironside once again skewed his responses to the War Office by reporting that even without a junction with Kolchak such a large and extended operation was still needed for the safe withdrawal of British forces from Archangel and for the morale of the White Russians supporting them.⁷⁵ He emphasized that the capture of Kotlas was paramount to a safe exit of Allied troops.⁷⁶ This lopsided observation was dangerous. Ironside knew that the evacuation could, in all probability, be accomplished safely without the advance to Kotlas. Moreover, he knew when he dispatched his cable to London that the attack was no longer feasible. A week before, the level of the Dvina River had dropped to its lowest point in 50 years, leaving it unnavigable.⁷⁷ On the very day Ironside sent his telegram he recorded in his diary, "I do not think for a minute that I can get to Kotlas but I do not want to be left wiring for permission to do things just when I want to be doing them."⁷⁸ Back at the War Office, Churchill also promoted Ironside's expansive plans.

On 27 June the War Cabinet again met to review the North Russia offensive. Most of the non-military members were still sceptical. Churchill argued that since it was a military operation rather than political, it should be approved.⁷⁹ The CIGS said it was critical to capture Kotlas and destroy the Red supplies and transport to protect the Archangel evacuation.

Military operations to save lives are always hard to deny, and after much discussion and questions on the consequence of failure, the War Cabinet approved Ironside's plans.⁸⁰ His misleading telegram had gained the approval desired by Churchill and the freedom of action Ironside craved. Incredibly, within days of this decision, it was Churchill who had to report to Cabinet that the operation was to be abandoned.

On 3 July, the Bolsheviks recaptured Perm, putting any junction between Kolchak's and Ironside's troops further out of reach. The day before, Ironside had clearly seen that the low level of the river made his advance to Kotlas impossible. Now he could not do much save break the Bolshevik line where his

forces were currently positioned. Once that was achieved, he would position his White Russian forces at the front and commence the withdrawal of the British.⁸¹ However, it was these very Russians that caused all thought of an advance to collapse. On 4 July, Ironside informed the War Office, "Latest news of loss of Perm [and] Kungur, coupled with the Dvina at very low ebb, makes even a raid on Kotlas at the moment impossible."⁸² This same day, the Slavo-British Legion, a battalion Ironside had a keen personal interest in, moved up to the line. On the night of 7 July, its "C" company mutinied, killing and wounding several British and Russian officers.⁸³

The mutiny shocked Ironside to despair and he now decided to conduct the evacuation as soon as practicable.⁸⁴ On 9 July the Dvina River dropped to only two-and-a-half feet and the Royal Navy flotilla withdrew immediately downriver to avoid being stranded.⁸⁵ This essential part of the force for attacking Kotlas was now unavailable, ending any chance for a successful operation. On this same day, the War Cabinet once again met to discuss the events in North Russia.

Some of the Ministers were perplexed that the Kotlas operation was cancelled when it had just been approved.⁸⁶ But the flexible Churchill defended the decision, saying Ironside had made it based on immediate local intelligence. Withdrawal would now be more difficult, Churchill conceded, but would still be done by 10 November as planned. When queried why the lateness in the year for the pull-out, Churchill explained that the Allies must stay to the last minute because of the unexpected strength the Reds were now showing. Still, the War Cabinet was worried about the fate of the 2000 men that would remain since there would be no escape once winter set in.

Elsewhere in North Russia, things were not going well. Maynard had been consolidating his gains around Lake Onega in June, but had found that without British or Allied support, the Whites did not press their advantage and were easily routed by the Reds.⁸⁷ Maynard was ordered to advance no further. The north end of Lake Onega was the furthest south Allied units penetrated into the Murman Region. Nevertheless, Maynard still had to accept that withdrawal of all the Allies from North Russia must be completed before winter set in (see Map 3).

At this juncture and quite suddenly on 18 July, the ever-aggressive Ironside in Archangel changed his mind. He now wanted to attack. A hard blow against the Reds, he believed, could be delivered in September.⁸⁸ It was needed to strengthen the resolve of local Russians. White Russians would be the majority of the force and these would continue on to try linking with Kolchak while the Allies withdrew from Archangel. His White allies, he claimed, had advised that a strong advance on Siberia would embolden the locals to join against the Bolsheviks. This opinion was directly opposite to Ironside's own experience that the population would remain neutral to see what the long-term outcome would be. Yet the general still had faith that a strong attack on the communists would ensure a safe pull-out. However, two days later, Onega's entire White garrison mutinied and defected to the Reds.⁸⁹ Now Ironside called for either immediate reinforcements or early evacuation. Reginald H. Hoare, Lindley's replacement as British chargé

at Archangel, wired London his preference for early evacuation with Ironside as military dictator to oversee all operations.⁹⁰ The mutiny endangered communications between Murmansk and Archangel with Onega straddling the main route between them. It was the last straw for Lloyd George.

At the 23 July War Cabinet meeting, North Russia was a main issue and a hot one.⁹¹ The loss of Onega and the impossibility of the North Russia government's survival without Allied military help were explosive topics. Ironside's proposed offensive did not indicate if additional reinforcements would be required. Regardless, he was once again trying to strike the Bolsheviks. Lloyd George would have none of it. While agreeing that the general was a strong man, unafraid to face facts, it was apparent that he was on the offensive and contemplated remaining in North Russia over the winter. This idea, the prime minister ordered, must be stopped immediately. His concern was real. Although Lloyd George had declared that Britain was at war with the Bolsheviks at an earlier Cabinet meeting, he had no intention of waging war and no armies would go to Russia to fight. Britain might be at war with Bolshevism, but it would not fight.⁹²

Yet Churchill still defended Ironside and, one might add, his own position. To allay a Cabinet feud, he said that he would not allow Ironside to remain over the winter, but the general's plan to strike a hard blow against the Reds was still sound. It was regrettable, Churchill said, that it had to be abandoned in light of events and Kolchak's retreat. He then warned that Kolchak's forces would collapse within two months and the Bolsheviks could then concentrate on the south and Denikin. In spite of these pleas, the War Cabinet ordered Ironside to withdraw his force before winter. Without reinforcements, any real capability for him to fight beyond Archangel was gone. This decision for North Russia was not the only consequence for the commanders. On 26 July the CIGS told Churchill that he did not think the War Office could exercise sufficient supervision of the two North Russia commanders or their evacuations. To control both, he proposed General Sir Henry Rawlinson be appointed supreme commander.⁹³ Churchill agreed.⁹⁴ He had little choice.

Apparently this was the CIGS's way of guaranteeing that Maynard and Ironside would carry out their orders. Each would be left to organize the withdrawal in their areas, but Rawlinson would oversee the entire operation. However, the evacuation of other Allies from North Russia continued. On 19 July the Italians at Murmansk exited the line. On 28 July the last 700 Americans left the North.⁹⁵ The last of the Canadians in Russia were also at Murmansk and had expected to leave earlier in July. Maynard, however, had tried hard to keep their services. Once again, Churchill cajoled the Canadian prime minister by insisting that the continued Canadian presence was a matter of life and death for other Allies as they pulled out.⁹⁶ Once again Sir Robert left the decision to his Cabinet, and once again it gave in to Churchill's plea.⁹⁷ And so the Canadians remained in North Russia while British plans for withdrawal matured. This spawned another hurried War Cabinet meeting.

War Cabinet Debates Russian Situation

On 29 July 1919, the day after the Canadians agreed to stay on, the War Cabinet debated the Russian question as a whole rather than just dealing ad hoc with individual regions and particular crises. According to the oft-frustrated CIGS, this was the first time Ministers had taken this much larger view.⁹⁸ First, they discussed North Russia. Churchill formally acknowledged that the Archangel government now knew there would be no British support for them over the winter. He admitted that Denikin was the only hope Russia now had, but he was loath to leave the North without a firm strategy for South Russia.⁹⁹ Lloyd George was primarily concerned with the North's evacuation, but declared that there must be middle ground between abandoning the Whites and backing them indefinitely. This prompted the CIGS to announce that withdrawal would proceed as planned although Maynard's position was weakened since the French had reneged on reliefs for Murmansk and the Reds now controlled Onega. Wilson then proposed sending a senior general to oversee the entire operation, leaving Ironside and Maynard to concentrate on the details of exiting each region.¹⁰⁰ This was Rawlinson, whom Churchill had already chosen.

It was Lord Curzon who had the most cogent resolve. From an Allied point of view, the entire Russian scenario, he pointed out, was in chaotic collapse, and this was so because no one among the Allies could see the greater scheme of things. Russian policy, he insisted, had to be seen and be decided upon as a whole: the Petrograd offensive had failed; Kolchak was in retreat; North Russia was a failure; only Denikin showed promise. If Britain continued support for Denikin, Curzon went on, it would become government policy and a financial burden. "Where do we find the money?" And what about the Caucasus? Britain would depart in August leaving the region in anarchy and open to Denikin. Only Britain staying would prevent this, but who would pay? And who would pay for other White aid? An Allied central fund should be established in London with contributions from all. Without a centralized policy and funding, disaster was certain. One by one the other Cabinet members agreed with this numbing assessment. In the end, they decided that Curzon was to approach the other Allies for a concerted strategy, Rawlinson was to command the North's pull-out and a political officer was to be sent to Denikin.¹⁰¹ This all pointed to the end of direct military aid to Russia.

Yet Churchill and a few others still wanted more support for the Whites, but most Ministers now saw the cost, both politically and financially, to be too great and too risky to bear. Later that day, Churchill announced in the House of Commons that all British forces would be out of North Russia before the original date of 15 October.¹⁰² South Russia remained the one positive region, but it still had problems.

South Russia

Denikin had been making progress since April and his successes continued. On 31 May the Admiralty told the War Office that White units had captured Mariopol on the Sea of Azov. On that same day, Denikin joined with the Cossacks in the

Donetz Region. He now had control of most of the mines and coalfields, which was a major blow to Moscow.¹⁰³ As this was occurring, the Whites were also advancing across the steppes capturing Kharkov, Nicolaevsk and Tsaritsin.¹⁰⁴ Denikin's forces were then in striking distance of joining Kolchak in Siberia.¹⁰⁵ By the end of June, all of the Crimean Peninsula was in Denikin's hands.¹⁰⁶ These victories had spurred Churchill's hope for a White triumph and sustained his arguments about North Russia. However, Denikin's victories masked rampant corruption, disorganization and chaos. Supplies rotted, unguarded munitions dumps were blown up, discipline failed and Denikin played favourites with equipment and food distribution.¹⁰⁷ This situation would eventually be rectified, but too late to prevent an overall disaster. Meanwhile in the North, Yudenitch still plotted.

The Baltic Region

On the Petrograd Front, the Whites were at a standstill at the end of June, Stalin having forced them back on the Narva Front. The Estonians had abandoned Yudenitch.¹⁰⁸ Only the Finns were in a position to help and they were halted in the Olonetz region. Nevertheless, Yudenitch thought he could still capture Petrograd.

On 28 June General Gough told London that Yudenitch would attack Petrograd on 10 July. However, he also explained that the Finnish government now desired peace and, despite Mannerheim's pact with Yudenitch, the Finnish general would not be able to force his government into a war of aggression on the strength of that accord alone. The Finns would only consent to the advance on Petrograd if they were convinced that it would destroy Bolshevism, that the Allies would guarantee any agreement signed by the Finns and Russians, and that the Allies would assist Finland with money and munitions.¹⁰⁹ If so, blame for any failure, Gough warned, would be on the Allies.

Two days later, at the end of June, the Reds brought strong reinforcements to the Narva front. The Whites were desperate for guns and ammunition to sustain their defence. Since the expected British supplies had not yet arrived, the 10 July attack was postponed.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the British chargé in the area, Mr. H. M. Bell, considered any agreements between Mannerheim and Yudenitch as temporary and with no credibility. He strongly advised London to back the Finnish government over Mannerheim. Without Allied help, any advance on Petrograd would end in a fiasco.¹¹¹ Weighing both Gough's and Bell's advice, Churchill took the only path he could. His government, he told the Finns, had no objections to their attack, but there would be no financial or material aid from Britain.¹¹² Moral support without substance helped no one. Without financial assistance the Finns would not help Yudenitch and the North West Russian Army was too weak to withstand the Reds by itself. Notwithstanding Gough's concerns, Britain was in no position to give help, material or military, to the Finns. This reality convinced Gough that the Reds would overrun Northwest Europe.¹¹³

In far away Siberia, Kolchak added to the chaos when he approved the Finns' military advance on Petrograd, provided that Yudenitch was part of the operation

and that the White army took possession of the city for Russia.¹¹⁴ However, the Admiral ordered his general not to sign the pact with the Finns as he did not wish to recognize Finnish independence.¹¹⁵ This basically “put-paid” to Finnish support for Yudenitch. Notwithstanding the loss of this support, Gough recognized the danger of the Bolsheviks and realized that the only military aid available to capture Petrograd would be from the Estonians. However, the Estonians were at serious odds with the White leader over recognition of their own state.

Desperate times require desperate measures. At least that is how the enterprising General Gough saw it. On 8 August he sought Estonian aid for the Petrograd attack, despite his orders not to get involved. But in return, the Balts wanted White guarantees of their independence. The Bolsheviks had already sanctioned Estonia’s freedom provided it ceased support to the Whites. To off-set this, and on his own authority, Gough abruptly ordered Yudenitch to create a North-West White government.¹¹⁶ Gough’s deputy, Brigadier General Frank Marsh, oversaw the details and gave the Whites only 40 minutes to form such a body and to assure the Estonians of their independence. Without this agreement, he threatened, all Allied aid would be withdrawn.¹¹⁷ Despite the ultimatum, the Whites only appointed three representatives to negotiate with Estonia and they did not acquiesce for four days. Only then did Gough tell his superiors in London that the White Russians recognized Estonian independence and the Allies were also asked to sign the deal.¹¹⁸

The first public rumours to reach London about the creation of the North-West government was a 16 August *Times* story, which caused surprise and angered the senior members of the Foreign Office.¹¹⁹ Not only were they taken aback, but so were the Allied delegates in Paris. All the Allied agents in the Baltic had acted without the direction or authority of their respective governments. Yet Balfour was loath to condemn the results since the other Allies – the United States and France – had given their warmest *post facto* approval to the new government scheme.¹²⁰ However, even before Balfour penned his reply, the plan began to unravel. The Estonians, having been brow-beaten as much as the Whites, insisted on full recognition by the Allied governments.¹²¹

All this was too much for the British. The War Cabinet directed that assistance to the Whites would be confined to Denikin’s forces only, and all other aid to other anti-Bolsheviks be brought to an end as soon as possible. General Gough’s actions were to be repudiated and both he and Harold Pirie-Gordon, the Acting British High Commissioner, were formally reprimanded.¹²² Both were recalled, although General Marsh, the architect of the scheme, remained in the region.¹²³ Gough did not return to the Baltic and Yudenitch did not get the Estonians’ cooperation. Yet the over-confident White commander continued to plan for a Petrograd attack with expectations of Finnish support.

While the North-West government fiasco was unfolding, Siberian forces continued to retreat to the east. After dismissing Gajda in mid-July, which angered the Czechoslovaks, Kolchak decided to withdraw, leaving only a few seasoned troops in the Urals. The Omsk government planned to retreat to a quiet region to rest and recuperate, then go on the offensive in the autumn. However, the only

limit on the Bolshevik forces was their own mobility and they remained on the offensive. Consequently the Siberian army's retreat continued through August and into September.¹²⁴

Only in South Russia did the Whites have any reward for their efforts. Denikin continued his success against the Red army in August 1919. After the fall of Tsaritsin, he started a three-pronged attack north across a 1000-mile front.¹²⁵ The Red Army was taken completely by surprise. Throughout August, Denikin's Volunteer Army pressed north, east and south capturing territory and Bolshevik prisoners.¹²⁶ Once again these victories gave the ever-expansive Churchill the evidence and optimism he used to bombard his colleagues in his backing of the Whites, and Denikin in particular.¹²⁷

Denikin continued moving towards Moscow. By mid-September he had forced the Reds out of all the Crimean Peninsula.¹²⁸ Once again, Denikin's rapid success gave a new wave of hope to some in the War Office. Still, the British continued the evacuation of Archangel and Murmansk.

