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Playing into the hands of isolationists : Woodrow Wilson's Russian policy, 1918-1920

Douglas F. Habib
San Jose State University

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PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF ISOLATIONISTS:
WOODROW WILSON'S RUSSIAN POLICY, 1918-1920

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of the Department of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Douglas F. Habib

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Dr. Billie B. Jensen

Dr. Peter M. Buzanski

Dr. Robert D. Kumamoto

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

Serena N. Stanford

ABSTRACT

PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF ISOLATIONISTS WOODROW WILSON'S RUSSIAN POLICY, 1918-1920

by Douglas F. Habib

This thesis addresses Woodrow Wilson's policy regarding Russia from the closing stages of World War I into 1920. After it was clear that Russia would drop out of the war, Wilson agreed to participate in Allied armed expeditions to Northern Russia and Vladivostok in July 1918 in an effort to achieve specific wartime goals.

Research revealed that while there was no domestic opposition to Wilson's policy during the war, once the Armistice was signed in November 1918, there was a sizable group of people who questioned Wilson on why American troops remained and engaged in fighting against the Bolshevik government in Russia. Opponents of intervention argued that Wilson was engaging in warfare without a declaration of war by Congress, and that the Russian civil war was no concern of America. Such arguments were used by virtually the same people who later opposed membership in the League of Nations.

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PREFACE

My interest in American armed intervention in Russia from 1918 to 1920 began during a Spring vacation tour of the Soviet Union in 1988. As part of the tour, the group visited many museums, and one of these museums happened to feature the events surrounding the Russian Revolution. I remember being steered through the exhibits by a small, intense woman, who shared with us the Communist Party history of the revolution and civil war. Part of the exhibition was a large map of Russia during the civil war which could light up the cities controlled by Red Russian and White Russian forces, and also point out the areas which were occupied by "reactionary capitalist forces," including the United States. I was aware that American forces had been stationed in Russia at Archangel and Vladivostok during the time of the civil war, and I had wondered why Woodrow Wilson, the champion of neutral rights and self-determination, sent troops to a state which had dropped out of the war. I was not, however, under the impression that the United States was participating in an invasion by "reactionary capitalist nations." To hear a tour guide describe my country as a force of reactionary capitalism was a bit of a shock, and I thought, surely if the United States had taken part in an invasion

of Russia to stop the Bolshevik Revolution a larger force would have been sent. Surely too, if the United States had taken an active part in the civil war, there would have been some domestic debate. These questions have lasted with me until now, when I have the time and resources to investigate these issues.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my thesis advisor and readers for their assistance in preparing this paper. I would also like to have a moment of silence to remember those pencils, pens, paper, and printer cartridges who gave their lives so valiantly so that this thesis could be created.

INTRODUCTION

The question as to when the United States should take part in collective security and international military operations is one which has recurred since the time of the Great War and the debate over membership in the League of Nations. Today, we see debates over continued American participation in NATO, and over providing troops for UN operations. There have been debates over the suitability of intervening in the former Yugoslavia, and we have witnessed debates over the appropriateness of intervention in Haiti, Somalia and the Iraq-Kuwait war. All of these episodes bring up recurrent themes of intervening in regional or internal conflicts. Should the United States take individual or collective action to ensure conflicts are quickly resolved, contained or prevented? Should the United States not interfere in conflicts which do not directly affect American security? Where should the United States draw the line as to what is a threat to security, and what is not? Is America to be the world's policeman, or are we to ignore international emergencies until they become a direct security threat? The American participation in Allied intervention in Russia from August 1918 to February 1920 raised those questions. It is possible that the American experience in the intervention

reinforced the theory of isolation, and weakened support for collective security as embodied in the League of Nations.

The whole episode of Allied intervention in Russia is a strange one. It combined an attempt to shore up an Ally which had formally dropped out of a war, the attempt to re-establish military pressure on a faltering front, the attempt to continue warfare on the territory of a non-belligerent, and an attempt to influence the outcome of a civil war. The situation encompassed many problems and presented a number of difficulties which may seem to be atypical for international relations. Yet complicated though it was, it raised basic questions for both the United States government and the population at large. Does the United States have the right to intervene in another state's internal affairs? Should the United States take part in collective security actions?

Much has been written about Woodrow Wilson's motives for participating in Allied armed intervention in Russia in the closing stages of World War I. Much has been written on the public perception of the intervention, and the campaign histories of the Allied expeditions. There is, however, little written on domestic opposition to intervention, and little analysis of what this episode meant in terms of future American participation in collective security operations. This paper will look at some of the interpretations of America's policy toward Russia from 1918 to 1920, specifically the domestic opposition to Wilson's

policy. It will also examine the impact this episode had upon the willingness of the United States to take part in subsequent collective security as embodied in the League of Nations.

This paper proposes that the participation in Allied intervention satisfied no one in mainstream American politics, and in fact, provided some members of the U.S. Congress with a graphic example of the dangers inherent in collective security operations where policy is not well thought out in advance of actions taken. It proposes that Wilson agreed to the intervention without a well thought out plan as to what American troops would accomplish. Rather, he participated in order to preserve the Allied coalition's cohesion, and he limited American activities in order to reserve the right to assume the role as an impartial agent for promoting democratic elements in Russia. It will be seen that Wilson failed to report accurately the mission to Russia to the American people and Congress so there was no common understanding as to why we were intervening in Russia. The paper also proposes that the failure of the mission, and the failure to present a coherent policy to the American people and Congress contributed to a return to a policy of non-entanglement or isolation.

For the purposes of this paper, the term intervention will be used in three ways. Armed intervention is the use of armed troops to enforce a policy or achieve a goal by one state against another. Economic intervention is the use

of funds and goods to influence a policy or goal within a state. Political intervention is the attempt to influence policy of another state through political recognition or non-recognition of a government or party, and the support or denial of support to a government or party.

The terms Bolshevik and Red Russians will be used to describe the supporters of Lenin's Soviet government, and the term White Russian will be used to describe those groups who opposed Lenin's government during the Russian civil war.

CHAPTER I

WILSON TAKES ACTION

The military position looked grim for the Allied Powers as 1918 began. On the Western Front, the British and French had staggered through a year of bloody, indecisive fighting. On the Eastern Front there was disaster. Two successive revolutions had overthrown the Czar, and the Kerensky government in quick succession. The Russian army was in ruins, and it looked as if the successor Bolshevik government was going to drop completely out of the war, thus leaving Germany in control of Eastern Europe, and freeing hundreds of thousands of troops for re-deployment on the Western Front. The good news for the Allies was that the United States had declared war on Germany in April 1917, although it took most of the rest of the year for America to build an army, ship it to Europe, and prepare it for action.

There were additional crises as Russia withdrew from the war. Some were potential crises, some real. Military stores which had been shipped to Archangel and Vladivostok could fall into the hands of the Germans. The Murmansk archipelago could be turned into a safe German submarine base. There were reports that former German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war were wandering the Russian countryside causing havoc. There was an army of

Czechs willing to fight for the Allies who were stuck in the middle of Russia with no apparent way out of the country.

In addition to these military concerns, the Allies were troubled by the nature of the Bolshevik government. This was a regime which had overthrown the republican Kerensky government, and which pledged itself to the eventual overthrow of the entire capitalist world. The Bolsheviks were the antithesis of the remaining Allied governments, and they won no converts among the Allies with either their method of seizing power, or with their peace negotiations with the German Empire.

These concerns led the Allies to begin planning for some type of intervention in Russia early in 1918. It took Britain, France, and Japan from the beginning of 1918 to June of that year to bring the United States in line with the policy of intervention. Once this was done, the Allies sent military expeditions to Archangel and Vladivostok. There were about sixteen thousand troops in Archangel, of which the Americans contributed approximately five thousand troops. In Vladivostok, there were eventually seventy thousand Japanese troops, and the Americans provided an additional nine thousand men.¹ These expeditions lasted from August 1918 to June 1919 in Archangel, and from August 1918 to February 1920 in Vladivostok. The Allies participated

¹Betty M. Unterberger, America's Siberian Expedition, 1918-1920: A Study of National Policy (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), 96-97.

in some fighting against the Red Army around Archangel, primarily during late 1918 and early 1919. American casualties in these skirmishes came to approximately 250 killed, missing and captured.² In the areas of Allied control Soviet governments were replaced by governments favorable to the Allies, and financial support was sent to White Russian forces.

Traditional Interpretations

There are, of course, conflicting interpretations of these events. The traditional view explains that the expeditions were nothing more than attempts to re-establish an Eastern Front, to hold the Trans-Siberian Railroad open, to provide an escape route for the Czechs, to prevent Allied stores from falling into German hands, and to prevent the Germans from establishing a submarine base on the Murmansk peninsula. In addressing the fact that Allied forces engaged in fighting with the Red Army, it has been argued that by simply being in Russia, the Allied forces were drawn into the civil war. Thomas Bailey writes that the expeditions were "not avowedly anti-Bolshevik" although there was a program of economic aid supplied to Admiral Alexander Kolchak and his White Russian government in Siberia.³ While this view is supported by the President's publicly stated policy, it does not touch upon Wilson's refusal to

²Joel R. Moore, Harry H. Meade, Lewis E. Jahns, The American Expedition Fighting the Bolsheviki (Detroit: Polar Bear Publishing Co., 1920), 299-303.

³Thomas A. Bailey, America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), 244.

work with the Bolsheviks upon any issue, the economic support given to Admiral Kolchak, nor the significance that Allied troops were establishing safe havens for anti-Bolshevik forces. These results must have been the unintentional consequences of following the stated policy of the Allies.

In the opinion of Betty Unterberger, Wilson participated in the expeditions as a way of keeping within coalition diplomacy, while at the same time, following the principles of non-intervention, anti-imperialism, self-determination, and the Open Door policy.⁴ Accordingly, Wilson did not consider the expeditions to be directed against the Bolsheviks. In a public announcement of 3 August 1918, he gave the purpose of the expedition and indicated that the U.S. contemplated "no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs,--not even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force may be obliged to occupy,--and no impairment of her territorial integrity either now or hereafter."⁵ This statement made clear Wilson's intentions in Russia, leaving little room for historians to doubt those intentions.⁶

⁴Betty M. Unterberger, "Woodrow Wilson and the Bolsheviks: The Acid Test of Soviet-American Relations," Diplomatic History 11 (Spring 1987): 71.

⁵Press Release, c. 3 August 1918, Arthur S. Link, ed., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, 49 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 170-71.

⁶*Ibid.*, 83.

Unterberger argues that the preservation of Russian territorial integrity and the maintenance of the Open Door were Wilson's primary goals. After all, they were basic tenets of Wilsonian diplomacy.⁷ Though the public was permitted to believe that the Siberian intervention was an anti-Bolshevik operation, in reality it was done to preserve the Open Door to Manchuria and to keep an eye on the Japanese in order to ensure they did not seize Siberia. In the end, Wilson was able to thwart perceived Japanese designs on Siberia and Manchuria, and ensure the eventual withdrawal of Japanese troops from Russia.⁸ The decisions to aid Kolchak financially were taken by the State Department when Wilson was ill and unable to keep up with events. Therefore, the aid to Admiral Kolchak, while undertaken by America, was not necessarily Wilson's policy.⁹

In addressing the fact that American troops engaged in fighting against Bolshevik forces around Archangel in December 1918, Unterberger argues that Wilson probably had no idea that American troops were engaged in military action against the Bolsheviks. Indeed, the troops were not operating under

⁷Unterberger, America's Siberian Expedition, 1918-1920: A Study of National Policy: 233.

⁸Unterberger, Diplomatic History: 91; and America's Siberian Expedition: 233.

⁹Unterberger, America's Siberian Expedition: 233.

American leadership, but were under the command of the British General Sir Frederick Poole.¹⁰

Unterberger does not deny that the Allied presence in Russia helped the White Russian forces by providing safe havens. Additionally, the White Russians benefitted from lines of communication improved due to an Inter-Allied Railway Agreement, which facilitated the operation of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In these ways the Allies, and the Americans, were participating in the Russian civil war. Unterberger asserts that these actions were intended primarily to maintain the Open Door to Manchuria and Siberia, and to maintain the territorial integrity of Russia.¹¹ Any assistance to the Whites would have been a secondary consequence of the stated Allied and American policy. In this analysis the Vladivostok expedition was the more successful of the two expeditions.

Wilson was able to perform a balancing act between his principles of self-determination, the Open Door, the territorial integrity of Russia, and wartime military objectives and opposition to German and Japanese imperialism. He was able to do so within the confines of coalition diplomacy, and in such a way

¹⁰Ibid., 86.

¹¹Ibid., 88-89.

that he did not alienate the Allies and jeopardize his vision for the post war world which was to include the League of Nations.¹²

Thomas J. Knock in his work titled To End All Wars takes the position that Wilson was extremely reluctant to take action in Russia when the Allies first approached him on the subject. Wilson and his advisors believed the Allied schemes to reopen the Eastern front through the introduction of troops in Northern Russia and Vladivostok to be of dubious merit, and Wilson was able to resist the Allies until mid-1918.¹³ Knock believes that Wilson might never had participated in intervention if it had not been for the events which followed the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. With the signing of this treaty, Germany was able to release thousands of troops to the west, and the calls by the Allies to do something in Russia reached a frantic pitch. Additionally, Japan threatened to take unilateral action in Siberia, and it was the belief of the Wilson administration that some additional Allied forces should accompany the Japanese to act as a restraint. Knock also notes the pesky Czech army and their plight in Russia as a factor which finally pushed Wilson to act with the Allies.¹⁴

¹²Unterberger, Diplomatic History, 90.

¹³Thomas J. Knock, To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 155.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 155-56.