Allied Evacuation of North Russia

On 9 August the new overall commander for North Russia, General Rawlinson, arrived at Murmansk on his way to Archangel.¹²⁹ Prior to leaving Britain, he met with Churchill. Flushed with Denikin's summer victories, the War Minister flirted with the notion that the Allies should stay in North Russia while letting the Whites battle the Reds until spring, and then withdraw all assistance. The uninformed Rawlinson fell under the spell of Churchill's renewed enthusiasm. The general suggested that Murmansk be held and that the local White commander, General Y. K. Miller, be persuaded to make a stand there. Then, in the spring, a renewed offensive could be launched with British material support.¹³⁰ Evidently Churchill and the CIGS promised this, but perhaps, given the Cabinet opposition, he felt he could not put it in writing. Whatever the case, the only explicit orders Rawlinson had were to effect the withdrawal before winter.¹³¹ But in the minds of the three men, there was a totally skewed picture, one not shared outside the War Office.

Once in Murmansk, Rawlinson quickly became aware of the situation there. A few French infantry and Royal Marines had arrived as reinforcements earlier, but most of the Allied troops, including veteran British and Canadians, were evacuated by mid-August.¹³² Things, according to Maynard, were not good and Rawlinson brought the discouraging news that no new reinforcements were destined for Murmansk.¹³³ The new C-in-C then travelled to Archangel.¹³⁴ The day before Rawlinson's arrival at Archangel on 11 August, Ironside launched another limited offensive along the Dvina, ostensibly to aid Allied withdrawals. In a completely successful attack, British and White troops routed the Reds, securing the approaches to Archangel.¹³⁵

While Ironside executed his plan, the British consul at the port encouraged the White government to prepare for the British departure and urged that the Archangel administration move to Murmansk.¹³⁶ Rawlinson thought this move

made sense, but he was not impressed with the Russians, noting as the Allies celebrated their Dvina victory that “Their troops won’t fight alone and their officers are hopeless.”¹³⁷

Both Rawlinson and Ironside argued that if the Whites remained in Archangel, it would open them to almost certain slaughter by the Bolsheviks.¹³⁸ They desperately tried to get Governor General Miller to abandon the city, set his government up at Murmansk and concentrate White defences in the Murman.¹³⁹ Miller refused, claiming that Kolchak had ordered him to defend Archangel to the end.¹⁴⁰ He then tried to persuade the British to leave some men. From London, though, the CIGS wired that no British forces were to remain in North Russia after the pull-out date.¹⁴¹ Moreover, he privately confided to Rawlinson that the Whites were not “worth a damn” and that Lenin and Trotsky were far better leaders than any anti-Bolsheviks, save Denikin.¹⁴² In short, the chief military advisor to the British War Cabinet had also lost all faith in intervention.

As scheduled, the British began their withdrawal from North Russia on 1 September.¹⁴³ Both the Archangel and Murmansk commands pulled back their extended defences into the two cities, handing over their positions to White units. Archangel troops evacuated first. Churchill also allowed over 6000 Russians who feared Bolshevik reprisals to go aboard the ships, and by 21 September 1919 the last British soldiers sailed from Archangel.¹⁴⁴

In the Murman Region there was a similar withdrawal, made complicated and dangerous by Bolshevik and Red Finnish ambushes and raids. In the end, it was accomplished both by sea and rail transport falling back on the Murmansk port. Finally, on 12 October 1919, the last Allied troops sailed away from North Russia.¹⁴⁵ The Whites who remained hung on for barely three months before the Bolsheviks took over in February 1920.¹⁴⁶ But it was far from over elsewhere in Russia. While the British were leaving North Russia, Yudenitch was again attempting to capture Petrograd and Kolchak was able to halt his retreat in Siberia in mid-September. In the South, Denikin, with British material support still flowing, continued his successful advance into the autumn. At the War Office, Churchill still had stubborn hopes, but few others in the British Cabinet did.

Baltic Thrust to Petrograd

Despite the Cabinet’s orders that only Denikin was to receive further British aid, Churchill ignored this direction and decided that Yudenitch could still receive British material help.¹⁴⁷ He tried to justify this extraordinary action by claiming it would bolster Denikin and the evacuation of Archangel.

On 5 August supplies earmarked for Yudenitch finally arrived in Reval just in time to influence the negotiations to establish the North-West government. Included were six tanks along with the instructors to train the White North-West Army.¹⁴⁸ Although the initial negotiations with the Estonian government failed, Marsh continued to encourage Yudenitch to attack Petrograd. With Marsh’s constant badgering and promises of aid, Yudenitch and the Estonians agreed to launch an offensive set to begin on 15 September.¹⁴⁹ For all of this, Marsh had

again acted on his own authority with no mandate from his government. It was just another contribution to overall chaos.

However, the Bolsheviks had not been idle that summer while the White Russians and the Baltic forces negotiated. Although the Whites were halted on the Narva Front, through July there had been back-and-forth fighting between the Reds and the Whites. On 1 August Lenin asked Stalin whether Petrograd was ready to be defended against any assault.¹⁵⁰ On 18 August a Royal Navy surprise attack on Kronstadt and the Red fleet with fast torpedo boats seemed to herald an impending onslaught on the old capital. The sea battle crippled the Bolshevik fleet and ensured the safety of the seaward flank of the White Army.¹⁵¹ These events hastened Moscow to consider making a separate peace with the Baltic States.

On 23 August, while these peace negotiations stumbled along, Yudenitch ordered the arrest of his most popular and politically moderate general, Bulak Balakhovich. The internal tensions that produced in the North-West Army gave the Bolsheviks an opportunity to attack Pskov, forcing the surprised Whites and Estonians to retreat. The Soviets now had a positive opportunity to offer peace, backed by force, to the Estonians.¹⁵² For the Balts, this underscored the perils of cooperating with Yudenitch.

On 31 August 1919 Moscow officially offered to recognize the independence of Estonia. There was no other recourse than to accept the offer.¹⁵³ One immediate effect was that the peace proposal scuppered Yudenitch's planned September attack. White fortunes had been dealt another blow. The other Baltic States and Finland opposed Estonia's decision, but on 11 September Moscow offered to negotiate peace with them as well. None wished to deal with the Russian Bolsheviks, but they had little choice since the Allies had deferred recognition of these States to the Paris Conference.

Even faced with this, the Allies could not agree on recognition of, or support for, "Balticum". The French refused any help outright. Once more, on 24 September, the British Cabinet discussed Russia and decided: that formal independence remained the responsibility of the Peace Conference or the League of Nations; that no further military assistance could be given; and that the Baltic States were free to make peace with the Soviets as they saw fit.¹⁵⁴ Consequently the four newly independent nations agreed to meet at Dorpat at the end of September.¹⁵⁵ This prompted the War Office to prepare a paper suggesting that the North-West Army be withdrawn through Reval to South Russia to assist Denikin, otherwise it would be lost.¹⁵⁶ Although the Foreign Office agreed with the conclusions, both Lord Hardinge and Lord Curzon doubted the feasibility of the proposal.¹⁵⁷

Amid all these discussions, the impetuous Yudenitch launched his offensive over a wide front and without support on 12 October (see Map 8). At first the Whites made a rapid advance, and by 20 October Yudenitch was fighting in the suburbs of Petrograd, ten miles from its centre. However, this was the limit of his advance. Insufficient troops impeded supply to his army and his right flank was dangerously exposed.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the Whites had made strategic errors. Yudenitch had failed to cut all the railway lines to Petrograd, which allowed the Reds to send reinforcements. On 22 October Trotsky counter-attacked and

Yudenitch's army disintegrated. When the Finns flatly refused Yudenitch's desperate appeals for help, the White Army retreated across the Estonian border with the Bolsheviks in hot pursuit.¹⁵⁹

Trotsky wished to destroy the Whites by following them into Estonia, but cooler heads prevailed.¹⁶⁰ Lenin ordered the chase to end at the Estonian frontier, only demanding that the Estonians disarm the White Army as it crossed over.¹⁶¹ The Estonians complied and thus ended in ignominy another attempt by the anti-Bolsheviks to destroy the Russian Revolution. Lenin told Trotsky he wanted to "switch everything against Denikin".

While Yudenitch's ill-conceived thrust at Petrograd failed, Denikin continued his successful drive towards Moscow from South Russia. Simultaneously in Siberia, Kolchak was attempting to regain the initiative. Nevertheless, by late that October the complete end of Allied military intervention and the White resistance to Bolshevism was more than a possibility.

Notes

1. Eliot to FO, Telegram 293, Vladivostok, 19 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/46169.
2. Eliot to FO, Telegram 244, Vladivostok, 5 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/37541.
3. Morris to Polk, telegram, Tokyo, 19 April 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 334.
4. Morris to Polk, telegram, Tokyo, 12 April 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 332.
5. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 270–1.
6. Blair to WO, Telegram 2081, Vladivostok, 15 April 1919 covering Knox telegram, Ekaterinburg, 8 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/61248.
7. Eliot to FO, Telegram 292, Vladivostok, 19 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/46824.
8. IntSum 52 (Russia), 31 May 1919.
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10. Blair to WO, Telegram 1821, Vladivostok, 3 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/53270 and Harris to acting Secretary of State, Telegram 200, Vladivostok, 25 March 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 484.
11. Knox to WO, Telegram 1508, Vladivostok, 10 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/42853.
12. Blair to WO, Telegram 2081, Vladivostok, 15 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/61248.
13. Original British correspondence on the Railway issues is found in PRO FO 371/4101 and PRO/371/4102.
14. Eliot to FO, Telegram 278, Vladivostok, 17 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/45336.
15. Eliot to FO, Telegram 278, Vladivostok, 17 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/45336.
16. William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure 1918–1920* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, undated; reprint, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971), 190.
17. FO minute (initials GLS) dated 11 March 1919 to Eliot Telegram 244, Vladivostok, 5 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/37541.
18. Eliot to FO, Telegram 279, Vladivostok, 17 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/45337.
19. Leeper minute to Eliot Telegram 293, London, 23 March 1919 and FO to Balfour, letter #1790, 6168/w/57, London, 29 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/46168.
20. Greene to Curzon, letter 25, Tokyo, 21 January 1919 PRO FO 371/4101/32920 and Unterberger, 116.
21. Eliot to FO, Telegram 301, Vladivostok, 25 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/49384.
22. Eliot to FO, Telegram 282, Vladivostok, 18 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/45882.
23. FO minute 11 April 1919, London, to DMI to Curzon, letter B.M. 5223 (M.I.R.), London, 5 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/53647 and Lambert to Curzon, letter 13693/19,

- London, 24 March 1919 and FO to Eliot, Telegram 263, London, 5 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/46238.
24. Thwaites (DMI) to Curzon, letter BM 5223 (MIR), London, 5 April 1919, PRO FO 371/4095/53647.
 25. FO Minute (Selby) 30 April 1919 to Thwaites letter BM 5223 (MIR), London, 5 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/53647; Blair to WO, Telegram 2065, Vladivostok, 15 April 1919 appended to Robertson to WO, Telegram 370, Vladivostok, 15 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/60275.
 26. Blair to WO, Telegram D746, Vladivostok, 28 March 1919 PRO FO 371/4094/53341.
 27. Polk to Commission to Negotiate Peace, Telegram 1106, Washington, 13 March 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 481.
 28. Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Paris, 21 March 1919 *PWW* Vol. 56, 153.
 29. Woodrow Wilson to Lansing, letter, Paris, 24 March 1919 *PWW* Vol. 56, 235; Polk to Commission to Negotiate Peace, Telegram 1106, Washington, 13 March, FRUS Russia 1919, 481.
 30. Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Paris, 26 March 1919, *PWW* Vol. 56, 304.
 31. Robertson to FO, Telegram 384, Vladivostok, 19 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/61990.
 32. Robertson to FO, Telegram 405, Vladivostok, 30 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/70109.
 33. Bliss to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Paris, 9 May 1919, enclosure Telegram NDB 13, 7 May 1919, *PWW* Vol. 58, 570.
 34. Bliss to Woodrow Wilson, letter, Paris, 9 May 1919, enclosure Telegram NDB 13, 7 May 1919 *PWW* Vol. 58, 569 and Robertson to FO, Telegram 428, Vladivostok, 12 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/72390.
 35. Robertson to FO, Telegram 428, Vladivostok, 12 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/72390.
 36. Robertson to FO, Telegram 423, Vladivostok, 5 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/71845.
 37. Robertson to FO, Telegram 439, Vladivostok, 9 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/73032 and Blair to Knox, Telegram 2425, Vladivostok, 3 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/74129.
 38. Alston to FO, Telegram 220, Tokyo, 19 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/76602.
 39. Greene to FO, Telegram 1?6, Tokyo, 28 April 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/67677.
 40. Woodrow Wilson to Baker, telegram, Paris, 19 May 1919 *PWW* Vol. 59, 281.
 41. Churchill to Lloyd George, letter, Paris, 21 May 1919 *WSC Companion Docs*, Part I, 659–60.
 42. Curzon to Alston, Telegram 277, London, 24 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/78794.
 43. Council 4 Mtg, 23 May 1919 *PWW* Vol. 59, 436–42.
 44. Council 4 Mtg, 27 May 1919 *PWW* Vol. 59, 544–5 and Balfour to Curzon, telegram, Paris, 25 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/79103.
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 48. Eliot to FO, Telegram 452, Vladivostok, 15 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/76986.
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 50. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 170.
 51. Robertson to FO Telegram 511, Vladivostok, 2 June 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/86390.
 52. Grogan to WO, Telegram 3261, Vladivostok, 8 June 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/87108.
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 54. Llewellyn Lewis to Nell Lewis (wife), letter, Vladivostok, 6 April 1919 in author's private collection and Swettenham, 186.
 55. J. E. Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia, 1918–1919* (Ottawa: Access to History Publications, 1990), 11, 22.
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57. Elmsley to Radcliffe, letter, Vladivostok, 11 February 1919, Appendix VIII to CEF (Siberia) Report, 106.
58. IntSum 53 (Russia), 14 June 1919.
59. Gilbert, *WSC*, Vol. IV, 296–7.
60. Eliot to FO, Telegram 493, Vladivostok, 29 May 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/84128 and IntSum 53 (Russia), 14 June 1919.
61. IntSum 52 (Russia), 31 May 1919.
62. Gilbert, *WSC*, Vol. IV, 297.
63. WC Minutes 578A, 11 June 1919 PRO Cab 23/15.
64. WC Minutes 578A, 11 June 1919 PRO Cab 23/15.
65. Robertson to WO, Telegram 534, Vladivostok, 11 June 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/89419.
66. Robertson to Curzon, Telegram 547, Vladivostok, 15 June 1919 PRO FO 371/4095/94770.
67. Council 4 Mtg, 12 June 1919 at 11 am *PWW*, Vol. 60, 463.
68. Council 4 Mtg, 12 June 1919 at 4 pm *PWW*, Vol. 60, 477.
69. Gilbert, *WSC*, Vol. IV, 299.
70. Council 4 Mtg, 17 June 1919 at 4 pm *PWW*, Vol. 60, 637.
71. WC Minutes 580A, 18 June 1919 PRO Cab 23/15.
72. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 501.
73. Ironside, 154.
74. Ironside to WO, Telegram E 1486/E 1, Archangel, 19 June 1919 PRO 371/3993/92861 and WC Minutes 584, 24 June 1919 PRO Cab 23/10.
75. Kinvig, 196–7.
76. Ironside to WO, Telegram E 1486/E.1, 19 June 1919 PRO FO 371/3993/92861.
77. Kinvig, 197.
78. Kinvig, 197.
79. WC Minutes 585B, 27 June 1919 PRO Cab 23/15.
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81. Kinvig, 198.
82. Kinvig, 203.
83. Ironside, 158.
84. Ironside, 160.
85. Gilbert, *WSC*, Vol. IV, 301.
86. WC Minutes 590A, 9 July 1919 PRO Cab 23/15.
87. Maynard, 273.
88. Ironside to WO, Telegram E.1556/E.1, Archangel, 18 July 1919 PRO FO 371/3993/105249.
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93. Wilson to Churchill, letter, London, 26 July 1919 *WSC Companion Docs*, Part II, 764.
94. Churchill to King George V, letter, London, 26 July 1919 *WSC Companion Docs*, Part II, 765 and WC Minutes 601, 29 July 1919 PRO Cab 23/11.
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100. WC Minutes 601.
101. WC Minutes 601.
102. Gilbert, *WSC*, Vol. IV, 302.
103. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 414–16.

104. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 446–7; Stuart, 176; Roy MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia 1918–1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 263.
105. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 446.
106. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 215.
107. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 213.
108. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 262 and Polk to Lansing, Telegram 2445, Washington, 27 June 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 681.
109. Gough to WO, Telegram B.S. 97, Helsingfors, 28 June 1919 as paraphrased in *DBFP Vol. III* n. 1, 407.
110. Kettle, *Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco*, 483.
111. Bell to Curzon, Telegram 352, 30 June 1919 *DBFP Vol. III* Nos 286, 407.
112. WO to Gough, telegram, London, 1 July 1919 *DBFP Vol. III* No. 291 n. 1, 411–12.
113. Gough to Balfour, Telegram G 38, Helsingfors, 3 July 1919 *DBFP Vol. III* No. 291, 411–12 and Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 265.
114. Knox to WO, Telegram 3387, Vladivostok, 14 June 1919 PRO FO 371/4114/106413.
115. O'Reilly to FO, Telegram 662, Vladivostok, 24 July 1919 PRO FO 371/4114/108221.
116. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 266–7.
117. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 267–8. Ullman states that Marsh told the Whites in Russian “*My vas budem brosat – We will throw you aside*”.
118. Pirie-Gordon to Curzon, Telegram D.C. 11, Reval, 14 August 1919 *DBFP Vol. III* No. 372, 488–9.
119. Gregory, Minute 16 August 1919 to Pirie-Gordon Telegram D.C. 13, Reval, 14 August 1919 PRO FO 371/4027/116698; Curzon to Balfour, Telegram 1096, London, 18 August 1919 PRO FO 371/4027/116698; Gough to Balfour, Telegram G 174, Helsingfors, 17 August 1919 in *DBFB* Nos 383, 498.
120. Balfour to Curzon, Telegram 1285, Paris, 19 August 1919 *DBFP Vol. III* Nos 391, 514.
121. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 270.
122. WC Minutes 617, 19 August 1919 and WC Minutes 619, 20 August 1919 Cab 23/12.
123. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 271.
124. O'Reilly to FO, Telegram 636, Vladivostok, 17 July 1919 PRO FO 371/4114/104801.
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126. Batoum to WO, Telegram 140819, Batoum, 23 August 1919 PRO FO 371/3965/120600.
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130. Kinvig, 239.
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132. Maynard, 296.
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135. Davis to Lansing, Telegram 2798, London, 14 August 1919, FRUS Russia 1919, 651.
136. Hoare to FO, Telegram 520, Archangel, 10 August 1919 PRO FO 371/3993/114718.
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148. Kinvig, 281.
149. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 282; Kinvig, 282.
150. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 127.
151. Kinvig, 279.
152. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 127.
153. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 128.
154. WC Minutes 633, 24 September 1919 PRO Cab 23/12.
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157. Hardinge, Minute to WO Staff Paper, “Disposal of Russian North West Army ...”, London, 10 October 1919 PRO FO 371/4027/138182.
158. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 134.
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160. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 134.
161. Ullman, *Anglo–Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 285.

14

Red Triumph and White Humiliation, July 1919–November 1920

By autumn 1919 the evacuation of North Russia meant that Allied hopes of bringing down the Bolshevik regime had failed. The Paris Peace Conference had concluded in June with the Treaty of Versailles, but there was still no common Allied policy for Russia and there was no will to find one any longer. The world was tired of constant conflict and had no desire to involve itself any longer in a Russian civil war. Yet it still continued.

Throughout July and August 1919 the Siberian army had been driven back in the face of Red attacks. Kolchak's replacement of General Gajda had left the Czechs unwilling to fight the Bolsheviks any longer.¹ The Red Army continued to drive the Whites east.² The more defeats Kolchak suffered, the closer it drove him, out of desperation, towards the reactionary elements. In return, this pushed the liberal elements in Siberia closer to the Bolsheviks and these liberals were secretly preparing for a rising against the Kolchak government.³ British agents in the region had reported this to London. The Foreign Office knew that the Admiral's end was near.⁴

Adding to Kolchak's travails was an announcement that the United States would withdraw funding for the Trans-Siberian Railroad if the Omsk government did not become more liberal towards the populace.⁵ Nevertheless, since Gajda's dismissal, the man with the most influence on Kolchak was his Chief of Staff, General Lebedev, a young, self-confident, but incompetent officer who was a leader in the reactionary camp.⁶ His ascendancy brought about a rapid turn to the extreme right, supported by a handful of reactionary senior officers. This combination changed nothing tactically or strategically. The retreats continued. Knox had little hope the Siberian army would offer an effective resistance in the face of the advancing Reds.⁷ Despite this view, Kolchak insisted on continuing the fight but agreed to review the composition of his government in consultation with peasant delegations once the current battle was decided. Nevertheless, on 18 August the last of the British Hampshire Regiment left Omsk for Vladivostok, leaving only Russians and Czechs.⁸ Earlier, the War Office had ordered its two regiments to leave Russia as soon as shipping became available.⁹ The Canadians had already departed and now the British were abandoning Siberia. On 7 September the Middlesex Regiment sailed from Vladivostok, leaving the Hampshires as the only British unit in Siberia capable of fighting.¹⁰

Rebellion against Kolchak

The Allied military support was trickling away with time. In addition, there was a concerted underground movement working for Kolchak's overthrow. This movement was able to garner qualified backing from some of the Allies, including the United States. One of the movement's leaders was the recently dismissed Czech General Gajda.

Gajda was bitter over his firing. On his travels to Vladivostok, he was approached by the Social Revolutionary Party seeking his help to toss out Kolchak. He first strongly rebuffed the offer, although there is evidence that not all the SRs wanted him as their military head.¹¹ Then, on reaching Vladivostok, when again approached he joined the rebels. The US Ambassador to Japan apparently encouraged this anti-Kolchak group.¹² When Gajda told British Brigadier General J. M. Blair, Knox's assistant at Vladivostok, of his plans to oust the Admiral, the sympathetic brigadier passed it on to William E. O'Reilly, the new British High Commissioner.¹³ O'Reilly, now believing that the US government supported the anti-Kolchak movement, expressed guarded approval.¹⁴

Back in London, Churchill was very upset at O'Reilly's actions and complained to Curzon:

Kolchak's battle is going well, but I am greatly alarmed at the way in which our representatives are lending themselves to discussing his being undermined by a revolution at Vladivostok. I do hope that explicit instructions will be given to them to continue to support Kolchak ...¹⁵

Sir John Tilley, the Chief Clerk at the Foreign Office, thought Britain "should stick to Kolchak so long as he remains in power ... Mr. O'Reilly's flaw [is] ... trying to ride two horses."¹⁶ Curzon then warned O'Reilly to do nothing to weaken Kolchak's position.¹⁷

Knox was also incensed at O'Reilly's attitude and considered him too inexperienced to make any decisions.¹⁸ Although sympathetic to the rebels, Knox's assistant, Blair, was also worried about a revolt. He advised strict neutrality for both British trainers and the Russian trainees at nearby Russian Island. However, he foolishly told General S. N. Rozanov, Kolchak's deputy at Vladivostok, that the trainees could be used as the Russian saw fit.¹⁹ On 18 September Rozanov moved the Cossacks into Vladivostok in anticipation of an insurrection. Yet Rozanov's men were completely out of control. Their actions resulted in the deaths of a US and a Czech soldier at the hands of Cossack officers, as well as the kidnapping and murder of a Russian officer.²⁰ This led to the Allied Council in Vladivostok ordering Rozanov to remove all the White forces from Vladivostok by 29 September. Rozanov was ready to comply, but Kolchak refused, considering the ultimatum as interference in internal Russian affairs. He ordered Rozanov to keep the troops *in situ*.²¹ Knox also reacted angrily. He thought Blair to be responsible for some of this situation and so removed him from his command.²² Separately, he wired a scathing note of censure about O'Reilly to London. This incensed the diplomats at

the Foreign Office.²³ However, Lord Hardinge did little save to say that Knox was very difficult.²⁴ Clearly British agencies in London were not cooperating and there was substantial disagreement between British military and diplomatic missions in Siberia. Knox remained a powerful influence in the region and he had an unremitting faith in Kolchak. While the diplomatic spats occurred in Kolchak's rear and the anti-Kolchak plotting continued in Vladivostok, the White Russians achieved some success on the battlefield. For a short time, the retreat halted.

Kolchak went on the offensive in the latter half of September and began to push the Red Army back. The counter-offensive worked for a time because the Bolsheviks were exhausted and what reserves they had were being used to face Denikin.²⁵ However, some of the Allies knew Kolchak's victories were only a temporary success. The Cossacks had not manoeuvred to destroy the Soviet army, which could now await reinforcements from the south as they regrouped behind the Tobol River.²⁶ The Admiral had no reserves and the shortage of supplies condemned future operations to failure (see Map 5).

White Success and Failure in South Russia

In the South, Denikin continued his successful advance towards Moscow as well as capturing the Ukraine. However, his eastern push was less successful. Throughout August heavy Bolshevik resistance had forced the Whites back towards Tsaritsin. This strategic retreat prevented the Whites from cutting the Saratov–Astrakhan Railway and allowed Red reinforcements to continue to arrive and strengthen the Bolsheviks facing him.²⁷

Yet in September the west wing of Denikin's offensive swept through the Ukraine to the Romanian border.²⁸ He accomplished this because the Communists were preoccupied with Ukrainian Nationalists.²⁹ However, Denikin refused to work with Petlyura, the Ukrainian leader, who he considered to be a traitor to Russia despite the fact that he was keeping the Bolsheviks from effectively fighting the Whites.³⁰ With this attitude, Denikin was forced to keep some of his troops in the Ukraine, strength that was desperately needed on his northern front. This was telling, as much of the gains made by the White Volunteer Army of South Russia were in the wrong direction. Consolidation to the west and south in the Crimean peninsula had slowed progress towards Moscow. However, when British troops arrived to help, Denikin stepped up his northern advance. The British tank battalion sent to train the Russians ended up leading their protégés in battle and the RAF squadrons soon found themselves supporting ground troops by bombing the Reds as the Whites advanced.³¹ Given this aid, Denikin moved steadily north, capturing Orel on 13 October 1919, only 250 miles from the Red capital.³²

On 14 October, hearing of Denikin's victories, Churchill sent a gloating six-page memorandum to Cabinet. Typically, he wrote, "The Bolshevik system was from the beginning doomed to perish in consequence of its antagonism to the fundamental principles of civilised society."³³ Denikin, he was sure, would triumph. But it was not to be. Denikin's offensive suddenly stalled on 15 October because

of critical internal flaws. There was no depth to the White forces. Denikin's front was now grossly over-stretched from Romania in the west to the Volga River in the east, with no reserves. In his rear there was unrest from Ukrainian Nationalists, as well as from the population of Daghestan.³⁴ Denikin's leadership followed the Tsarist methods of driving his men rather than leading them. His passion for a Greater Russia, restored to its pre-war size and influence, would not permit the existence of independent Baltic and Trans-Caucasian states.³⁵ But ideological and character weaknesses aside, the White general simply did not have enough manpower to secure his supply lines or counter any concerted Red Army attack.

Sitting in Moscow, Lenin was soon aware of his adversary's shortcomings. In September he switched his assaults from the left flank to Denikin's extended front. He concentrated his reserves north of Orel, which included shock Latvian and Estonian Bolshevik troops. After continuous defeats throughout the spring and summer, by autumn 1919 the Reds decisively reversed the trend and began to force the White armies back. Mutinies and desertions were also fatal for Denikin. On 18 October several units of Cossacks at Orenburg switched allegiance and were immediately drafted into the Bolshevik Army on Lenin's direct orders.³⁶ Meanwhile, in Daghestan the populace revolted against Denikin's rule. As a result, he was forced to divert 15,000 troops south and away from the advance on Moscow.³⁷ Just as he weakened his front, the Reds struck their fatal blow. The shock force of Baltic Bolsheviks launched a fierce attack on Orel and recaptured the city on 20 October.³⁸ Four days later Semen Budenny's Red cavalry defeated General K. K. Mamontov's White troopers, capturing Voronezh.³⁹ Worse events occurred in the south.

With Denikin preoccupied with fighting around Orel, Nestor Makhno, the Ukrainian anarchist, attacked in Denikin's rear areas, cutting off the anti-Bolsheviks at the front from their supply bases.⁴⁰ The White retreat soon turned into a rout from which it would not recover. On 15 November Denikin was soundly defeated at Kastorskaya and on the 17th the Reds entered Kursk. With Kastorskaya in their hands, the Bolshevik cavalry drove a deep wedge between Denikin's Volunteer Army and the Don Cossacks to the east. This was the final blow to the morale of Mamontov's cavalry.⁴¹ Yet, sitting in remote London, Churchill still fostered hope that Denikin would produce a White victory, but he needed accurate information.

On 19 November the Secretary of War asked Major-General Herbert C. Holman, Chief of the British military mission to Denikin, whether the Bolshevik advance was "a desperate effort which cannot last long, or ... evidence of really superior power on their side?"⁴² Churchill wanted his military mission chief to ascertain what reserves Denikin had and if he could now attack. But in a rare and perhaps prophetic addendum, he instructed Holman, "If he [Denikin] has no good chance of winning or of getting to Moscow, you should carefully consider whether we ought not to advise negotiation having as their object the maintenance and consolidation of territories now held by the anti-Bolshevik forces."⁴³ Obviously Churchill was grasping at straws, hoping to gain time by negotiation in order to resume hostilities at a more opportune occasion. Moreover, he really was

advocating the partition of traditional Russia, something neither side was likely to accept.

In his reply, Holman said that Denikin was preparing a counter-attack with six cavalry divisions, which, he believed, would restore the Whites' fortune. For three days Churchill waited anxiously for word of the Russian victory. On 11 December he asked whether the decisive battle had taken place. He was apprehensive that it had miscarried.⁴⁴ And his instinct, this time, was right. Denikin's forces were in constant and chaotic retreat. Still, Churchill would not accept defeat and urged Denikin to carry on, giving the beleaguered Russian Commander false hope promising that the French might be on the way since they were more anti-Bolshevik than he was.⁴⁵ On the 12th, the Reds captured Kharkov, and by the end of the year the Bolsheviks were on the Black Sea.

However, while Churchill was exhorting Denikin to carry on that December, Lloyd George and Clemenceau met to discuss Churchill's request for further help for Denikin. Both prime ministers agreed unanimously "Not to enter into any further commitments, as to furnishing assistance to the anti-Bolshevik elements in Russia" and "that a strong Poland was in the interests of the Entente Powers".⁴⁶ This last was a strong warning to Denikin that the old Russian provinces, now independent, would stay that way.

All Churchill's efforts for Denikin were for naught. Finally, on 11 January 1920 he told General Holman that he saw no possibility for victory: "Kolchak and Yudenitch are finished." The primary blame for this, he confided, was the inaction of both the United States and France. Still, Churchill told Holman that this was only his personal opinion and not official British policy.⁴⁷

At this point, Churchill was beginning to accept hard reality. The best one could expect now was a defensive stalemate, with "The Crimea as probably the last place of refuge".⁴⁸ On 14 January 1920 he informed Lloyd George that he had ordered the British Mission with Denikin to concentrate at Novorossiysk and asked the Admiralty to send ships in case an emergency evacuation was required.⁴⁹ Such bad news was seen as good news to the British Cabinet and the same day they unanimously approved Churchill's contingency plan.⁵⁰ Complete retreat in Russia was now the order of march. Churchill's efforts fared no better for Kolchak, whose fortunes declined inexorably at the same time as Denikin's.