Knock writes that the expeditions were a dismal failure. The German threat in the north never came about, the Czechs were unpredictable, and Wilson found himself stuck in Russia and open to criticism of violating his own principles of non-intervention and self-determination. Although Wilson was never fully committed to intervention in Russia, and he did not want to repeat the mistakes he made in Mexico, he found himself in a quagmire. Though Wilson limited American participation, Knock argues that the expeditions damaged Wilson's position with progressive internationalists. Progressive journals such as the New Republic and the Nation harshly criticized Wilson and believed that he had abandoned his principles and had become yet another tool of European counterrevolution and reaction.¹⁵

Revisionist Interpretations

In a revisionist analysis explaining the reasons for American participation, William Appleman Williams interprets American participation in the context of the Open Door thesis, and points out that Wilson, a believer in economic expansion, was inherently opposed to revolutions. He writes that "given the nature of his integration of morality, politics, and economics around the Open Door Policy, Wilson's opposition to revolutions becomes quite

¹⁵Ibid., 156-57.

comprehensible."¹⁶ The Bolshevik revolution directly challenged Wilson and the heads of all the Allied governments. Bolshevism was the antithesis of their traditional beliefs of good government and good society.¹⁷

Williams summarized the problems facing Wilson when he was deciding to intervene in Russia. They were: 1) not to compromise personal moral values and ideological precepts; 2) not to risk the successful conduct of the war against Germany; 3) not to allow Japan to establish itself in a position from which it could shut the Open Door in China; 4) not to unite other Russians behind the Bolsheviks.¹⁸ The answer to these problems came in the form of participation in joint intervention. In this way, there could be effective support for anti-Bolshevik groups, and it would be possible to keep an eye on Japanese movements in Siberia and Manchuria.

In Williams' analysis, it is important to remember that the American military was focused solely upon the defeat of Germany on the Western Front, and it did not want to participate in expeditions which would take forces away from that objective. However, political concerns overruled military concerns. In a measure of how seriously he viewed the Bolshevik threat, Wilson provided for

¹⁶William A. Williams, "American Intervention in Russia, 1917-1920," Studies on the Left 3 (Fall 1963): 31.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 35.

the diversion of troops to Russia prior to the conclusion of the 1918 German offensive, when the outcome in the west was still in doubt.¹⁹ Given these circumstances, Williams argues, the American policy towards Russia was first and foremost anti-Bolshevik in nature. Cooperation with the Bolsheviks in action against Germany was never a consideration for the Wilson administration.²⁰ Thus, according to Williams, opposition to Bolshevism was the determining element in American intervention in Russia, and the decision to intervene in Russia was made as early as December 1917.²¹

In yet another revisionist analysis, David Fogelsong argues that Wilson intervened overtly with military expeditions, and covertly with political and economic support of White Russian forces. Wilson participated in order to pacify the Allies and also because it fit with his pre-existing anti-Bolshevism and the promotion of responsible self-government.²² He decided to gamble on intervention without an invitation from the Soviet government because he believed that foreign troops would be welcomed by the mass of Russians since

¹⁹Ibid., 36.

²⁰Ibid., 35.

²¹Ibid., 42.

²²David S. Fogelsong, "America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1991), 543.

they would bring stability to the country, and allow them to establish responsible, non-Bolshevik governments.²³

Fogelsong's agrees that Wilson participated in order to pacify the Allies in spite of convictions that military intervention would not be effective.²⁴ Not only did Wilson disapprove of an overt military solution to the Bolshevik menace, his own public pronouncements, and the attitudes of Congress and the public would not allow him to engage in a more aggressive, overt policy.²⁵

Fogelsong believes that since overt anti-Bolshevik action was not feasible, covert means of influencing the civil war were tried. Though American military involvement in Russia was inferior in strength and scope to that of Britain and France, America contributed just as much money to White Russian forces as the latter, especially in South Russia²⁶ in an attempt to keep them fighting against the Germans.²⁷ As to political interference, American and Allied troops were present in Archangel and Vladivostok in order to provide centers around which White Russian forces could organize. At the same time, the

²³Ibid., 547.

²⁴Ibid., 543.

²⁵Ibid., 5-6.

²⁶Ibid., 286.

²⁷Ibid., 6-7

Wilson Administration refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the Bolsheviks.

According to Fogelsong, this policy was never acknowledged to the public, and the failure to explain convincingly the purpose of American troops in Russia caused both public opposition from the relatives of the soldiers in the American forces in Russia, and from congressional foes.²⁸ This type of opposition steered Wilson away from direct military intervention and toward economic intervention.

This analysis opposes the traditional view that American intervention was not anti-Bolshevik, but merely a by-product of World War I. Wilson is traditionally viewed as having given in to incessant demands from the Allies to participate in the expeditions to keep open a second front. Fogelsong adds the interpretation that Wilson saw limited intervention, both military and economic, as a way of indirectly establishing order and facilitating Russian self-determination. Economic support of White Russian forces, diplomatic non-recognition of the Bolsheviks, support of anti-Bolshevik Czech forces within Russia, and the attempts to establish Allied zones in North Russia and Vladivostok were all parts of Wilson's policy to influence the outcome of the civil war in favor of the White Russians.

²⁸Ibid., 10.

A Synthesis

N. Gordon Levin, Jr., in his book Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, does not perceive Wilson's motives for intervention in Russia as expressly anti-German or anti-Bolshevik in design. Rather, he describes the Administration's position towards Russia as a "Wilsonian desire to oppose both Bolshevism and German imperialism on behalf of pro-Allied and liberal-nationalist Russia."²⁹ Levin explains the Wilson Administration position by arguing that Bolshevism, as much as German imperialism, was contrary to the Wilsonian concept of a just world order based upon the existence of liberal-democratic capitalist states working together for peace prosperity. In no way did an unmodified Bolshevik state fit into this concept. This rejection of Bolshevism explains why at no time did Wilson or Secretary of State Robert Lansing consider the possibility of giving Lenin either economic or military aid to resist Germany.³⁰

Levin does point out that from March 1918 to June 1918 Wilson had opposed Allied plans for intervention in Russia. Wilson distrusted those plans, thinking that intervention would bring to Russia more harm than good. However, Wilson was eventually brought around to support intervention through intense lobbying on the part of the Allies, and because of the concern

²⁹N. Gordon Levin Jr., Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 104.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 80.

that anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia would turn to Germany for support if no visible support was offered by the Allies.³¹ Levin also points out that the Wilson Administration was concerned about the possibility that the Japanese might act unilaterally and intervene in Siberia. Wilson feared that such action would so alienate the Russians that they would turn to the Germans to not only force out the Japanese, but also reject the Entente.³² These were the issues which led Wilson to agree to participate in expeditions to Northern Russia and Siberia.

The desire by Wilson to support pro-Entente, anti-Bolshevik forces appears to contradict his public statements of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Russia. If Levin's interpretation is correct, then Wilson was blatantly interfering in Russian affairs. As one of the goals of the expeditions was to aid Russians in organizing for self-defense, it would appear that such self-defense was directed against both Germany and the Bolsheviks. Levin tries to reconcile this apparent contradiction between Wilson's expressed policy of non-intervention in Russian affairs by clarifying Wilson's perception of Russian politics. Levin argues that Wilson was dedicated to the liberal democratic government of the March Revolution, and rejected the Bolshevik government as it was based on the concept of a minority dictatorship. Wilson's concept of non-intervention

³¹Ibid., 89-90.

³²Ibid., 95.

took into account only relations between anti-Bolshevik groups within Russia. Wilson would not become involved in inter-White Russian disputes or power struggles. He could not, however, be able to stand by and watch a Bolshevik regime take root in Russia.³³

Levin also provides a different interpretation on Wilson's policy towards his Japanese allies. Levin does not interpret Wilson's motives in Siberia as being dedicated to keeping a suspicious eye upon the Japanese, nor one of preserving the Open Door in Asia. Rather, it was an attempt to bring the Japanese into the Wilsonian concept of internationalism. This does not mean that Levin discounts the watchful aspect of America vis-a-vis the Japanese in Siberia, but he believes Wilson was pursuing more than merely a negative policy. By joining with the Japanese in Siberia, America could not only reassure Russians who would be insulted by the presence of Japanese troops, but also accustom the Japanese to working multilaterally to counter threats to stability in Asia.³⁴

In the final analysis, however, Levin reminds his readers that Wilson was never fully committed to intervention in Russia and had limited resources with which to work. Levin notes that for all of the actions Wilson did take to shore up pro-Ally, anti-Bolshevik forces, America did withdraw from Northern Russia

³³Ibid., 109, 233.

³⁴Ibid., 112-13.

in mid 1919 although there was an embryonic White Russian government which desperately needed the backing of the Allies.³⁵ As Levin writes:

There can be no doubt then, both that Wilson opposed extensive political and military intervention in the Russian Civil War and that the President wanted to see the Russians settle their own affairs. Yet the evidence also suggests that Wilson was in no sense indifferent to the outcome of such an internal Russian struggle.³⁶

To Levin, Wilson tried to assist liberal-democratic Russians within Russia as both an attempt to reform the government of the March Revolution, to counter the Bolsheviks, and to save Russia from German imperialism. Wilson hoped that such pro-Entente, anti-Bolshevik elements would be successful, and that eventually Russia would be able to take part in the American inspired post war world order based upon liberal-democratic traditions and capitalist prosperity.³⁷

A Re-Evaluation

In reviewing these analyses, and in examining the statements of Wilson and his advisors, it appears that Wilson, though no supporter of the Bolsheviks, only participated in military intervention after much consideration and debate. He never extended diplomatic recognition to the Bolshevik regime, and he never made any move which could have been construed as offering

³⁵Ibid., 231.

³⁶Ibid., 232.

³⁷Ibid., 236.

recognition to the Bolsheviks.³⁸ As early as December 1917, the Administration viewed the Bolsheviks as "treacherous," and it was not possible to recognize the Bolsheviks as a de-facto government because it was not seen as responsible to, nor representative of the Russian people.³⁹ It must be remembered that while Wilson was not prepared to recognize the Bolsheviks as the government of Russia, he was also not prepared to battle the revolution with force of arms, and he repeatedly stated he did not intend to interfere in the domestic affairs of Russia.

Wilson was inflexible in his non-recognition position. Two members of the United States Red Cross Commission to Russia (established and sent to Russia in mid-1917 to help keep Russia in the war) found this out when they tried to change Wilson's mind. William B. Thompson, a conservative Wall Street banker and head of the commission until December 1917 and Raymond Robins, the progressive Republican reformer from Chicago who took over for Thompson from December 1917 until April 1918, concluded that though the Bolsheviks were much too radical for their tastes, they appeared to have a program generally acceptable to many Russians, and their control of Russia

³⁸Translation of a Telegram from Jean Jules Jusserand to Stephan Jean Marie Pinchon, 5 December 1917, Link, Papers, 45: 220.

³⁹Statement by Robert Lansing, 4 December 1917, Link, Papers 45: 205.

was quickly becoming a fact of life. Additionally, they were more acceptable than the reactionary elements within Russia.

When Thompson was recalled to the United States in December 1917, and when Robins was recalled in March 1918, they both tried to change Wilson's views on recognition of the Bolsheviks. Thompson tried several times to gain an interview with Wilson in an effort to discuss the matter. However, neither letters from friends on his behalf, nor letters written by Thompson himself persuaded Wilson to discuss such alternatives. When a mutual friend wrote to Wilson in January 1918 to advise that Thompson would be in Washington for several days, and would be available for an interview, Wilson responded that he could not possibly meet him due to a cold.⁴⁰ Wilson made clear that he was not willing to talk with someone who was trying to change his Russian policy. Wilson wrote, "some day I hope I shall be able to have a deliberate talk with him, but just at present the changes taking place in Russia are so kaleidoscopic that I feel that information and advice are futile until there is something definite to plan with as well as for."⁴¹

Robins also was unable to catch the ear of the President, and in fact Wilson had decided long before Robins returned to the United States that his

⁴⁰Letter from William Boyce Thompson, 31 January 1918, Link, Papers 46: 193.

⁴¹Woodrow Wilson to Thomas William Lamont, 31 January 1918, Link, Papers, 46: 179-80.

opinion was untrustworthy.⁴² Robins did manage to meet with Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and he succeeded in submitting his views in a written report in July 1918. Robins argued that Germany was trying to create puppet states in the Ukraine, the Baltic region and Finland; that Allied intervention in Russia would be equivalent to German aggression; that intervention if uninvited by the Bolsheviks would be opposite of the principles of Wilson's war policy of self-determination; that intervention, if uninvited, would result in civil war in Russia; that intervention would help Germany consolidate gains in the East; and that Allied economic co-operation with the Bolsheviks would allow them to become an effective fighting force to be used against Germany.⁴³

Robins never met with Wilson, although he found other ways to make his message heard. He was able to testify before Senate committees, and succeeded in presenting his case to Senators William Borah, Hiram Johnson, Robert LaFollete, and Medill McCormick.⁴⁴ His talks with Johnson proved to be particularly influential, and they led to Johnson's sponsorship of a Senate Resolution calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Russia in December 1918 and January 1919. Though Robins was able to present his

⁴²Woodrow Wilson to Robert Lansing with Enclosure, 4 February 1918, Link, Papers, 46: 222-23.

⁴³Neil V. Salzman, Reform and Revolution: The Life and Times of Raymond Robins (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991), 282.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 283.

case to individual Senators and a Senate Committee his efforts were in vain. He was not able to extend this influence to Wilson, and Wilson never did change his policy.

As early as January 1918, there were allied proposals to send troops into the Far Eastern regions of Russia. France, Britain and Japan all wanted some sort of intervention in the area, though there were initially some disagreements as to how the expeditions should be constituted. The British believed the Trans-Siberian Railroad to be vital to supply pro-Allied Russian forces in southern and south eastern Russia, and they and the French had agreed to allow Japan to occupy the railroad as a mandate to ensure this line of communication would stay open.⁴⁵ The Japanese wanted to be the only allied force in East Russia (Vladivostok), as they believed keeping order there was their duty alone.⁴⁶

When he was first approached with these proposals, Wilson opposed them saying that such maneuvers would give Germany the propaganda argument that the Allies intended to occupy Russia, rather than combat Germany.⁴⁷ It

⁴⁵Robert Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, 9 February 1918, Link, Papers, 46: 301-3.

⁴⁶Frank L. Polk to Woodrow Wilson, 24 January 1918, Link, Papers, 46: 118.