Kolchak's Defeat

October saw the resurrection of the Bolshevik advance in Siberia forcing Kolchak back. The exhausted Siberian White army was unable to withstand the pressure and retreated along the entire front.⁵¹ By the end of October, Kolchak decided to send government departments and the gold reserves to Irkutsk, 1500 miles to the east, but the Ministers were to remain as long as possible in Omsk.⁵² On 30 October the Red Army captured Petropavlovsk, opening the route to Omsk (see Map 5).⁵³ The British consul there, Sir Robert Hodgson, saw no prospect of any more White successes. Besides, there was little the Allies could do to support the Admiral. The Americans and the Japanese would not venture west of Lake Baikal,

and the last of the British forces in Siberia, the Hampshire Regiment, sailed from Vladivostok on 1 November.⁵⁴

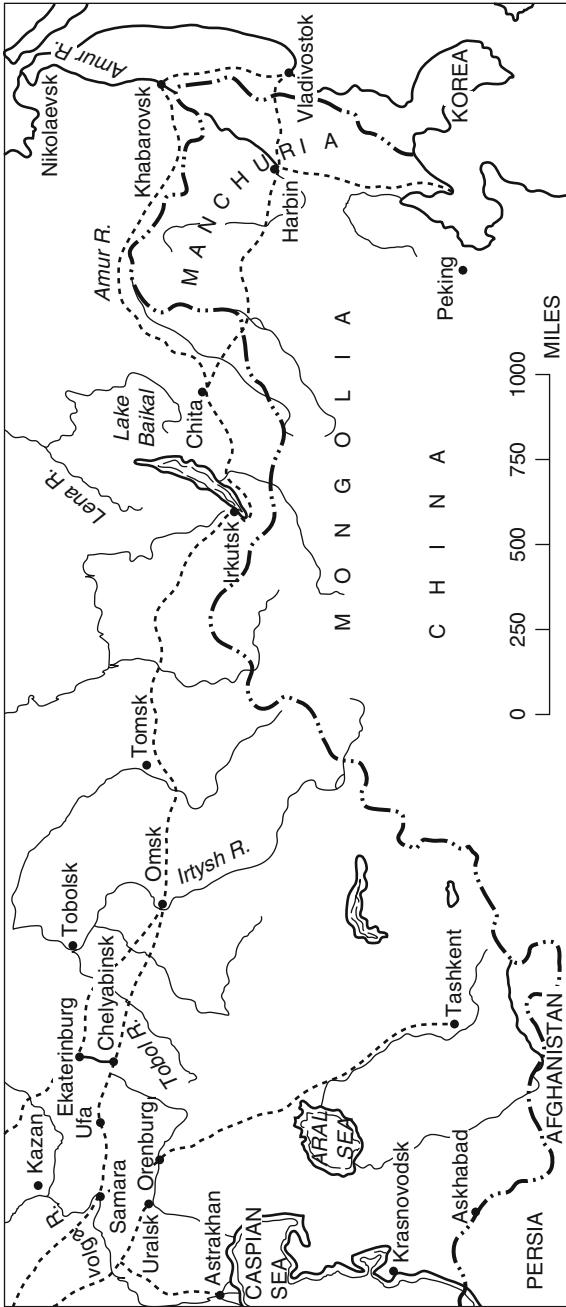
A week later, Hodgeson and Knox left Omsk with the other Allied diplomats.⁵⁵ Kolchak stayed until the Bolsheviks were about to seize the city. On 14 November he narrowly escaped in his train to Kainsk just as the Reds entered his Siberian capital (see Map 9).⁵⁶ With Kolchak in utter rout, the Social Revolutionaries allied with Gajda in Vladivostok seized the opportunity to overthrow the Admiral. With the loss of Omsk and rumour of a coup attempt, General Rozanov tried to prevent it by arresting Gajda. He was dissuaded by the intimation that the entire Czech force in the city would rise to Gajda's defence. In a move to overawe the Czech general, Rozanov's deputy, Cossack Ataman Ivan Kalmykov, moved his armoured train beside Gajda's and stifled any uprising for a time.⁵⁷ But in mid-November 1919 chaos reigned supreme as the Whites fell back. Given the rout and having no guiding policy, most of the remaining Allies quickly scrambled to get out.

Nevertheless, Gajda's group did attempt a coup. On 17 November, it was initially successful when they seized the railway station.⁵⁸ The next day, Rozanov employed Kalmykov's Cossacks again, backed by Japanese troops, to put down the insurrection.⁵⁹ Gajda was captured and was expelled from Russia. Anarchy gripped Siberia. In Vladivostok, only the harsh methods employed by the reactionary Whites, nominally as representatives of the Kolchak government, prevented all-out fighting. Nevertheless, the final contortions of the Whites in Siberia had commenced and the unpopularity of Kolchak grew in leaps and bounds.⁶⁰

In an attempt to stabilize the situation and renew confidence in the White government, Kolchak ordered Victor Pepelaieff, his prime minister, to form a coalition with the socialists and the Cossack atamans.⁶¹ It was too little, too late. Having ordered the new government, the desperate Russian was unwilling to have his own powers curtailed. While discussions continued with Kolchak, still separated from his ministers, other factions were consolidating.⁶² And the Whites continued to retreat east.

The Czechoslovak Legion, which was supposed to be escorting and guarding Kolchak, blocked him from rejoining his faltering administration at Irkutsk.⁶³ Without the Admiral's presence, his ministers were unable to stabilize the government. Finally, under considerable French pressure, the Czechs allowed Kolchak's train to proceed, but his arrival at Irkutsk was immaterial to the durability of his government. On Christmas Eve 1919, while he was still on route, the Social Revolutionaries combined with the Mensheviks to overthrow the White government, deposing Kolchak's ministers.⁶⁴ The rebels took control of the railway station, preventing the passage of trains east. Kolchak arrived in the midst of the rebellion on 27 December.⁶⁵ The day before, with everything collapsing, Kolchak's staunchest ally, Knox, perhaps as a signal of the end, hurriedly sailed for Britain from Vladivostok.⁶⁶

To prevent a complete disruption of the only line of communication, the Russians agreed with the Allies to neutralize the railway by placing the section from Krasnoyarsk to Misovaya under Czech control. After that point, the railway came under US control.⁶⁷ Into this chaotic mix, Washington sent General Graves



Map 9 Siberia 1919

Source: Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol. II*, 3. © 1968 Princeton University Press. 1996 Renewed PUP reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

a top-secret alert: “You are informed very confidentially that it is expected that within a few days you will receive orders for the withdrawal of your entire command. Keep matter very secret until orders are received by you.”⁶⁸ Meanwhile Irkutsk remained chaotic.

The Czechs attempted to control the railway and to eject the insurgents from the Irkutsk station. Fighting was heavy. When the Japanese-backed Semenov tried to push his armoured trains into the city to oust the Social Revolutionaries, the Allies sidelined the engines for fear of more violence. But it was only successful for one day, and so fighting continued in Irkutsk and White soldiers joined the insurgents in large numbers.⁶⁹

With the White government facing the Social Revolutionaries’ coup, three of the ministers pleaded with the Allies to safeguard both Kolchak and the gold reserves.⁷⁰ They also wanted the Allies to fight to hold Irkutsk as a base for future White Russian efforts to stop the Bolshevik advance. With everyone, save the Japanese, scurrying to quit Siberia, it was flatly refused. The Russians then asked that the Allies act as neutral mediators between themselves and the Social Revolutionary rebels. They agreed.

During the negotiations, the mediators were stymied by the intransigence of the Kolchak ministers and their inability to face reality, while at the same time the Allies were impressed with the reasonable attitude of the revolutionaries. Given Kolchak’s stubbornness, nothing was achieved and the frustrated Allies withdrew. The now deserted Admiral frantically took his only option.⁷¹ On 4 January 1920 he resigned, named General Denikin as his successor and asked for Allied protection to get him and, significantly, the Russian gold out of the country.⁷² But the Reds had been eagerly seeking both the Admiral and the gold in their advance eastward.

Previously, while still travelling to Irkutsk, the Bolsheviks had approached the Czech forces guarding Kolchak’s train, offering safe passage in exchange for the Czechs surrendering the Admiral to them.⁷³ The Czechs refused this overture and so both the Admiral and the Czechs arrived in tumultuous Irkutsk. However, on 15 January they did hand Kolchak and the Russian gold over to the Social Revolutionary insurgents in the city, on the orders of French General Janin, who was nominally their commander. Apparently the Frenchman did so because of a threat of a general strike that would have prevented him and his retinue from escaping the city.⁷⁴ Put simply, Janin bowed to chaos, likely out of fear. Earlier, Janin had been a signatory to an Allied agreement guaranteeing “safe conduct by Allied troops of Admiral Kolchak to some place decided later by Governments.”⁷⁵ Janin also held a personal dislike of the Admiral since the Russian had refused to submit White forces to the Frenchman’s command.⁷⁶

With the Admiral’s arrest, any hope of a White victory in Siberia vanished. The Social Revolutionary government could not maintain control and had no real support. The rebellious soldiers soon deserted or joined the Bolsheviks. As they lost control, a deputation of five Social Revolutionaries left Irkutsk for the west with a mandate to negotiate peace with the Reds at all costs and on any terms dictated by them.⁷⁷ The political and military situations in Siberia were changing

as fast as Russians could change their allegiances to save themselves. And amid this chaos, the Allied exodus continued.

US Withdrawal from Siberia

On 8 January 1920 General Graves suddenly gave notice to the Japanese that all US military would be withdrawn from Siberia almost immediately.⁷⁸ This came as a shock to the Japanese, who had been negotiating with the US government on new troop dispositions.⁷⁹ The Japanese viewed the announcement as an insult, but in fact they had been warned of the US desire to pull out for several months. That notice was part of an official Washington objection to Tokyo the previous August that the Japanese must control Semenov's marauding Cossacks or the United States would withdraw from Siberia.⁸⁰

Although at the time the Japanese government had given no formal answer to the protest note, the Cossacks along the railway had continued their murderous attacks with secret Japanese backing.⁸¹ The United States even sent a second note in October demanding a reply to their August warning.⁸² Two weeks later, Tokyo finally replied with a mixture of vague promises to do something, but a definite assertion that the Japanese military was going to carry out the defence of the railway as it saw fit.⁸³

The exchange of official notes between Washington and Tokyo did produce serious debate in the Japanese Cabinet throughout the autumn of 1919. Despite major pressure from the military to increase its contingent, the Japanese prime minister managed to maintain current levels.⁸⁴ Negotiations continued with the United States throughout December, but the United States feared that remaining in Siberia would eventually lead to outright conflict with the Bolsheviks.⁸⁵ Powers in Washington knew that there was no way they could convince the American people to support another war; but this was not explained to the Japanese, nor to the other Allies. Instead, the United States claimed they had done all they could.⁸⁶ The United States' formal withdrawal announcement of 8 January 1920 came as a complete surprise to Japan. And four days later the first US troops left.

The US government was bitterly criticized by the Japanese press and politicians for its double-dealing and discourtesy. On 3 February Japan asserted that geographical proximity dictated its presence in Siberia. The political chaos there endangered Japan's interests in the region, as well as in Manchuria and Korea. For these reasons it was unable to pull out its troops immediately.⁸⁷ None of this affected the continued exodus of the Americans. On 1 April 1920, the last US contingent sailed from Vladivostok.

The US–Japanese interaction and diplomatic controversy had no effect on the steady advance of the Red Army eastward. All along the rail line, the Bolsheviks confronted the Czechs who were guarding the railway. The local Soviet in Irkutsk acted independently and refused to obey any orders from Tomsk. The Czech battalion in the town considered forcibly ejecting the local Bolsheviks and taking control, even though the Reds were stronger but not yet organized. The Czechs hoped to regain possession of Kolchak.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Social Revolutionaries

in Vladivostok once again rebelled against the reactionary Whites.⁸⁹ Finally, on 31 January the rebels took complete control and peacefully occupied the port.⁹⁰ Significantly, these were not Bolsheviks, but rather Social Revolutionaries and other White elements opposed to Kolchak's reactionary officers.

Meanwhile, in Irkutsk, Kolchak was still a prisoner under the control of the insurgents despite the presence of Czech troops. But on 30 January the Bolsheviks swarmed into the city and seized the Admiral.⁹¹ On 7 February, fearing that a rescue of Kolchak was imminent, the Bolsheviks convened a people's court at two in the morning, found him guilty of treason and sentenced him to death. He was shot at 5 a.m. along with his prime minister, Pepelaieff.⁹² The same day, in far away Crimea, the Bolsheviks entered Odessa.⁹³ It was an ignominious end of more than just the White Admiral.

With the execution of Kolchak, the White forces in Siberia were in complete disarray. The US announcement that they were quitting Siberia completely forced Britain's hand. In early February, the Army Council decided to withdraw the whole British military mission in Russia's Far East without delay.⁹⁴ Allied intervention was ending, not with fanfare, but in dribs and drabs. Chaos was rampant and whatever hopes there had been were vanquished in its midst. Britain decided to cut its losses.

White Retreat in South Russia

At the end of January 1920 the British Cabinet was alarmed to hear of the 50,000 Russian refugees fleeing the Bolshevik juggernaut in South Russia. Only prompt British military aid could save Denikin. But the Cabinet was not prepared to do more. They quickly decided "That no British troops should be moved to defend any Russian ports or territory."⁹⁵ Five days later, on 3 February, they also warned Denikin that Britain could no longer assist any anti-Bolshevik combination.⁹⁶ In turn, Churchill immediately notified General Holman that no further British aid would be forthcoming and that Holman was authorized to show Denikin his telegram. Yet Churchill would not let go and he privately ordered his mission chief to "Put these matters to Denikin directly from me and assure him ... as long as he can maintain a reasonable front, our undertakings in regard to the final packet will be strictly carried out."⁹⁷ Despite direct Cabinet decisions to the contrary, Churchill still offered aid, hoping for a Denikin victory. Some might say he flaunted the principle of Cabinet authority and collective responsibility. But there was no turning aside the Red Army and British assistance could not continue. A month later, General Radcliffe advised the CIGS "to withdraw the whole of Holman's mission now before the situation gets even worse".⁹⁸ The CIGS promptly agreed and quickly wrote to his minister the same day, noting "that loyalty to our men should over-ride all sentimental feelings for Russia".⁹⁹

It was time. Red General Budenny crossed the Don at the beginning of March 1920 and outflanked Denikin isolating the Whites at the port of Novorossiysk.¹⁰⁰ Evacuation of the survivors was all that could be accomplished. The British

military maintained order during the retreat, but Novorossiysk was described as a “foretaste of hell”, with typhus raging in the city.¹⁰¹ Early in the morning of 27 March 1920, the last ships sailed from Novorossiysk, carrying 10,000 of Denikin’s army and the remainder of the Allied soldiers. In the previous 48 hours, ships had evacuated 60,000 people, but in the end, masses of refugees and the majority of loyal Don Cossacks who had remained true to the White cause were left to fend for themselves.¹⁰² The Dons fought the Red cavalry man to man to the end. However, Churchill was determined that Denikin would not suffer Kolchak’s fate and ensured his safe evacuation.¹⁰³

The last region of Russia where Allied military intervention had occurred was now evacuated.¹⁰⁴ Intervention in the South, as elsewhere, was again a failure. Having rescued Denikin from Novorossiysk, on 31 March the British Cabinet made it clear to him that the fight was over and he should make peace immediately for the sake of all Russians. The British would offer to be intermediaries for such talks.¹⁰⁵ On 4 April Denikin formally resigned as Commander of South Russia in favour of General Wrangle.¹⁰⁶ All expected the Baron to negotiate with the Bolsheviks. In fact, that was Wrangle’s intention when he accepted the leadership. He held the Crimean peninsula and expected to make it a safe haven while negotiations progressed with the Bolsheviks. Yet stubbornly he would not negotiate directly with the Reds and expected the British to carry out the task.¹⁰⁷

On 24 April 1920 Curzon told Admiral de Robeck, the British High Commissioner at Constantinople, that negotiations were not making progress with Chicherin and that Britain was unable to agree to terms with him over Wrangle and his army. The White Russian should talk for himself. However, Wrangle’s supporters considered such negotiations treason and so the fighting carried on under Wrangle’s leadership, but without overt Allied help.¹⁰⁸ Wrangle held his own until October 1920, winning back large tracts of South Russia because the Bolsheviks were still fighting both the Poles and Ukrainians. However, once the Polish conflict had been settled, the Reds turned all their power onto Wrangle.¹⁰⁹ In October they drove the Baron into the Crimea. On 8 November 1920 the Soviet army launched a major offensive, and two days later broke through into that peninsula.¹¹⁰ The French asked for British naval help to evacuate some 80,000 White Russians, but the Cabinet flatly refused.¹¹¹ And so Great Britain washed its hands completely of Wrangle and the White Russians. With no other choice, the cornered Wrangle ordered his men to disperse to the ports where they were evacuated under French protection and sailed to Tunisia where they were interned.¹¹²

The Russian Civil War was over. The Japanese remained in eastern Siberia until 1922, gradually retreating to Sakhalin Island. The Bolsheviks allowed a separate government in the Pacific provinces for a few years, but eventually these same governments voluntarily disbanded and joined the Soviet Union (as the Bolsheviks had begun calling the remainder of the Russian Empire). Allied intervention had been a long drawn-out failure and its legacy was a Russia that distrusted and detested the West. It remains to determine what one can conclude about this diplomacy of chaos.

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15

Conclusion

The Allied intervention into Russia was part of a historical continuum springing out of the Great War, which witnessed the death of Tsarist Russia and the birth of the Soviet regime. A culminating event of that Allied involvement came in 1919 from the negotiations in Paris for the Versailles Peace Treaty. That Treaty ended the largest and bloodiest conflict in history and left the world fundamentally changed, with new orders shoving against the old. Even more, it left the world weary of conflict and confused about what to do internationally. The Allies' Russian involvement tested the very nature and practice of alliances, and it did so at a variety of levels. At its simplest, it is illustrative of how nations that ostensibly ally themselves for a common goal actually work or do not work together. It shows the various parameters of diplomacy and national self-interest. The Russian intervention also demonstrates how individuals can profoundly affect the course of events. For in the end, it is people who make the decisions and people who carry out those decisions.