⁴⁷White House Cable to Frank Lloyd Polk, Enclosure II, 18 January 1918, Link, Papers, 46: 35.

was Wilson's position that any Allied occupation of Russia's Trans-Siberian Railroad would be unwise. If any force were to be needed to establish order, then a multi-national force would be needed, not one country acting as a mandate for the rest of the allies.⁴⁸ It appears the Wilson Administration was more suspicious of the Japanese than concerned about the port of Vladivostok remaining peaceful and orderly. In the end, both Japan and the United States took part in occupying Vladivostok to keep order and ensure the port would stay open.

The matter of sending an Allied expedition to North Russia was not as difficult for the Administration. While Wilson was unconvinced an expedition to Vladivostok was of any advantage, he was willing to cooperate with the Allies in an expedition to Murmansk and Archangel.⁴⁹ Wilson was willing to send naval support to the British at Murmansk as early as April 1918,⁵⁰ and the U.S.S. Olympia arrived at Murmansk on 24 May 1918.⁵¹

There were limits to Wilson's cooperation with the Allies in Russia. It was decided that the U.S. would send three battalions of infantry, and three companies of engineers as part of total Allied expedition, although the U.S.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Lord Reading to James Balfour, 12 May 1918, Link, Papers, 47: 621-22.

⁵⁰Woodrow Wilson to Robert Lansing, 4 April 1918, Link, Papers, 47: 246.

⁵¹Ibid.

reserved the right to withdraw its troops from the effort if it was determined the expedition was deviating from stated policy.⁵²

In writing to Frank Polk, the counselor to the Secretary of State, Wilson stated it was not his intention to re-organize an Eastern Front.⁵³ Far from maintaining troops in North Russia to assist White Russian forces in their struggle against the Reds, Wilson declared as early as February 1919 that it was his intention to withdraw the troops as soon as possible.⁵⁴ To Wilson, it was clear that the usefulness of the Allied expedition was over.

During a meeting of the Allied Powers in May 1919, Wilson admitted he had no policy in Russia, and added that up to that time, it was not possible to have a policy due to the confused situation in that country.⁵⁵ If this were truly an anti-Bolshevik policy, then surely he would have gone into North Russia with more than a mere five thousand troops and one old cruiser. Wilson did not withdraw immediately because he did not want to upset the other Allies.

⁵²Peyton Conway to Gen. Tasker H. Bliss, 22 July 1918, Link, Papers, 48: 57.

⁵³Woodrow Wilson to Frank L. Polk, 17 July 1918, Link, Papers, 48: 641-42.

⁵⁴Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme War Council, 14 February 1919, Link, Papers, 55: 181.

⁵⁵Notes of a Meeting of the Council of Four, May 20, 1919, Link, Papers, 59: 301-2.

Wilson was indeed playing coalition politics, while at the same time trying to stay true to his stated policies of non-interference, and territorial integrity. It appears that Wilson was merely contributing troops to intervention in order to have an opportunity to promote liberal democracy in Russia. For a man such as Wilson, democracy was self-determination, and if America was to promote self-determination in Russia, then it would have to be in a position to aid democratic elements within Russia. No assistance or recognition was given to the Bolsheviks, because if one's position is to promote democracy, then giving recognition and aid to the Bolsheviks would obviously be contrary to the goals of assisting democracy. It was as if Wilson were searching for some liberal democratic element within Russia to step forward, and he did not find such a group. Unfortunately Wilson did not try to educate Congress and the public about his Russian policy. As will be seen in the following chapters, Congress and the public held a variety of beliefs as to why American troops were in Russia. There were opinions that American troops were in Russia to fight Bolsheviks, to provide aid to the Russians, or to achieve specific war aims. None of these beliefs seemed to be supported by the results of the expeditions, and as will be seen later, much of the Congress and American public was dissatisfied with the experience.

The lack of communication gave ample ammunition for opponents in Congress to question what American troops were doing in Russia without a

stated purpose, and why they were kept there well after the conclusion of the war. There were even accusations that by positioning troops in a neutral country, the United States was acting just as Germany had in relation to Belgium. The following chapters will explore the many different Congressional and public reactions to Wilson's policies, and the different opinions on what should be done in Russia.

CHAPTER II

CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION

In the summer of 1918, Woodrow Wilson decided to send twelve thousand troops to Russia as part of an Allied expedition to accomplish his specific wartime goals, which were valid wartime goals. Yet it must be remembered that Russia was out of the war, and technically a non-belligerent at the time Allied troops landed in North Russia and Vladivostok. In effect, the Allies were occupying a non-belligerent country, and opposition soon rose in Congress.

During the war, there did not appear to be many concerns about the legality or appropriateness of Wilson's action. The only murmurs on the floor of Congress regarding his policy in Russia were two resolutions. On March 4, 1918, Representative Meyer London (Socialist-New York) introduced House Joint Resolution 256 protesting against the suggested invasion of the territory of Russia.¹ This resolution was introduced and referred to committee on the same day, and was not heard of again. In a show of support for the President, Senator William H. King (Democrat-Utah) introduced Senate Resolution 262,

¹Congress, House, Joint Resolution protesting against suggested invasion of territory of Russia, H.J. Res. 256, 65th Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record, (4 March 1918), vol. 56, pt. 3, 3028.

which indicated that whereas Russia was about to realize a republican government, and since it was in the interest of the U.S. to promote republics, it was resolved the U.S. aid Russia and that a military expedition should be sent to that country.² This resolution was introduced and referred to committee on the same day, and it too died in committee.

These opposing resolutions appeared to be the extent of Congressional discussion on Wilson's policy prior to the end of the war. It appears Congress did not want to interfere with Wilson's handling of wartime policy, and so it went along with Wilson on matters of foreign policy. There was no discussion on the floor as to whether or not these military expeditions interfered with the rights of a non-belligerent. It was the Congressional view that the U.S. was supporting an ally. As a wartime measure, this sending of troops was seen as a legitimate military operation.

Once the Armistice was signed however, there were rumblings in Congress about Wilson's Russian policy, and questions began to arise as to why U.S. troops were fighting in the frozen bogs of the north.³ Some of this opposition came from the representatives of the states which were the homes

²Congress, Senate, Resolution that an Allied expedition be sent to Russia, S. R. 262, 65th Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record, (10 June 1918), vol. 56, pt. 8, 7557.

³Leonid I. Strakhovsky, Intervention at Archangel: The Story of Allied Intervention and Russian Counter-Revolution in North Russia 1918-1920 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 105, 131, 135-37.

of the soldiers who comprised the American troops in Russia. Representative J. M. C. Smith (Republican-Michigan) agitated for the withdrawal of U.S. troops on 12 February 1919, and he expressed concern that no one could say how or why troops were sent to Russia, nor when they would return. He also read a letter into the Congressional Record from a constituent who appealed to the government to withdraw the troops from Russia.⁴ Representative Ernest Lundeen (Republican-Minnesota) introduced House Concurrent Resolution 64 on 4 January 1919, demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Russia,⁵ and on 1 February 1919, William E. Mason (Republican-Illinois) submitted House Concurrent Resolution 66, which also resolved to withdraw U.S. troops from Russia.⁶ Both resolutions were submitted to committee, and were not heard from again.