From the perspective of almost a century hence, it is difficult to understand how the Allies' Russian intervention of 1918–20 could end in such a tragic way. The experiences of alliances and coalitions that span those of the Second World War and the existence of the long enduring alliance structures of NATO and NORAD show that international alliances do work. While not without their own difficulties, they have functioned with far more success and much less obvious chaos than the Allied Intervention experienced. But the decision-makers of this earlier period had no such precedents to go by, nor could they be instructed by the collective historical experience available to us. Moreover, they had just fought through four years of mutual slaughter and national exhaustion. During that conflict we know that they did not resolve their alliance cooperation quickly or easily or, arguably, even adequately. In this situation, then, one can understand how the Russian involvement developed into the chaotic diplomacy and failure that it did. The Allied Intervention demonstrates what can happen when adequate thought and a collective spirit of cooperation is lacking, especially when decisions are made based on personal beliefs and national goals, while suffering from inadequate, incorrect or just plain absent intelligence information.

The Triple Entente, which, with the United States, won the Great War, did not act as an ideal coalition. As a result, the Allies never developed a single concerted policy on Russia. This led to there being no common goal or “mission” for Russia that was accepted by all participants, which left individual commanders to develop strategies to fit local conditions. In some regions this led to unintended expansion of the operation and in others no set goal to work towards. No one member of the alliance had such overwhelming power in 1919 that it could dominate the relationship. Nor was it the norm to have an alliance of such strong equals that no single nation could control the policies and overall operation of the War. The surviving Great Powers were too equal in strength and influence to defer to any other partner. Self-interest, often disguised, dominated each nation’s strategy. With hidden agendas came chaos, a state also imposed by circumstance.

And chaos, above all, characterized the Allied intervention. Much of it resulted from the Great War and the follow-on Russian civil war. And the Great War was the driving force for intervention, until it wasn’t. Rapidly changing events in highly fluid situations plagued all players. Even if all the leading actors in the intervention had been equally prescient, they were all cursed by poor, wrong or non-existent information, often filtered through particular personalities, individual self-interests and transmitted by feeble and slow communication systems. Unified strategic decisions were nearly impossible. Political and military leaders of all the Great Powers were forced to deal with constant turmoil. Most dealt with it reactively, scrambling to find answers and take actions to slow or stem its effects. All tried to use it or to shape matters to their own ends. In turn, such political leaders’ decisions shaped their nations’ strategic perceptions and aims.

Nations working together have their own national interests. Each has its own strategic goals and, when there is resistance from allies, each goes its own way, usually secretly. Equally, each country may endeavour to change or pressure other allies to go along with them. Moreover, when individual national interests clash with the collective alliance goals, some will try to promote what they consider to be the only correct solution. Self-perceptions of power also play a role. Senior and junior allies may operate differently and for different reasons. The Great Powers, in trying to re-establish the Eastern Front in Russia in 1918, illustrated many of these things. A case-in-point was the United States, which first tried to prevent any Allied military intervention, and then, when that became inevitable, refused to cooperate with its Allies in Siberia and attempted to restrict US troop employment in North Russia. At a more strategic level, the US administration agreed to have Japan in overall command in Siberia, but then neglected to direct its own commander to submit to Japanese leadership. Operational chaos was the inevitable result.

Other Allies fared no better. Japan looked at intervention as a means to control Siberia for its own national purposes. It agreed to intervention originally and ostensibly to assist the Czech Legion escape Siberia, but refused to send troops west of Lake Baikal to fight the Bolsheviks who were trying to prevent the Legion’s exit. In addition, the Japanese actively supported rebels against the established anti-Bolshevik government of Admiral Kolchak, rendering impossible the avowed

purpose of the operation. Japan consented to limit its troop strength to that of the US contingent, but immediately sent double that number in order to dominate the Russian Maritime Provinces. This action alone spawned a heightened US distrust of its Asian Ally's intentions. Japan wished to control Siberia to counter the historic and ongoing US economic incursions into China. America's support of the "open door" trade policy in China directly conflicted with Japan's wish to monopolize trade in its sphere of influence. This rivalry prevented the two nations from working together to establish a stable anti-Bolshevik government in Siberia, something Japan could not permit if it was to obtain the dominance it desired. But Japan was not the unified nation it appeared to be. The governing elite was divided over its approach to both Russia and the United States. Although the Army appeared to be in charge in Siberian operations, Prime Minister Terauchi and others were at odds with the General Staff and were able to resist enlarging Japanese military forces in Siberia late in 1919. There were conflicts in the Japanese government on how to work with the United States, but there was no consensus other than to allow the military to continue its operations in Russia. This was only one part of the chaotic nature of the Allied intervention.

Because of their ignorance of Bolshevik methods and goals, the United States saw the two Russian factions as equals in the struggle, but they viewed the anti-Bolsheviks as reactionaries ready to return to the tyrannical government of the Tsars. For this reason, the United States would not support Kolchak against the rebels in Siberia. National interests submerged the collective Allied goal. In Britain's case, it not only worked for its own interests, it also clashed with the interests of parts of its own Empire.

Britain actively sought Canadian troops for Russian service, but ignored Canada's demand for their withdrawal at the earliest opportunity. When faced with the inevitable, Britain then pressured the Canadian politicians to reconsider or delay withdrawal. However, Canada, in its turn, flexed its independence and insisted on removing its soldiers on a specific schedule, thus strengthening its ability both to act as an independent nation on the international stage and to exert its strength within the Empire. This was part of the Great War legacy where Canada had consistently worked towards independent action in its own national interests.

It was Sir Robert Borden's ambition for Canada to be able to act independently internationally while at the same time being a leader within the British Empire.¹ Britain's need of Canadian soldiers for the Russian intervention enabled Borden to exercise more independence by establishing the ground rules under which Canadians would participate. He demonstrated this new national self-interest even more when he told Lloyd George and the War Office exactly when the Canadians would evacuate Russia as well as the fact that Canada would side with the United States in arguments over Imperial actions. All of this predated the usual historical interpretation that a much more individualistic Canadian foreign policy only emerged in 1921.² Clearly such a direction was exercised well before that date in Ottawa's attitude in its Russian ventures. Nonetheless, Canada's actions in Russia were also affected by serious and potentially grave domestic

considerations. Already horrified by Canadian losses in Flanders and France, most Canadians had no sympathy for further sacrifice in faraway Russia. The Ottawa politicians quickly realized the electoral danger in intervention.

In its turn, France undermined the White Russian General Denikin in favour of the Ukrainian rebels, despite the agreed Allied aim. In addition, France assiduously worked at advancing any scheme that would ensure Russian payment of the enormous pre-war loans and massive war debts. This blinkered view of pursuing compensation by any means to the detriment of common goals steadily undermined collective Allied efforts to assist the Whites. These illustrate how national self-interest trumped many of the collective goals.

But the Alliance's strategic aims in Russia were also fluid. The Great War was the driving force until November 1918. Up to then, the Allies' intentions in Russia were to re-establish the Eastern Front to alleviate German pressure on the Western Front. The United States, however, did not accept this goal as achievable or necessary. But with the Armistice, even this goal was no longer relevant and the war on Bolshevism became one of many other reasons for intervention. Yet the Allies could not agree on one policy as it applied to Russia. Moreover, with the end of fighting in Europe, Russia lost strategic importance to the need to produce a peace treaty in Paris.

Significantly, Russia was intimately tied to the laborious and often bitter negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference. Even well after the Armistice, Allied soldiers were part of the continued fighting and turmoil across Russia. At Paris and in Allied capitals, there was fear that Russia could fall under the influence of Germany, despite the latter's defeat in Western Europe. Russia could not be separated from the larger subject of Germany and its place in Europe. Revolution and tumult were spreading in Middle and Eastern Europe and in Germany. So, while the negotiating Great Powers did not want Russia present at the Paris Conference, that nation could not be separated from their talks and decisions. Here was a major weakness of the Allied interventionist effort: without Russia in Paris, the Allied intervention was likely doomed to be piecemeal, and driven by individual self-interest. And Russia also had an impact on nations far from its shores.

There were smaller actions and other motives at play in these events, and mistrust often spread. In Canada, Sir Robert Borden at first urged his government to establish economic missions to accompany the Canadian contingent destined for Siberia, hoping to reap economic rewards. Based on the way Britain had acted during the Great War with respect to munitions orders, directing them to the United States and ignoring Canada's factories, he did not trust the British economic delegation to look after Canadian interests.³ For some Canadians in 1919, Russia offered opportunity to help recoup the financial cost of the Great War and also keep the newfound Canadian industrial success going well into the 1920s. So Canada, like other nations, mixed too many expectations on a policy that should have been kept as simple as possible, given war's natural characteristic to be chaotic and uncontrollable.

Personalities had a major influence on the courses that nations followed. Individuals can often drive action or cause inaction. Politics and personalities

cannot be ignored. Decisions, in turn, determine what will not be done as well as what is done. And people made these decisions. Strong-willed people are very important in a functioning alliance. In the Allied intervention in Russia, there were influential people at every level of decision-making. The strongest examples both in the actual events and in historical interpretation were David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and Woodrow Wilson.

Although some American historians point their finger at Wilson for single-handedly causing the failure of the Allied Intervention, more honestly it has to be laid at the feet of more than him. There were many others who had various shares in the cause of this failure, but besides Woodrow Wilson another major contributor was British Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

George Kennan's conclusion – blaming Wilson for the outcome – is based more on American national centrism rather than detailed analysis: that is, Wilson was against both Russian factions equally because neither lived up to his idealistic version of the American dream. Initially Wilson had fought against sending Allied troops into Russia from a sense of superiority combined with naiveté. He firmly believed that the Russian Revolution was based on a desire of a people to rid themselves of a tyrannical government and to establish democracy. Convinced to the point of unreason, he considered it immoral to interfere in the internal political struggles of the Russian people. The United States had to set an example to other nations, and therefore should not actively interfere on one side or the other of an internal political fight. Yet Wilson's view was, ironically, also anti-Bolshevik, although not to the point that he would allow the US military to assist either faction in Russia. He also deeply abhorred imperialism, and therefore he was suspicious and reluctant to act with an entity he naturally recoiled from, such as the British Empire or a reconstituted Russian one. He hoped to use the United States' strength to create a new international order free of war or revolution. It was one in which the United States would be the pre-eminent political and economic power.⁴

Having the United States participate in what the president saw as an immoral undertaking would undermine that nation's image as a "shining city on a hill". Wilson firmly believed that the United States was divinely destined to lead the world to an orderly, liberal and capitalist international society. Yet this messianism, as US philosopher-historian Reinhold Niebuhr describes it, is a corrupt expression of man's search for the ultimate within the vicissitudes and hazards of time.⁵ Wilson's self-assurance in his own intellect, coupled with belief in his own moral superiority, made him impervious to differing rational argument. Wilson never recognized his own intellectual limits and never corrected his mistakes in Siberia. In one author's view, he had the mind of a country schoolmaster and the soul of an army mule.⁶ Wilson interpreted the First World War as a crusade "to make the world safe for democracy", but first viewed that conflict as caused by trade rivalries, which the United States was supposedly above.⁷ Yet the US president was averse to intervening in Siberia because of trade disagreements with Japan. Moreover, his antipathy towards the military intervention ensured that US troops involved would be inadequate for the purpose.

He was not alone. While Wilson was central to retarding US participation in the intervention, Lloyd George almost single-handedly prevented the British from supporting the Whites effectively. Unlike Wilson, the British prime minister was the consummate politician who understood the need to keep his electorate happy while maintaining British prestige and pre-eminence internationally. Like Wilson, Lloyd George was a bit naïve about Bolshevism, seeing it solely as a Russian problem. He did not understand Lenin's avowed goal of worldwide revolution. However, he did understand the danger to domestic peace and the desire of Great Britain's war-weary populace to return quickly to a normal, peaceful regime. British Labour's opposition to military intervention could have, in Lloyd George's mind, endangered the whole domestic political system and Britain's domestic tranquillity. Although not recognizing the danger of Bolshevism, nevertheless Lloyd George knew that Britain could not afford nor would undertake another major war, especially in Russia where the Bolshevik revolution at first seemed to dispose of a dictator and replace him with a popular government. At the same time, he had to preserve Britain's premier place in the world. Britain also had its Empire to protect, but an Empire with a mind of its own. Given their very important and very bloody wartime contribution, the overly assertive self-governing Dominions precluded the formation of any post-war Imperial government, but this did not end the final responsibility of the British government for the defence of the Empire and the security of the United Kingdom.⁸

But early in the intervention debate, the British prime minister was supportive of military involvement when it appeared to be a way of easing pressure on the Western Front by re-establishing an Eastern Front. His acceptance increased dramatically in the spring of 1918 when it looked like the Germans' *Michael* Offensive would crush the Allies. And so Lloyd George accepted sending Allied troops to guard military stores at both Archangel and Vladivostok to prevent their capture by Germany. However, he became sceptical of intervention once the Armistice was achieved in November 1918. From then, he actively opposed the scheme in both the British Cabinet and at the Paris Peace Conference. Lloyd George remained fully sensitive to the manpower limitations of the British Army as well as the unaffordable costs any intervention would entail. As the head of a coalition government dominated by Conservatives, but with strong-willed Liberals as well, Lloyd George could not afford a single political failure that could be laid at his feet personally. Fully aware of this, he governed accordingly.

Ever the pragmatist, Lloyd George's greatest fear was unrest among the British population. Military intervention in Russia, in the view of the Labour Party and articulated by the Trades Union Congress, was cause for a General Strike. For this reason, Lloyd George could not risk openly supporting a full-scale intervention against the Bolsheviks. He maintained this stance despite overt pressure from Winston Churchill, the one man who consistently pushed for a military solution to the Russian problem. To add to the chaotic nature of British politics was the problem that Lloyd George never quite said "no" and never quite said "yes" – perhaps to cause delay in making any decision, thereby gaining time. But whatever the case, such overt inaction meant that "others" like Churchill took action

and were difficult to control. Nonetheless, it was Lloyd George's actions and inactions that prevented adequate British support for the anti-Bolsheviks and together with President Wilson ensured the failure of the intervention. And the "others" acted as they saw fit in the chaos created.

Churchill can be viewed as the one politician who never waived in his determination to destroy Bolshevism. As Britain's Secretary of State for War, he was able to ensure the necessary material support for Denikin in South Russia. His eloquence in Cabinet coupled with his independent actions without Cabinet approval produced British brigades for North Russia. Despite Cabinet decisions to the contrary, Churchill continued to send military materiel to the White Russians. There can be no doubt that his actions alone prolonged the Russian civil war. Moreover, he tested the very limits of responsible government and Cabinet solidarity. In many cases, Churchill issued orders from the War Office that completely disobeyed Cabinet direction. Fortunately for him, he usually gained enough support to make him both hard to resist and even harder to check. Moreover, Lloyd George's government was a coalition government, which gave him little room to manoeuvre. And perhaps all these reasons are an explanation of why Lloyd George allowed Churchill to continue his rebelliousness and independence and still kept him in his Cabinet. They had been friends for years, ever since Churchill had crossed the floor in 1904 to sit as a Liberal in Parliament.⁹

In 1917 the prime minister had brought Churchill – a Liberal – into his Cabinet against the express wishes of Conservative members of the coalition government.¹⁰ Moreover, Churchill had been Lloyd George's personal envoy to France's Clemenceau during the German spring offensive crisis of March 1918. At the time, Churchill had successfully lobbied the French premier for French military assistance in halting the German advance against the reeling British, thus putting the British prime minister in Churchill's debt. As a result, Lloyd George may have felt loyalty to Churchill, as well as having a need for Liberal support in his coalition Cabinet. Regardless, Churchill remained in a position that allowed him to influence and prolong the Allied intervention and add to the chaos in Russia.

The fourth person that greatly influenced Allied intervention was French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. He hated Bolshevism, and, like Churchill, wanted it destroyed before it could infect the world. Clemenceau was not a man to be bullied or cowed and he was adamant that Russia repay the huge debts it owed to France. By war's end, this was even more critical since France was bordering on bankruptcy. The Bolsheviks were a major obstacle to France's financial recovery. If they remained in power, France would never be repaid. Treating the Bolsheviks as a legitimate government would only strengthen their position, and Clemenceau could not allow that. And so, in early 1919 he was instrumental in preventing the Bolsheviks from coming to Paris to negotiate with other Russian factions during the Peace Conference.