In addition to the ineffective Mid-West opposition to Wilson in the House of Representatives, there was strong post-Armistice opposition based in the Senate and led by Hiram Johnson (Republican-California). Johnson was

⁴Congress, House, Remarks in House on withdrawal of American troops, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (12 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 3242.

⁵Congress, House, Concurrent resolution, H. C. Res. 64, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (4 January 1919), vol. 57, pt. 1, 1060.

⁶Congress, House, Concurrent resolution favoring withdrawal of American troops from Russia, H. Con. Res. 66, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (1 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 3, 2566.

relatively new to the Senate, having been elected in 1916. He was a progressive Republican, and he had made his name in California by taking on the politically powerful Southern Pacific Railroad, as a founding member of the Progressive Party in 1912, and supporting progressive programs as governor from 1911 to 1917. In the United States Senate, he continued to support the the progressive wing of the Republican Party. He had a staunch "America-first" philosophy. He voted against declaring war against Germany in 1917, and during the war, he sat on the Senate Armed Forces committee. While a supporter of the war effort once America joined the fighting, he was a constant thorn in the side of the military in keeping on pressure to expedite demobilization. He distrusted a large peace-time army and opposed peace-time conscription. He also fancied himself a Presidential candidate, and by 1918 he was testing the waters for a possible run for the Presidency in 1920. Reading through some of his personal correspondence with his family makes clear his position towards intervention in Russia. As early as March 1918, Johnson expressed pleasure that Wilson was opposed to intervention in Russia, but by 12 December 1918, Johnson was questioning the Administration's policy.⁷ In fact, he was rather quiet on the subject of U.S. troops in Russia until November and December of 1918. After the armistice

⁷Letter to Amy Johnson, 23 March 1918, Robert E. Burke, ed., The Diary Letters of Hiram Johnson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1965), n.p. [This reference is not paginated.]

was signed, he was suspicious of the reasons given by the Administration for keeping troops in Russia. He thought that perhaps they were staying for purposes of occupation, reconstruction of Russia, or to protect Europe from Bolshevism.⁸ He became increasingly incensed that U.S. troops and Russians were skirmishing with each other, and in December of 1918 he wrote to one of his sons:

The Russian situation is a shame and a disgrace, giving lie to all our professions of democracy. I am going to try to devote tomorrow to this situation, and if I can have any clarified thought upon it I am going to bring it up on the floor of the Senate next week, and ask that our troops be withdrawn from there.⁹

He became increasingly suspicious of the reasons why American troops were sent initially, and he believed the Allies were trying to influence the U.S. into sending troops to police Russia.¹⁰ In fact he questioned whether the Administration had a policy, or if it was being led by the nose by the Allies. On 12 December 1918, Johnson introduced a resolution asking the Senate to question the President on what the troops in Russia were to accomplish. Were the troops in place in order to help destroy Bolshevism, and if so, what sort of government would take its place? If the troops were trying to fight off German

⁸Letter to Archibald M. Johnson, 14 November 1918, Burke, n.p.

⁹Letter to Jack Johnson, 7 December 1918, Burke, n.p.

¹⁰Letter to Archibald M. Johnson, 20 December 1918, Burke, n.p.

aggression, why were they still in Russia a month after the signing of the armistice? Johnson also asked why U.S. troops were engaged in fighting against Bolshevik troops in the Archangel region.¹¹ Johnson used the Administration's own position against it when he quoted an Administration statement indicating it had no designs on the territory or internal affairs of Russia under this military operation:

In taking this action the Government of the United States wishes to announce to the people of Russia in the most public and solemn manner that it contemplates no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs, not even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force may be obliged to occupy, and no impairment of her territorial integrity, either now or hereafter but that what we are about to do has as its single and only object the rendering of such aid as shall be acceptable to the Russian people themselves in their endeavors to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny.¹²

There was no response from the Administration to the Johnson resolution of the 12th, though this did not seem to bother Johnson. In a letter to his son Jack Johnson he wrote "it is of very little consequence whether the resolution is reported, because I will continue to hammer away upon the proposition anyway."¹³ Johnson was going to make an issue of the expedition regardless of the answer, if any, by the Administration.

¹¹Congress, Senate, Affairs in Russia, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (12 December 1918), vol. 57, pt. 1, 344-346.

¹²*Ibid.*, 343.

¹³Letter to Jack Johnson, 29 December 1918, Burke, n.p.

On 9 January 1919, Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock (Democrat-Nebraska), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, made a speech in Congress in which he responded to criticism of the Administration's Russian policy. Hitchcock rhetorically asked if the United States was prepared to refuse its allies when requests for military assistance were put to the government? Was it to abandon 50,000 Czech troops to their fate in central Russia?¹⁴ The answer was, of course, no. He explained the purpose of the expedition was to save supplies at Vladivostok, and this was accomplished. It was to save an important line of communication (the Trans-Siberian Railroad) and this was done. It was to save the Czech Army in Central Russia, and this was done. It was to save supplies at Archangel and prevent the Germans from establishing a submarine base at Murmansk, and this was also done.¹⁵ The reason the U.S. was still in Russia was because the U.S. started operations jointly with Britain, France and Japan, and the U.S. could not let its allies down by unilaterally withdrawing from the operation. Additionally, though it was true an armistice had been signed, there was not officially a state of peace. Therefore,

¹⁴Congress, House, Affairs in Russia, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (9 January 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 1161-2.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1163.

having troops stationed in Russia would discourage Germany from beginning a new offensive in the East.¹⁶

Once this subject had been introduced on the floor, there followed a debate on what the United States should be doing in Russia. Opinion was divided between those who thought the U.S. should withdraw from Russia, to those who believed the U.S. was not doing enough. Senator King expressed his opinion that it was unfortunate that 50,000 to 100,000 troops were not sent to Russia in the Summer of 1918 in order to give aid to the anti-Bolshevik forces. He regretted that allied forces had

not taken in the past stronger measures for the purpose of protecting Russia as well as themselves, and in order that they might wall in the Bolshevik murderers and madmen, so that the fires which they are lighting in Europe might not spread into Germany and other European lands and undo much that has been accomplished by the Allied Governments.¹⁷

Senator William E. Borah (Republican-Idaho) contradicted Senator King and opined that the situation in Russia did not lend itself to outside intervention and added, "I want to get out of Russia and let Russia settle her own affairs so

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 1166-67.

far as military intervention is concerned, just as soon as we can do so, with due deference to the military situation which has been superinduced by this war."¹⁸

This debate in the Senate did not satisfy Senator Johnson. He did not find Senator Hitchcock's explanation of the Administration's policy acceptable, and in another letter he explained why U.S. troops were in Russia. "The true explanation is, and this unfortunately I can not prove at all, that our troops are in Siberia and at Archangel because of the great debt of Russia to France, and because we are practically going to compel receivership of Russia for the collection of those debts."¹⁹ Senator Johnson also had another reason for opposing the Administration:

I am glad to put the onus upon the Democratic Party. It means that they hope to justify war without a declaration of war. Absolutism and autocracy in our rulers are as pronounced as that against which presumably we have fought in the war.²⁰

By January 1919, Senator Johnson had not received an answer to his resolution of 12 December 1918, and therefore he submitted two resolutions on the floor of the Senate; both called for the withdrawal of troops as soon as possible. These were Senate Resolution 411 and Senate Resolution 444. Both

¹⁸Ibid., 1167.