Clemenceau's intransigence helped erode efforts for a peaceful resolution of the Russian civil war via the Prinkipo Conference. He and the French government also hastened to involve France in Southern Russia in a precipitous and unilateral fashion. Military action was taken without adequate resources and with faulty or

no intelligence. France rejected the much more capable Denikin in favour of the Ukrainian nationalists who were more amenable to Paris.

These four men, Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and Georges Clemenceau, by the sheer strength of their personalities, ideas, positions and actions were the main drivers of Allied policy in Russia. But there were many others who also had profound influence on the chaos and failure there.

Britain relied on Canadian manpower for both the major portion of the British contingent to Siberia and significant support in North Russia. The Dominion even supplied a good portion of Dunsterforce in the Caucasus. Sir Robert Borden, Canada's prime minister, was a major reason that Canada contributed the manpower needed for Russia. Yet his actions and his apparent lack of leadership when his Cabinet argued against participation appear out of character. Borden was a man with a strict moral code, a commitment to duty and an ambition for worldly success.¹¹ In the debates over Canada's commitment to Siberia, just as he had done over the need for conscription in 1917 during the bloodiest period in the Great War, Borden argued that Canada would be breaking its word and dishonouring itself if it did not send the troops promised. However, while absent from Ottawa in Paris for long periods of critical time, Borden told his faraway Cabinet to make the decision. This seems contradictory to his character. In fact, Borden's biographer views the whole Russian intervention as an Imperial War Cabinet problem and Canada's participation was, in Borden's mind, a commitment not to be avoided.¹²

The explanation for Borden's actions lies in politics. He knew that his coalition Cabinet was divided, but had worked as one for the sake of the war. The recent bitter Canadian election of late 1917, fought over conscription, had divided the country. The resulting "Union" government was a coalition. As its head, Borden could not afford to have his Cabinet split and his government fall over the Siberian intervention. Sir Robert also was sensitive to the criticism hurled at him in the press, both Liberal and Unionist, that he was neglecting "important business at home".¹³ Acting Prime Minister Sir Thomas White had pleaded with Borden to return and deal with pressing domestic issues. White had told him that some of his restless ministers were opposed to sending Canadians anywhere in Russia. But in the end, the Canadian coalition Cabinet stayed intact during the Russian crisis. By leaving the final decision to his Cabinet, any decision would not be his alone. Borden thus ensured that a cabinet revolt would be unlikely.

Yet Canada, like other nations, had domestic unrest at the end of the War, yielding a fear that a Bolshevik-style revolution could happen. The mutiny of some of the French Canadian troops destined for Siberia had been fired by the rhetoric of far-left labour organizers in Victoria and was seen as proof by the Canadian Cabinet that troops were required at home in anticipation of revolution. The creation of a monolithic Labour Union in March 1919 in Calgary and the six-week Winnipeg General Strike begun two months later in May was direct evidence to some that Borden's government needed its soldiers at home. However, Borden finally had his epiphany even before the Winnipeg General Strike: the turning point for him was the failure of the Prinkipo Conference scheme. It so disillusioned Borden that he now realized the futility of the Russian intervention.

Satisfied that Canada had shown its willingness to do its duty, Borden showed a renewed firmness. Getting Canada out of Russia became his goal. Once his demand for a consistent Allied policy on Russia was ignored, he set time limits on when Canadians would evacuate that nation and stuck to them, regardless of the consequences. Although not one of the major players in the Russian intervention, he was one of the key decision-makers. But in the final analysis, there was not much that Canada could have done to make the Russian intervention successful.

Failure, in fact, was due to purely Russian issues and the Allied leaders' ignorance of Bolshevik goals. Lenin was a master at chaotic diplomacy. For instance, he kept the American Red Cross representative Robins and the United States convinced during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations that he would accept Allied help against the Central Powers. This allowed the Bolsheviks to retain power in Moscow. He employed similar methods against Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders to bolster his personal power. He used diplomatic confusion to gain time against German negotiations to delay or stop them from a resumption of fighting. And he was willing to cede Russian territory to ensure the Bolsheviks retained power in Russia, convinced that world revolution would eventually return all that was lost.

Even before Lenin attained power, other Russians made decisions that ensured the Bolshevik triumph. Without the lies and machinations of Vladimir N. Lvov, it is possible that Kerensky and General Kornilov would not have had their violent falling-out. If Kerensky and Kornilov had not become open rivals, it is possible that the Bolshevik revolution would have failed. And it was personal distrust, inflated egos and lies that caused the Kornilov–Kerensky schism.

Other White leaders also shared similar failings given their widely divergent political views and egocentric personalities. When coupled with their personal ambition and frequent infighting, it also led to turmoil and the final Red success. Denikin, a believer in a Great Imperial Russia, refused to ally with the Ukraine Nationalist Petlyura to fight the Bolsheviks in South Russia. In the Baltic, Yudenitch was an arrogant reactionary who alienated regional allies vital to his success. Consequently they denied him support necessary for victory. In North Russia, Chaikovsky feared his own military leaders, continuously quarrelled with Allied military commanders over political power and failed to persuade the people in North Russia to support him. Finally, Admiral Kolchak could not control his own forces and lost the confidence of the Czech Legion, the one capable military force on his side in Siberia. He also alienated the local population whose support he needed. In addition, the Japanese backed his Cossack opponents ensuring the White forces were divided.

Coupled with the incompetence of the White Russian leadership was the individual actions of Allied personnel on the spot in Russia. Whether it was US General Graves in Siberia refusing to cooperate with the Japanese Allied Commander-in-Chief Otani or British diplomatic representative Bruce Lockhart in Moscow striving to prevent Japanese intervention against the wishes of his own government, individuals enhanced the diplomatic uncertainty by their actions. Ironside and Maynard in North Russia worked from necessity to maintain a strong force and defeat the Reds, and in the case of Ironside link the North

Russia army with Kolchak's Siberian army, while being bombarded with contradictory orders from Churchill and Lloyd George over the Allied withdrawal. Both strove for offensive victory while trying to plan the evacuation of all Allies from North Russia. General Sir W. R. Marshall, in Mesopotamia, interfered with General Dunsterville's Caucasus intervention by first trying to divert Dunsterforce to face the Turks in Mesopotamia and then delaying the necessary support for Dunsterville in Baku until it was too late. General Gough over-stepped his authority by bullying Yudenitch into creating another White Russian Government for North Western Russia and recognizing Estonian independence, which added to the diplomatic chaos in London and Paris. And General Knox wholeheartedly supported Admiral Kolchak up to the latter's ignominious rout from Omsk despite the blatant incompetence of the Russian military in the fight against the Reds and the complete inability of the White administration to govern the Siberian region. These individuals, while not the cause of the chaos, helped perpetuate and enhance it.

Complicating this were the vast distances between fighting theatres in Russia. This mixture of internal divisions and space prevented concentrated Allied military aid. Providing needed materiel to these diverse and distant theatres was exacerbated by the Allies' chronic logistics and communications problem – lack of sufficient shipping, a single railway and the impediments of troops and politicians who had no desire to fight so far from home.

The revolutions in Russia caused international turmoil. No one knew where events were leading or what would occur next. Utter confusion reigned. From the end of 1917, events often forced governments and leaders to react even though they lacked both the time and the information to develop a comprehensive strategy. The various events in Russia stretched the already inadequate Allied resources beyond effective utility and created the illusion that they were separate and independent. In reality, they all impacted politically and militarily on each other. Each nation added to and increased the overall chaos endemic to these widespread and diverse Russian operations.

Chaos, by its nature, breeds insecurity and removes any assurance of the outcome of events. However, it can be employed to achieve goals or to mitigate disaster. Lloyd George, Churchill, Clemenceau, Lenin and even Borden seemed to use it for their own ends rather than be mastered by it. Chaos does not lend itself to success, but leaders can use it as a political and diplomatic tool to mitigate events for their own success. Both Lloyd George and Borden prevented political disaster at home. Clemenceau kept the Bolshevik leadership out of France by his mastery of turmoil and Lenin retained power and triumphed in Russia by employing it as both a diplomatic and political device. Woodrow Wilson did not master chaos, but was mastered by it. Regardless, chaos is ever-present in international relations. If not anticipated, it can lead to disaster. In Russia, in the period 1917–20, chaos characterized events and set a significant course for twentieth-century history. The failure of both the Allies and the Whites ensured the antipathy and mistrust of the West by the Communist leadership in Russia for the next 70 years, the legacy of which still resonates. International relations by their very nature are

chaotic, and if left untempered leave only the litter of unfulfilled collective goals and perhaps a new and even more dangerous path. Such was the failed Allied intervention in Russia.

Notes

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Appendix

People Involved in Allied Intervention into Russia, 1918–1920

- Albi, Major-General Henri Marie Camille Edouard** – 1858–1935. Foch's Chief of Staff in 1919.
- Alexeiev, General M. V.** – 1857–1918. Russian Chief of Staff under the Tsar, then leader in formation of Volunteer White Russian Army in the Don area until his death from Typhus in 1918.
- Alston, B. F.** – 1868–1929. British Consul at Vladivostok September 1918.
- Altham, Captain (Royal Navy) Edward** – 1882–1950. Commander of the River flotilla on the Dvina River during Ironside's advance on Kotlas June–July 1919.
- Anderson, Major P.** – Canadian Commander at Segeja, Murman Region 1918–19. Successfully routed Reds holding Urosozero.
- d'Anselme, General Philippe Henri** – 30 August 1864–26 March 1936. French commander sent to occupy Odessa in December 1918.
- Antonov-Ovseenko, Vladimir Alexandrovich G.** – 1883–1938. Bolshevik commander in South Russia and the Ukraine 1918–19. His real surname was Ovseyenko.
- Asquith, Herbert H. 1st Earl of Oxford and Asquith** – 1852–1928. Liberal Prime Minister of Great Britain 1908–December 1916.
- Avksentiev, Nikolai Dmitrievich** – 1878–1943. Right-wing Social Revolutionary and anti-Bolshevik. Kerensky's Minister of the Interior before November 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Leading member of Ufa Directory, then Chairman of the Directory of Five of the Ufa government that moved to Omsk in October 1918. Arrested with fellow SR director V. M. Zenzinov in the military coup that installed Admiral Kolchak as the anti-Bolshevik leader in Siberia. Both were exiled to China after the coup.
- Baker, Newton Diehl** – 1871–1931. United States Secretary of War 1916–21.
- Bakhmeteff, George** – died 1928. Last ambassador of the Russian Empire to the United States, 1911–17. Succeeded by Boris Bakhmeteff (no relation) as Kerensky's ambassador.
- Bakhmeteff, Boris Alexandrovich** – 1880–1951. Russian Ambassador to United States representing the provisional government, not the Bolshevik government, 1917–22.
- Balakhovich, General Bulak** – White Russian general, one of two commanders of Yudenitch's North-West Army.
- Balfour, Arthur James** – 1848–1930. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1916–19.
- Barclay, Colville** – British chargé d'affaires in Washington.
- Bell, Edward Price** – 1869–1943. Chicago Journalist to whom President Wilson said Russia should be left alone.
- Bell, H. M.** – British chargé d'affaires in Helsingfors (Helsinki) 1919.
- Beneš, Eduard** – 1884–1948. Leader in the Czechoslovak independence movement and later Minister of Foreign Affairs and the second president of Czechoslovakia.
- Berthelot, General Henri** – French General Head of the French Military Mission to Romania. Later French senior officer in Constantinople.

- Berthelot, Philippe** – Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay.
- Bicherakov, Colonel Lazar** – 1882–1952. Ostian Cossack allied with British General Dunsterville and organizer of anti-Bolshevik activities in the Caucasus.
- Biskupsky, General** – Centrist White Russian general overlooked by French command in Odessa in favour of far-right general Grishin-Almazov as army commander in Crimea.
- Blackwood, Lieutenant Colonel A. P.** – British Officer sent to report on situation in South Russia under Denikin's control in November 1918.
- Blair, Brigadier General J. M.** – General Knox's assistant in Vladivostok who advised the Russian trainees to stay neutral in fights between Kolchak's men and the SRs but advised the White Russian General Rozanov he could use the trainees as he saw fit.
- Bliss, General Tasker H.** – 1853–1930. US Military Representative on the Supreme War Council Versailles 1917–19; US Commissioner; Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Boldyrev, Vasilii Georgievich** – 1875–1936? Tsarist general and Commander-in-Chief of the White Siberian army. Was one of the five Directors of the White Siberian government overthrown in a coup that made Kolchak dictator in Siberia.
- Borden, Sir Robert Laird** – 1854–1937. Canadian prime minister 1911–20. Representative of Canada at Imperial War Cabinet 1917–18. Chief Plenipotentiary Delegate of Canada at Paris Peace Conference 1919.
- Borius, General Albert** – French commander of the initial detachment of French troops landing at Odessa, December 1918.
- Botha, Louis** – 1862–1919. Prime minister of South Africa during the First World War.
- Bradshaw, Lieutenant W. J.** – Canadian battery commander at Tulgas North Russia on 11 November 1918 who successfully defended his guns against a large Bolshevik attack.
- Briand, Aristide** – 1862–1932. French prime minister in 1916.
- Bridges, Major-General** – British Military Attaché in Washington, 1918–19.
- Brier, Captain Bion B.** – Captain of the USS *Olympia* sent as US presence at Murmansk.
- Briggs, General Charles** – British Liaison and Head of Mission to Denikin in South Russia 1919.
- Brusilov, General Alexei Alekseevich** – Russian general who planned and led last Tsarist Offensive in 1916.
- Buchanan, Sir George** – British Ambassador to Russia until January 1918.
- Buckler, W. H.** – 1867–1952. Special assistant at US Embassy in London dispatched by President Wilson to confer with Bolshevik representative Litvinov in Sweden.
- Budenny, Semen Mikhailovich** – 1883–1973. Bolshevik cavalry commander. Defeated the White forces in South Russia in the Civil War.
- Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich** – 1888–1938. Leading Bolshevik leader in Moscow and advocate for Revolutionary War. A leading member of the Soviet Central Committee in 1918.
- Bullitt, William C.** – US Assistant Secretary of State. He headed the US peace negotiating team sent to Moscow in February 1919. In the 1930s he was the first US Ambassador to Soviet Russia.
- Cadorna, General Luigi**: 1850–1928. Commander of the Italian troops at Caporetto in 1917.
- Caldwell, John K.** – US Consul at Vladivostok 1918.
- Cambon, Paul** – French Ambassador to Great Britain 1898–1920.
- de Candolle, Brigadier-General John** – British representative to the Cossacks at Novo Chersk, Consul at Rostov and British Liaison Officer with the French in Romania.
- Carr, E. H.** – Junior clerk in the British Foreign Office who advocated limited negotiations with the Bolsheviks.
- Carson, Sir Edward Henry** – 1854–1935. First Lord of the Admiralty, December 1916–July 1917. Minister without Portfolio in the War Cabinet July 1917–January 1918.
- Cecil, Lord Edgar Algernon Robert** – 1864–1958. Third son of the third Marquess of Salisbury. Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1915–16; Minister of Blockade 1916–18.
- Chaikovsky (Tchaikovsky), Nikolai Vasilievich** – 1850–1926. Revolutionary and leader of the cooperative movement in Russia. Head of the provisional government of North Russia 1918–19.