¹⁹Letter to Jack Johnson, 11 January 1919, Burke, n.p.

²⁰Letter to Jack Johnson, 8 February 1919, Burke, n.p.

were submitted on 13 February 1919, and S. R. 444 was debated on February 13th, while S.R. 411 was debated on the fourteenth.²¹

Senator Johnson began the debate on S.R. 444 by saying he was pleased to learn from foreign news reports that Britain's Prime Minister Lloyd George had stated that the United States would not send further aid, nor would it intervene further in Russia. He pointed out his pleasure in discovering U.S. policy from a foreign government. He continued by saying the question of troops in Russia was not about Bolshevism, but rather, it was about five thousand troops in North Russia in immediate danger without the backing of a firm policy. It was also, he said, about the constitutionality of sending troops to fight in Russia.²²

Senator Henry C. Lodge (Republican-Massachusetts) joined the debate by stating that the initial policy was determined during wartime, and the only doubts he had regarding the action was that too few troops were sent into

²¹S.R. 411 resolved "that in the opinion of the Senate United States soldiers should be withdrawn from Russia as soon as practicable," and S.R. 444 resolved "that in the opinion of the Senate the soldiers of the United States as soon as practicable should be withdrawn from Russia." from the Congress, Senate, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (13 February 1919), vol 57, pt. 4, 3258; and (14 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 3334.

²²Congress, Senate, Resolution relative to proposed withdrawal of American troops in Russia, S.R. 411, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (13 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 3258-59.

Russia to make a contribution. However, now that hostilities ceased, U.S. troops should be withdrawn immediately.²³

Senator Hitchcock again presented the Administration's policy, repeating his arguments of January ninth. He added, in a personal jab at Johnson, that he personally thought that Johnson's agitation was a "tempest in a teapot."²⁴ Senators Johnson and Hitchcock spent the remainder of the session debating whether or not a state of war existed between Russia and the United States, with Senator Johnson taking the position that a virtual state of war existed in North Russia. This being the case, Senator Johnson continued to ask why the United States had not declared war upon Russia.²⁵ Senator Hitchcock countered by insisting no state of war existed in the area, and that the American troops were a part of the North Russian expedition assisting the Allies and Russia, and it would be wrong to abandon the Allies by leaving prematurely.²⁶ At the conclusion of the debate, the resolution was sent to the calendar. The full Senate did not vote on this resolution before the end of the session, and it was heard of no more.

²³Ibid., 3262.

²⁴Ibid., 3263.

²⁵Ibid., 3264.

²⁶Ibid.

Senator Johnson's second resolution, S.R. 444 was considered and debated on 14 February 1919, a day after the defeat of S.R. 411. Senator Johnson introduced this resolution by saying it was obvious to him there was no United States policy towards Russia, since his interrogatory resolution had been bottled up in the Foreign Relations Committee, and he had not yet received word from the Administration as to a definite policy. He added he did not believe the United States had any business in Russia, and the troops stationed in Russia were simply courting disaster.²⁷

Senator Lawrence Y. Sherman (Republican-Illinois) supported Johnson's position by pointing out there was not a state of war between Russia and the United States, though the expedition seemed to indicate that was the case. He stated that though he was not a friend of Bolshevism, he did not believe it was the duty of the United States to send troops to suppress Bolshevism in Russia.²⁸ Senator Sherman even went so far as to compare the United States intervention with the invasion of Belgium by Germany in opening phases of the world war. The stationing of troops followed a law of necessity, rather than of

²⁷Congress, Senate, Resolution relative to proposed withdrawal of American troops in Russia, S.R. 411, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (14 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 3334.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 3334-36.

international law. In his eyes, it was a "most unusual procedure" and "something for which we criticize Germany."²⁹

Of course this did not sit well with some members of Congress. Senator King interrupted Senator Sherman and said that the United States was invited into Russia to fight Germans and Bolsheviks. In his opinion, the Bolshevik government was not a legitimate government, but a tool of Germany, and as such, it should be fought by the Allied powers.³⁰

Senator Sherman countered by saying that the only way we could legally send troops to Russia was upon invitation by the Russian government. He added that the United States never officially recognized the Kerensky government, and now that an armistice had been signed, there was no war under way. Therefore, the United States troops were there illegally.³¹

Senator Porter J. McCumber (Republican-North Dakota) pointed out that the Bolshevik government came to power through the assistance of Germany, and therefore it was a friend of Germany, and enemies of the Allies. In this instance, it was perfectly legitimate to make war against enemies of the Allied Powers. As only an armistice had been signed and not a peace treaty, the Allies were still justified in their military operations. McCumber agreed with

²⁹Ibid., 3336.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

Johnson that the United States should have a definite policy. He believed the United States should fight the Bolshevik government by sending 100,000 to 500,000 troops into Russia to defeat Lenin's government.³² He believed if and when the Bolshevik government had been defeated, a law-abiding and legitimate government would be established. If it were not a representative government, then an autocratic one would suffice.³³

Senator Sherman continued with his remarks after Senator McCumber had finished, pointing out that he believed the United States was in Siberia (East Russia) legally, as the troops were there to support the migration of the Czech army, which was considered to be the governing power in Siberia. However, the United States still did not have any legitimate reason to stay in North Russia. He complained that Wilson usurped the legislative power to declare war, and as the Congress had not declared war upon the Bolshevik government, the United States had no right to be in North Russia.³⁴ He concluded by stating the United States had no right to shape the government in another state. He was in favor of immediate withdrawal, or a declaration of recognition of an opposition government. He also recommended sending

³²Ibid., 3337.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 3338-39.

sufficient troops to Russia to defeat the Bolsheviks.³⁵ Senator Sherman took this approach in order to shake his fellow Senators into thinking of the consequences of full military action in Russia.

At the conclusion of the debate, S.R. 411 was tabled. A quorum was declared, and thirty-three voted in favor of the resolution and thirty-three against. The voting was primarily split along party lines. Of those voting to table the resolution, twenty-nine were Democrats, and of those voting against putting the resolution on the table, twenty-nine were Republicans. Those not voting were closely divided along party lines. Thirteen Republicans and seventeen Democrats did not vote. The deciding vote was left to the President of the Senate, who voted in favor of tabling the resolution.

The debate on the floor of the Senate revealed three main positions toward Russia. There were those who believed Russia should settle its own affairs, and the United States should have nothing to do with its internal development. Other Senators opposed Wilson's policy because it did not go far enough in fighting the Bolsheviks, and these Senators believed the United States should make every effort to stop Lenin and the Bolsheviks from consolidating power in Russia. Finally, there were those who supported Wilson's policy as a wartime measure, and who wanted to continue United

³⁵Ibid., 3342.