- Chaplin, Commander Georgi Ermolaevich** – Tsarist naval officer who led the successful anti-Bolshevik coup at Archangel, August 1918.
- Chernov, Viktor** – Social Revolutionary leader at Samara and foe to Kolchak in Siberia.
- Chicherin, Georgii Vasilevich** – 1872–1936. Revolutionary and diplomat (party pseudonym: Ornatskii). People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, 1918–30. He became Foreign Commissar (Foreign Minister) when Trotsky became War Minister in 1918.
- Chinda, Viscount Sutemi** – Japanese Ambassador to Great Britain and member of the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.
- Churchill, Winston Leonard Spencer** – 1874–1965. First Lord of the Admiralty 1910–15, Minister for Munitions 1917–18, Secretary of State for War 1919. Adamantly opposed to Bolsheviks and fervent supporter of military intervention in Russia.
- Clemenceau, Georges E. B.** – 1841–1929. French prime minister and Minister of War November 1917– January 1920.
- Clerk, Sir George R.** – Senior clerk and head of the War Department in Foreign Office 1916 until the end of the war.
- Clive, (Sir) Robert Henry** – 1877–1948. British Consul at Stockholm 1915–19.
- Cole, Felix** – 1887–1969. US Vice Consul (later Consul) at Archangel.
- Crerar, Thomas Alexander** – 1876–1975. Canadian Minister of Agriculture 1918, member of Unionist Party and opponent of the Siberian Expedition.
- Cromie, Acting Captain Francis Newton Allen Cromie, CB, DSO** – 1882–1918. British naval attaché in Petrograd. Shot by Cheka at the British Embassy.
- Curzon, George Nathaniel Lord Marquis of Kedleston** – 1859–1925. Conservative MP, 1886–98. Member of the War Cabinet, 1916–19; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1919–22.
- Czernin, Ottokar, Graf von und zu Chudenitz** – Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Daniels, Josephus** – US Secretary of the Navy for President Woodrow Wilson.
- Denikin, General Anton Ivanovich** – 1872–1947. Helped form Volunteer White Russian Army in Don area and later Leader of White Russian Armies in Southern Russia.
- Derby, Earl of, Edward George Villiers Stanley** – 1865–1948. Secretary of State for War December 1916–18. Ambassador to France 1918.
- Donop, Colonel** – French Officer appointed military commandant of Archangel.
- Doulcet, Jean** – French chargé d'affaires in Petrograd 1917.
- Dragomirov, General Abram Mikhailovich** – General in Denikin's Volunteer Army of South Russia and his adjutant for civil affairs.
- Dukhonin, General N. N.** – Tsar's Commander-in-Chief at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. Refused to negotiate for armistice when ordered to do so by Trotsky.
- Dunsterville, Major-General L. C.** – 1865–1946. British Commander of Dunsterforce in the Russian Caucasus.
- Durov (Douroff) General** – Russian War Minister at Archangel appointed by Chaikovsky. Previous appointment was Governor General.
- Dutov, Aleksandr Il'ich** – Ataman of Orenburg Cossacks.
- Eliot, Sir Charles Norton Edgecombe** – 1862–1931. British High Commissioner in Siberia in 1919 and later British Ambassador to Japan 1919–25.
- Elmsley, Major-General James Harold** – 1878–1954. Canadian Commander of British forces in Siberia.
- Emrys-Evans, P. V.** – British Foreign Office officer in the Russia department.
- Esher, Viscount, Reginald Balliol Brett** – 1852–1930. Private advisor to the British government on military affairs.
- d'Esperey, General Louis Franchet** – French general at Constantinople after the Armistice and overall commander of French forces in South Russia.
- Fanshawe, Major-General Sir Hew Dalrymple** – 1860–1957. Second in Command in Mesopotamia.
- Findley, Sir Mandfeldt** – British Ambassador to Norway.

- Finlayson Brigadier R. G.** – Ironside's Chief of Staff and commander of the Allied troops along the Dvina River in North Russia.
- Foch, Marshal Ferdinand** – 1851–1929. Marshal of France and Generalissimo of Allied forces on Western Front April–November 1918.
- Foster, Sir G. E.** – 1847–1931. Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce in Borden's Cabinet.
- Francis, David Rowland** – 1850–1927. US Ambassador to Russia 1917–19.
- Frazier, Arthur Hugh** – US diplomatic liaison to the Supreme War Council in Versailles.
- Freidenburg, Colonel Henri** – French Chief of Staff in Odessa. Being of Jewish background, he had a particular dislike of the Russians for their anti-Semitic policies.
- French, Field Marshal Sir John Denton Pinkstone** – 1852–1925. First Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the First World War.
- Gajda, General Rudolf** – 1892–1948. Colonel commanding Czech forces in central Siberia, July–October 1918. Supported Admiral Kolchak's seizure of power at Omsk, November 1918. Promoted Major-General by Kolchak, November 1918. Commanded Kolchak's northern army, June–July 1919, with rank of Lieutenant General. Dismissed by Kolchak, July 1919. Attempted unsuccessfully to seize power at Vladavostok, November 1919. Returned to Czechoslovakia 1920.
- Geddes, Sir Eric Campbell** – 1875–1937. First Lord of the Admiralty 1917–18. Minister of Transport, 1919–21.
- Golovin, General N. N.** – White Russian General, liaison to British government in London for Yudenitch.
- Goltz, General Rudiger von der** – German general in command of German forces in the Baltic at the end of the war.
- Gotō Baron Shimpei** – Japanese Foreign Minister 23 April 1918 onwards, replaced Viscount Motono.
- Gough, General Sir Hubert de la Poer** – 1870–1963. Chief of Allied mission to Baltic and to Yudenitch May 1919.
- Graham, Sir Ronald** – 1870–1949. Senior clerk in British Foreign Office during Russian intervention.
- Graves, General William S.** – 1865–1940. US General officer commanding US troops in Siberia.
- Greene, Sir Connyngham** – British Ambassador to Japan, 1919.
- Grénard, Joseph Fernand** – French Consul General in Moscow 1919.
- Gregory, J. D.** – Clerk and senior analyst in the British Foreign Office.
- Grigoriev, Ataman Nikifor A.** – Ukrainian general who sided with the Bolsheviks and fought against the French and White Russians in the Ukraine in 1919.
- Grishin-Almazov, General A. N.** – Ultra-reactionary Russian general appointed by French Consul Henno as commander of the Russian Volunteer Army at Odessa.
- Grogan, Brigadier General G. W. St. G. VC, CB, CMG, DSO and Bar** – 1875–1962. Commander of the first relief brigade sent to Archangel May 1919.
- Guchkov, Aleksandr Ivanovich** – Russian Minister of War in first Russian provisional government 1917.
- Gwatkin, Major-General Sir Willoughby Garnons, KCMG, CB** – 1859–1925. Chief of the Canadian General Staff in Ottawa.
- Haig, Field Marshal Sir Douglas** – 1861–1928. Succeeded Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief British Expeditionary Force, 19 December 1915.
- Hall, T. Harper** – British Consul at Murmansk February 1918.
- Hankey, Lord Maurice Pascal Alers** – 1877–1963. Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1912–38. Secretary to the War Cabinet, 1916–18; to the Cabinet 1919–38.
- Hara, Takashi** – Japanese prime minister 30 September 1918–4 November 1921.
- Hardinge of Pendhurst, Lord Charles** – 1858–1944. Permanent Undersecretary to Foreign Office 1916–20.
- Harris, Ernest Lloyd** – 1870–1946. US Consul General in Siberia at Irkutsk 1918–1921.

- Helferich, Karl** – New German Ambassador to Moscow appointed after the assassination of Ambassador Mirbach-Hoff.
- Henno, Émile** – French Consul at Odessa 1918–19.
- Hintze, Admiral Paul von** – 1864–1941. German Foreign Minister during the Bolshevik–German peace talks at Brest-Litovsk 1917–18.
- Hoare, Reginald H.** – 1882–1954. British chargé d'affaires in Archangel, replacing Francis Lindley in 1919.
- Hoare, Sir Samuel John Gurney** – 1880–1959. Conservative MP 1910–44. Backed White General Yudenitch to capture Petrograd from the Baltic States in 1919.
- Hoffmann, Major-General Max** – 1869–1927. Commander, German forces on the Eastern Front. Negotiated the armistice with the Bolsheviks, December 1917.
- Hodgson, Sir Robert MacLeod** – 1874–1956. British Consul at Vladivostok 1911–19.
- Holman, Major General Sir Herbert Campbell** – 1869–1949. Major General 1919. Chief of the Military Mission to South Russia, 1919–20.
- Hoover, Herbert Clark** – Appointed head of the Food Administration by President Wilson. After the Armistice, Hoover organized shipments of food for starving millions in central Europe.
- Horvat, General Dimitri L.** – 1858–1937. Russian President of Chinese Eastern Railway at Harbin, Manchuria.
- House, Colonel Edward Mandell** – 1858–1938. Personal representative of President Wilson to the European governments, 1914–18. US Peace Commissioner Paris, 1919.
- Howard, Esme William, 1st Baron Howard of Penrith, GCB, GCMG, CVO** – 1863–1939. British ambassador to Sweden 1913–19.
- Hughes, William (Billy) Morris** – 1864–1952. Prime minister of Australia 1915–23. Australian representative to the Imperial War Cabinet and to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Imbrie, Robert** – US Consul at Viborg, 1919–20.
- Ironside, Major-General William Edmund** – 1880–1959. Major-General Commanding the Allies at Archangel, 1918–19.
- Ishii, Viscount Kikujiro** – Japanese Ambassador to United States.
- Ivanov-Rinov (Ivan-Rinoff), Major-General Pavel Pavlovich** – Siberian Cossack leader and Kolchak's commander in Vladivostok.
- Jameson, J. Paul** – Special US Consul in Siberia 1918.
- Janin, General Pierre T. C. Maurice** – Chief of French military mission to Russia in 1916 then French commander in Siberia 1918.
- Jellicoe, Admiral Sir John** – First Sea Lord in Great Britain 1917.
- Jenkins, William L.** – US Consul at Odessa, Russia 1919.
- Joffe (Ioffe), A. A.** – First Bolshevik negotiator at Brest-Litovsk and then Bolshevik Ambassador to Germany.
- Joffre, General Joseph** – 1852–1931. Commander of French Forces on Western Front until 1916.
- Johnson, Hiram Warren** – US Senator from 1917 to 1945. Opposed US involvement in Russia.
- Jordan, Sir J.** – British Ambassador to China.
- Judson, General William V.** – US Military attaché to Russia 1917–18.
- Jusserand, Jean Adrien Antoine Jules** – 1855–1932. French Ambassador to the United States 1902–25.
- Kaledin, General Alexis M.** – 1861–1918. Cavalry general. Commander of Cossack forces that opposed the Red military units in the Don region 1917 and early 1918. Ataman of Don Cossacks until his death in February 1918.
- Kalmykov, Ivan** – Cossack leader in Siberia supported by Japanese. Noted for his atrocities against anyone he considered an enemy.
- Kamenev (born Rosenfeld), Lev Borisovich** – 1883–1936. Chairman of the Moscow Soviet and Central Executive Committee, 1918.
- Kaplan, Fanny Yefimovna (known as Dora)** – 1890–1918. An attempted assassin of Vladimir Lenin. Executed 3 September 1918.

- Karakhan, Lev M.** – 1889–1937. Armenian-born Russian revolutionary. Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs drafted and sent the two telegrams to Lenin from Brest-Litvosk that made Lenin fear Germany was restarting the war.
- Katō, Admiral Kanji** – Commander of the first Japanese ships to enter Vladivostok, January 1918.
- Katō, Viscount Takaakira** – Leader of Kenseiki party and Japanese Parliament opposition leader.
- Kemp, Sir A. E.** – 1858–1929. Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence and Minister of the Overseas Military Forces residing in London during the First World War.
- Kemp, Admiral T. W.** – Commander of Royal Navy at Murmansk 1918.
- Kerensky, Alexander Fedorovich** – 1881–1970. Prime minister of the Russian provisional government after the abdication of Nicholas II, deposed by the Bolsheviks 7 November 1917.
- Kerr, Philip Henry** – 1882–1940. Personal Secretary to Lloyd George 1916–21.
- Khanzhin, General** – Commander of the remnant of the Constituent Assembly's military force based at Samara.
- Knox, Major-General Sir Alfred William Fortescue** – 1870–1964. Military Attaché, Petrograd, 1911–18. Chief of the British Military Mission to Siberia, 1918–20.
- Kolchak, Admiral Aleksandr Vasilevich** – 1870–1920. Minister of War in the Siberian "All Russian government", 1918. Declared "Supreme Ruler" November 1918. Shot by Bolsheviks at Irkutsk, 7 February 1920.
- Kornilov, General Lavr G.** – 1870–1918. Russian Supreme Military Commander who opposed Kerensky and whose defeat set the conditions for the Bolshevik revolution.
- Krylenko, Ensign Nikolai Vasil'evich** – Bolshevik military officer appointed by Trotsky to negotiate armistice with Germans.
- Kuhlmann, Richard von** – 1873–1949. German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1917–18.
- Kyetlinski, Russian Admiral K. F.** – Murmansk Russian naval commander murdered by Bolsheviks 1918.
- Laidoner, General Johan** – Estonian General Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Armed Forces. He aided the White Russian Northern Corps in its attack on Petrograd, 1919.
- Lansing, Robert** – 1864–1928. US Secretary of State, 1915–20. US Commissioner to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Lavergne, General Jean Guillaume** – French military attaché in Petrograd during Russian Revolution.
- Law, Andrew Bonar** – 1858–1923. Canadian-born British Conservative MP 1900–23. Conservative Party Leader and in Lloyd George's Cabinet 1916; Prime Minister 1922–23.
- Lebedev, Major-General D. A.** – Kolchak's young inexperienced but arrogant Chief of Staff.
- Leckie, Lieutenant Colonel John Edward** – 1872–1950. Canadian senior officer at Murmansk under MGen Maynard.
- Leeper, R. A.** – Head of the Political Intelligence Department in the British Foreign Office.
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (born Ulyanov)** – 1870–1924. Leader of Russian Bolsheviks. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (prime minister) from October 1917 until his death.
- Liakov, General Vladimir Platonovich** – General in Denikin's Volunteer Army of South Russia.
- Lindley, Francis Oswald** – 1872–1950. Counsellor of British Embassy, Petrograd, 1915–17. Commissioner in Russia, 1918; Consul-General and British Representative to North Russian government at Archangel, Russia, 1919.
- Litvinov, Maxim** – 1879–1951. Born Meir Henoch Mojszewicz Wallach-Finkelstein (simplified into Max Wallach). Soviet representative in Britain. In 1918 exchanged for R. H. Bruce Lockhart who had been imprisoned by Trotsky. Litvinov was then the Soviet government's roaming ambassador.
- Liaudansky** – President of the Tsentromur in Murmansk.

- Lloyd George, David** – 1863–1945. British prime minister, December 1916–October 1922.
- Lockhart, R. H. Bruce** – 1887–1970. Special agent for the British government to the Bolshevik government in Russia.
- Long, Breckinridge** – 1881–1958. US Third Assistant Secretary of State in 1917.
- Long, Walter Hume** – 1854–1924. British Conservative MP, 1880–1921. Secretary of State for the Colonies 1916–19, First Lord of the Admiralty 1919–21.
- Lukomsky, General A. S.** – Tsarist General Staff officer who supported Kornilov's attempt to usurp Kerensky in summer 1917. Escaped with the general to join White Volunteer Army and became one of Denikin's commanders.
- Lvov, Georgii Evgen'evich** – 1861–1925. Prince, prominent zemstvo leader and first premier of the Russian provisional government March 1917–July 1917.
- Lvov, Vladimir N.** – 1872–1930s? (no relation to Prince Lvov, above). Chief procurator of the Holy Synod, dropped from cabinet by Kerensky. His lies and misrepresentations caused Kornilov to act against Kerensky and for Kerensky to denounce the general as trying to overthrow the provisional government.
- Lyons, Thomas** – British Foreign Office official on the Russian Desk.
- MacAlpine, Major R.** – British military representative in Archangel 1918.
- MacDonald, Major General Hugh French** – Canadian intelligence officer at Overseas Military Forces of Canada Headquarters in London.
- Macdonough, Major-General Sir George M. W.** – Director of British Military Intelligence (DMI) 1916–18.
- Mai-Maievsky, General V. Z.** – Deputy commander of the White Volunteer army under Denikin.
- Makhno, Nestor Ivanovych (Daddy)** – 1888–1934. Ukrainian anarchist leader in 1919, first allied with Bolsheviks then rebelled against them along with Grigoriev. He led an independent anarchist army in Ukraine during the Russian civil war.
- Makino Baron Nobuaki** – Member of Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Mamontov General Konstantin Konstantinovich** – White cavalry general in South Russia defeated by Red cavalry in fall 1919.
- Mannerheim, General Carl Gustav Emil** – 1867–1951. Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Army, 1918. Fought against the Russians, and against the Red Finns, 1918. Regent of Finland, 1919.
- March, General Peyton Conway** – 1864–1955. US Army Chief of Staff, 1918. He was highly critical of President Wilson's decision to send a US Expedition to North Russia and Siberia in 1918.
- de Margerie, Pierre** – Political director at the Quai d'Orsay in French government in 1917.
- Marling, Sir Charles Murray** – 1863–1935. British Ambassador to Persia (Iran) during the First World War.
- Marsh, Brigadier-General Francis (Frank) G.** – General Gough's assistant in the Baltic States; shepherded the formation of the Russian North-West government in Reval in August 1919.
- Marshall, General Sir W. R.** – British General Officer Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia.
- Martin, Lieutenant Hugh S.** – US Assistant Military Attaché in Murmansk.
- Martov, Iuri** – Menshevik leader, supported the Bolsheviks in Moscow in 1919 and told Bullitt that the Bolsheviks were the only stable government for Russia.
- Marushevskii, General V. V.** – Russian General appointed by Major General Ironside to command the White Russian Army at Archangel.
- Masaryk, Thomas G.** – 1850–1937. Founder and first President of Czechoslovakia. He negotiated the exit of the Czechoslovak Legion from Bolshevik Russia in 1918.
- Maslov, S. S.** – North Russia government war minister.
- Maynard, Major-General Charles Clarkson Martin** – 1870–1945. Commander of Allied forces at Murmansk 1918–19.
- McCain, MGen Henry Pinckney** – 1861–1941. US Army Adjutant General from 1914–18.

- Mewburn, Major-General Sydney C.** – 1863–1956. Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence 1917–20.
- Miliukov, Pavel Nikolaevich** – 1859–1943. Foreign Minister in First Russian provisional government that deposed the Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917.
- Miller, Lieutenant-General Yevgenii (Eugene) Karlovich** – 1867–1937? First Russian Governor-General of Archangel and second, Commander-in-Chief of the North Russia Army.
- Milner, Lord Alfred** – 1854–1925. British Secretary of State for War April 1918–January 1919.
- Mirbach-Harff, Count Wilhelm Graf von** – German Ambassador to Bolshevik government.
- Montagu, Edwin** – 1879–1924. In British War Cabinet. Secretary of State for India, June 1917–March 1922.
- Morris, Ira Nelson** – US Ambassador to Sweden.
- Morris, Roland S.** – US Ambassador to Japan.
- Morrissey, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Sydney** – 1890–? Canadian Officer sent with 55 men to Omsk as support for British Battalions there 1918–19.
- Moser, Charles** – US Consul at Harbin.
- Motono, Viscount Ichiro** – 1862–1918. Foreign Minister of Japan between 9 October 1916 and his death in 1918. Maintained harsh stance against the Russian Revolution and supported Siberian intervention.
- Munro, General Sir C. C.** – British Commander-in-Chief, India.
- Muraviev, General M. A.** – Red Army commander who defected to the Czechs in July 1918.
- Nabokov, Constantine** – 1871–1927. Last Tsarist chargé d'affaires to Great Britain then Russian Ambassador in London 1917. Forced to resign in 1919. He was an uncle of the writer Vladimir Nabokov.
- Nakajima, Major General Masatake** – Senior Japanese Intelligence officer and Russian expert assigned to Siberia.
- Nazeranus (Natseranus), S. P.** – Commissar sent to North Russia to oversee Allies in Murmansk and Archangel in 1918.
- Newcombe Major H. K.** – Canadian officer attached to Dunsterforce and seconded to Colonel Bicherakov as liaison officer. He is the only Canadian to be officially attached to Soviet forces when Bicherakov joined Bolshevik Army in the Caucasus.
- Nicholas II, Tsar** – 1868–1918. Last of the Romanov Tsars of Russia. Assassinated with his family by the Bolsheviks on the night of 16/17 July 1918.
- Nivelle, General Robert** – French Commander on Western Front 1916–June 1917. Planned and executed the *Chemin des Dames* Offensive in spring 1917.
- Norris, Commodore David T.** – British commander of Royal Navy forces in the Caspian Sea, 1918.
- Noulens, Joseph** – 1864–1944. French Ambassador to Russia until 1918.
- Oi, General Narimoto** – The second Japanese general commanding Allied forces in Siberia.
- Oliphant, Lancelot** – 1881–1965. Assistant Secretary at the Foreign Office 1912–20. Persian affairs expert and major advisor on policy for Russian affairs at the Foreign Office.
- O'Reilly, William E.** – 1873–1934. Entered Foreign Service 1894. Acting British High Commissioner in Vladivostok 1919 on Sir Charles Eliot's departure to Japan as the new British Ambassador.
- Orlando, Vittorio Emanuele** – 1860–1952. Italian prime minister in 1918 and one of the Italian representatives to the Paris Peace Conference.
- Otani, Lieutenant General K.** – First Japanese Commander in Siberia and Allied Commander-in-Chief east of Lake Baikal in Siberia.
- Page, Walter Hines** – US Ambassador to Britain.
- Painlevé, Paul** – 1863–1933. French Minister of War March–September 1917, prime minister and Minister of War 12 September–13 November 1917.
- Paléologue, Maurice** – 1859–1944. French Ambassador to Tsarist Russia 1914–17. General Secretary of the Foreign Ministry in French Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand's cabinet.

- Pepelaieff (Pepeliaev), Victor Nikolaevich** – Kolchak's prime minister after the retreat from Omsk, 1919. Executed with the Admiral at Irkutsk February 1920.
- Petlyura (Petliura), Simon Vasilievich** – 1877–1926. Ukrainian Nationalist leader who fought the White Russians and Bolsheviks 1918/1919.
- Petrov, Peter** – One of two Russians Trotsky demanded be freed in England in exchange for allowing British citizens to leave Russia in 1917.
- Phillips, William** – 1878–1968. Assistant US Secretary of State.
- Pichon, Stéphen** – French Foreign Minister in Clemenceau's government.
- Picton Bagg, John** – 1877–1967. British Commercial Secretary at Odessa 1918–20. British mediator between General Wrangle and Bolsheviks, 1920.
- Pirie-Gordon, Harold (Harry)** – Acting British Commissioner for the Baltic Provinces at Reval, Estonia, 1919. Helped force White General Yudenitch to officially recognize independence of Baltic States.
- Poincaré, Raymond** – 1860–1934. President of the French Republic 1913–20.
- Polk, Frank Lyon** – US Undersecretary of State (Number 2 after Lansing).
- Poole, Dewitt** – US Consul in Moscow and Consul General after death of Maddin Summers. Transferred to Archangel during the Russian civil war.
- Poole, Major-General F. C.** – British Military Commander in North Russia, relieved by MGen Ironside. Appointed Liaison Officer to White Volunteer Army in South Russia 1919.
- Price, Brigadier General G. D.** – British Brigadier in Command of offensive against Segeja in the Murman region, February 1919.
- Proctor, Captain Alex** – British military representative in Archangel 1918 for the British Military Mission of Supply originally headed by MGen F. C. Poole.
- Radcliffe, Major General Sir Percy Pollexfen de Blaquiére (P. de B.)** – 1874–1934. Director of Military Operations, British War Office, 1918–22.
- Radek, Karl Bernhardovic** – 1885–1939. International Communist leader after the Russian Revolution. Sent to Vologda to bring Allied ambassadors back to Moscow.
- Rakovsky, K. G.** – Leader of the Ukrainian Soviet government, 1919.
- Ransome, Arthur Mitchell** – 1884–1967. Correspondent for *Daily Mail* in Russia and confidant of the Bolsheviks.
- Ravndal, Gabriel Bie** – US Consul General at Constantinople 1919.
- Rawlinson, General Sir Henry Seymour** – 1864–1925. Supreme Commander Allied forces in North Russia during the evacuation, 1919.
- Reading, Earl of (Rufus Daniel Isaacs)** – 1860–1935. Special British Ambassador to the United States, 1918.
- Reilly, Sidney** – British secret agent in Russia during the Bolshevik civil war.
- Reinsch, Paul S.** – US Ambassador to China.
- de Robeck, Admiral** – British High Commissioner at Constantinople.
- Robertson, Colonel** – British military representative in Vladivostok.
- Robertson, General Sir William Robert** – 1860–1933. Chief of the British Imperial General Staff 1915–18.
- de Robien, Louis** – Junior French Diplomat in Petrograd 1917–18.
- Robins, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond** – US Honourary Colonel and head of American Red Cross delegation in Russia 1917–18.
- Rodzianko, General A. P.** – White Russian General and de facto commander of the White Russian Northern Corps in Estonia under Yudenitch in 1919.
- Rodzianko, M.** – 1859–1924. President of Russian Duma.
- Romanovsky, General I. P.** – Denikin's Chief of Staff.
- Rowell, Newton Wesley** – 1867–1941. President of the Canadian Privy Council in Sir Robert Borden's Union government.
- Rozanov, General Sergei Nikolaevich** – Chief-of-Staff to General Boldyrev at time of the Kolchak coup in November 1918 at Omsk. Later Governor of Vladivostok.
- Ruggles, Lieutenant Colonel James A.** – US Military Attaché in Russia, 1918.

- Rumbold, Sir Horace George Montague** – 1869–1941. British Ambassador to Switzerland, 1916–19.
- Russell, Charles** – correspondent with President Wilson and member of the Elihu Root Committee that visited Russia in 1917.
- Sadleir-Jackson, Brigadier General Lionel Warren de Vere, CB, CMG, DSO and Bar, FRSG** – 1876–1932. Commander of the second British relief brigade at Archangel, June 1919.
- Sadoul, Capt Jacques** – Assistant French Military Attaché in Russia and confidante of Trotsky and Lenin.
- Saionji Prince Kimmochi** – Head of the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference 1919.
- Sannikov, General A. S.** – White Russian General under Denikin in command of South-West Russia.
- Savinkov, Boris Viktorovich** – 1877–1925. Deputy Minister of War in provisional government August 1917. An opponent of Bolshevism, he joined General Alexeiev's forces on the Don, November 1917. Accredited agent in Paris, first of Alexeiev, then Kolchak and finally Denikin, 1918–20.
- Sazonov, Sergei Dmitrievich** – 1866–1927. Russian Foreign Minister under Tsar Nicholas II 1910–15. Foreign Minister to Denikin, the Omsk government and Kolchak 1919–20. Represented White Russian governments at the Paris Peace Conference.
- Scavenius, Garald da** – Danish Ambassador to Moscow.
- Selby, Sir Walford Harmood Montague** – 1881–1965. Diplomat and clerk in the British Foreign Office.
- Semenov, Gregorii** – 1890–1946. Russian Cossack warlord in Siberia Allied to the Japanese and opposed to Kolchak.
- Sharman, Colonel C. H. L.** – Commanding Officer 16th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery North Russia.
- Sharp, William Graves** – US Ambassador to France 1914–19.
- Shkuro, General A. G.** – White Army cavalry general under Denikin.
- Shulgin, V. V.** – A reactionary Russian politician from Odessa supporting the Greater United Russian politics against the Ukrainian Nationalists.
- Sifton, Arthus Lewis** – 1858–1921. Borden's Minister of Customs and, later, Minister of Public Works. A Canadian delegate to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Sims, Admiral W. S.** – Commander of US naval forces in Europe.
- Skoropadsky, Pavlo** – Ukrainian general and head of Ukrainian government backed by the Germans. Deposed by a rebellion led by Petlyura in November 1918.
- Sly, Henry E.** – British Consul at Harbin.
- Smith, Captain** – British Ambassador Buchanan's military aide in Petrograd.
- Smuts, Lieutenant General Jan Christian** – 1870–1950. South Africa's representative at Imperial War Cabinet, 1917 and 1918.
- Sonnino, Baron Sidney** – 1847–1922. Italian Foreign Minister, November 1914–June 1919. Second Italian representative at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.
- Spiridornoff (Spiridornov)** (other names unknown) – Bolshevik commander bluffed by General Maynard into surrendering without a fight at Kandalaksha.
- Spring-Rice, Sir Cecil Arthur** – British Ambassador to Washington until January 1918.
- Stalin, Joseph** – Defender of Petrograd 1919 and eventual dictator of the USSR.
- Startsev, N. A.** – Provincial commissar in North Russia and coup conspirator with Georgi Chaplin.
- Steel, Colonel Richard A.** – Director of MI2 and later Director Military Intelligence Operations (MIO) and instigator of small-scale interventions into Russia.
- Stefanik, Milan Ratislav** – 1880–1919. Slovak senior officer, Czechoslovak Minister of War and organizer of the Czech army and the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia.
- Stevens, John F.** – American railway engineer sent to Siberia to revamp and oversee the operation of the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1918.
- Stewart, Colonel George E.** – Commander US Forces in Northern Russia.
- Summers, Maddin** – US Consul General to Russia 1917–18.
- Tanaka, Baron Giichi** – 1864–1929. Japanese War Minister 1918–21.

- Terauchi, Field Marshall Count Masatake** – 1852–1919 Japanese Prime Minister 9 October 1916–29 September 1918.
- Tereshenko, M. I.** – 1864–1929. Kerensky's provisional government Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- Thomas, Albert** – French Minister of Munitions.
- Thomson, General W. M.** – Appointed BGen, Dunsterville's successor, by General Marshall after Dunsterville's failure to hold Baku.
- Thornhill, Lieutenant Colonel C. J. M.** – Chief of Intelligence to General Poole and General Ironside in Archangel.
- Thwaites, Lieutenant General Sir William** – 1868–1947. Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) September 1918–April 1922.
- Tilley, Sir John Anthony Cecil** – 1869–1952. Chief Clerk, Foreign Office, 1913–19.
- Torretta, Tomasi della, Dei principi di Lampedusa, Duca di Palma, Barono di Montechiaro** – Italian Ambassador to Russia.
- Trotsky, Lev (Leonid) Davidovich (born Bronstein)** – 1879–1940. Bolshevik Commissar for Foreign Affairs, 1917–18; for Military Affairs, 1918–25.
- Turner, Lieutenant General Sir Richard Ernest William KCMG, VC, DSO** – 1871–1961. Canadian Chief of Staff in London at the Ministry of Overseas Forces of Canada.
- Uchida, Viscount Yasuya** – Japanese Foreign Minister 1919–20.
- Uritsky, Moses S.** – 1873–1918. Head of the Petrograd Cheka or Bolshevik Secret Police, assassinated 30 August 1918.
- Vatsetis, General Ioakim Ioakimovich** – 1873–1938. Bolshevik General and Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army in late 1918.
- Vesselago, Lieutenant Commander Georgi** – Russian officer at Murmansk who negotiated with Allies for Allied protection for the port.
- Vinogradov, V. A.** – One of the non-socialist members of the Directory of Five that was the Omsk government overthrown by the Kolchak coup, November 1918.
- Vologodskii, P. V.** – One of the non-socialist members of the Directory of Five that was the Omsk government overthrown by the Kolchak coup, November 1918.
- Volsky** – A Social Revolutionary and past president of the Constituent Assembly. He supported the Bolsheviks in Moscow in 1919 and denounced foreign intervention to Bullitt.
- Vorovskii, Vatslav Vatslavich** – 1871–1923. Bolshevik representative in Sweden in 1919.
- Vynnychenko, Volodymyr** – Ukrainian nationalist who formed the Ukrainian National State Union in opposition to Skoropodsky, 1918.
- Ward, Lieutenant-Colonel John** – 1866–1934. Lieutenant Colonel 25th Middlesex Regiment. In 1918, while at Vladivostok, supported Kolchak's revolt.
- Warden, Lieutenant-Colonel John** – Canadian senior officer attached to Dunsterforce.
- White, W. Thomas** – Canadian Minister of Finance and Acting Canadian Prime Minister while Prime Minister Borden attended Peace Talks in Paris.
- Whitehouse, Sheldon** – US chargé d'affaires at Stockholm, Sweden.
- Wilson, Field Marshal Sir Henry Hughes** – 1864–1922. Chief of the Imperial General Staff, January 1918–22.
- Wilson, President Woodrow** – 1856–1924. President of the United States 1912–21.
- Winship, North** – US Consul in Petrograd 1917.
- Wiseman, Sir William George Eden, 10th Baronet** – 1885–1962. British intelligence agent who acted as a liaison between Woodrow Wilson and the British government. Was a participant in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.
- Wrangle, General Baron Peter Nikolaevich** – 1878–1928. Commander of White Volunteer Army in South Russia under Denikin and succeeded Denikin in 1920.
- Yermolov** – Anti-Bolshevik Deputy Governor at Murmansk 1918–19 who supported Maynard in his defence of the Murman Region.
- Young, Douglas** – British Consul in Archangel 1918.
- Yudenitch General Nikolai Nikolaevich** – 1862–1933. Commanded the anti-Bolshevik North-Western Army and attacked Petrograd in winter 1918–19.

Yuriev (Iur'ev), Aleksei M. – President of Murmansk Soviet June 1918.

Yuzefovitch, General – General in Denikin's Volunteer Army of South Russia.

Zenzinov, Vladimir Mikhailovich – 1880–1953. One of two Social Revolutionaries part of the Directory of Five in the Omsk government in October 1918.

Zinoviev, Grigorii Evseevich – 1883–1936. One of the original Bolshevik leaders and one of Lenin's closest associates; head of the Petrograd city and regional government; first Chairman of Comintern, 1919.

Zvenintsev, General N. I. – Russian army general in Murmansk who negotiated Allied protection for the port.

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- Public Record Office Cabinet Papers 27/24, 27/25, 27/26, 27/27, 27/28, 27/29, 27/30, 27/31, 27/32, 27/33, 27/34, 27/35, 27/36, 27/37, 27/38, 27/39. Private Microfilm Collection K. Neilson.
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