States presence in Russia as long as the Allied mission there still needed American support.

Senator Johnson may have been disappointed in his defeat, but he viewed the entire fight in a positive light. In his eyes, he was able to make the presence of American troops in Russia a party question, and he seemed pleased that he was able to put the Democrats on the defensive.³⁶ After the defeat of his resolution in February, Johnson did not again directly oppose Wilson's Russian policy, as his attention was diverted by the debates on the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles.

Senator Johnson's opposition to American involvement in Russia followed his basic isolationist sentiment, which could also be seen in his opposition to the League of Nations. He did not want the United States to become dragged into European affairs on a permanent basis; he did not want the United States to support "world wide imperialism,"³⁷ and he did not want to see America become a loan collector for France.³⁸ He was also not going to pass up an

³⁶Letter to Jack Johnson, 16 February 1919, Burke, n.p.

³⁷Letter to Archibald Johnson, 25 December 1919, Burke, n.p.

³⁸Johnson believed France was concerned because of the Bolshevik policy of repudiating debts taken on by the Czarist government. Johnson was first warned of this possibility through talks with Raymond Robins, who in turn learned of this through a discussion with Henri Bergson in July 1918. Robins was told that the French people had invested their life savings in government bonds, and if Soviet Russia repudiated her debts to France, the French government would be in dire financial straits, and the French government

opportunity to embarrass the Democrats if at all possible. Though opposition appeared to be partisan fighting, Hiram Johnson's position was consistent with his America first beliefs.

Did the opposition have any effect on U.S. policy? No. In a letter from Frank L. Polk to Robert Lansing, the Secretary of State, there was some mention of Johnson's frequent attacks upon the Administration's Russian policy, and there was a tone of concern regarding a "critical spirit to-day."³⁹ However, it does not appear that this critical spirit was the catalyst for Wilson's decision to withdraw troops from Murmansk and Archangel. Wilson, as indicated through his statements, never intended to stay in Russia, never intended to send a large number of troops to Russia, and had no intention of fighting Bolsheviks or overthrowing Lenin. It is clear that when Allied intervention in Russia was first proposed in early 1918, Wilson was worried that an occupying force of allied troops could be seen as an invading army by the Russians, and it could be used as a propaganda tool by the Germans to get the Russians to fight the Allies.

Wilson did not see the intervention as a chance for overthrowing Lenin, and he fought off suggestions by the British that more support be sent to

might fall because of inability to pay off the bonds. Cited from Salzman, 283.

³⁹Frank Lyon Polk to Robert Lansing, 24 January 1919, Link, Papers, 54: 259.

Russia to back the anti-Bolshevik forces. Wilson and Winston Churchill, at a meeting of the Supreme War Council in February, engaged in an exchange in which Wilson stated he did not think that the Allied troops in Russia were doing anything constructive and should be withdrawn. Churchill argued that withdrawal would mean the destruction of 500,000 anti-Bolshevik troops throughout Russia. Wilson responded by indicating that the Allies had no Russian ally ready to use supplies effectively, and that the Allied forces now in Russia were not enough to counter the Bolsheviks.⁴⁰ Other officials within the Wilson administration were also of the same opinion. William C. Bullitt, Colonel Edward M. House, and General Tasker H. Bliss all commented upon the need to withdraw American troops in late January, and early February 1919.⁴¹

Though the Administration wished to withdraw U.S. troops as soon as possible, the irony was that the weather would not permit it. Murmansk and Archangel were locked in by ice, and it would not be possible to remove troops before the northern ice broke, which was not until late May and early

⁴⁰Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme War Council, 14 February 1919, Link, Papers, 54: 181.

⁴¹William C. Bullitt to E. M. House, 30 January 1919, Link, Papers, 54: 348-9; Tasker Howard Bliss to Newton Diehl Baker with Enclosure, 14 February 1919, Link, Papers, 55: 188-92; Edward Mandell House to Woodrow Wilson, c. 17 February 1919, Link, Papers, 55: 203-4.

June of 1919.⁴² At that time, the frozen seas of northern Russian finally cleared, and sufficient ships were available to transport the Allied soldiers.

American participation in the Allied expedition to Murmansk and Archangel ended in June 1919, although American troops remained in Vladivostok until February 1920. In reviewing the thoughts of Wilson, House, Lansing, and others in the Administration, it does not appear as if the Administration was in any danger of becoming bogged down in Russia and taking part in combating Bolshevism. The Wilson Administration had a strict measurement for rendering assistance in Russia, and when they saw that the troops were no longer serving the purpose for which they were sent, the Administration moved to withdraw those troops. The only reason they stayed until the Summer of 1919 was because of the weather conditions.

The question remains if both the Administration and Johnson had the same goals in mind (the immediate withdrawal of troops), why then did Senator Johnson make a pest of himself? There was genuine concern on Johnson's part that America was becoming the world's policeman, and he feared that the Russian expeditions were the start of just such a policy. It should also be remembered that there was a partisan aspect to his position. Johnson wanted to turn the issue of American intervention into a party issue, and paint the Democrats as the party which sent American boys to far away places to fight

⁴²Strakhovsky, 191-92.

and die in matters that were not the immediate concern of the United States. Senator Johnson was unable to change Wilson's Russian policy, though he was quite successful in making his sentiments known. When faced with the League of Nations charter he used the same arguments against League membership as he used against Russian intervention.

CHAPTER III PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INTERVENTION

Public opinion, as measured in journal articles which addressed Wilson's policy towards Russia, fell into three general groups. One group provided qualified support for the President's policy. Others thought he was not doing enough to defeat Bolshevism, and a final group who thought the United States should not be involved in the Russian civil war.

Wilson initially informed the American public regarding his policy with a press release on 3 August 1918. Secretary of State Robert Lansing had suggested to Wilson he make an announcement to the American public to clarify the Administration's position towards Russia.¹ Indeed, foreign observers noted that American opinion was beginning to take shape in mid-1918, and British officials believed Wilson's policy might be changed if he believed much of the public was against him.²

¹Robert Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, 13 June 1918, U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers 1914-1920 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 2: 362.

²Sir William Wiseman to Sir Eric Drummond, 30 June 1918, Link, Papers, 48: 470.

By mid-1918 there were discussions in the popular press regarding what should be done in Russia to keep that country in the war. In general, the concerns of the American public were somewhat similar to those of the Administration, and intervention was generally seen as desirable. There were many who believed intervention was necessary to maintain the Eastern Front, and to prevent Germany from dominating Russia. The New Republic stated that "it is our right as well as our duty" to help keep Russia from falling under German control or slipping into anarchy and chaos.³ Any such action should be directed against the German presence in Russia, and guarantees should be given that the integrity of Russia not be violated:

To send an Allied expedition into Russia, under appropriate guarantees of Russian civil and territorial integrity, would be excellent policy, provided that we could be assured of the consent of the Russian people, or at least of no opposition that is not purely passive. We cannot be assured of Russian consent so long as the Bolsheviki remain dominant and in their present mood toward us. Possibly their dominance is shadowy and of no account. If this is the case we can afford to wait until they give way to a regime that will invite our aid against Germany. Possibly too, their dominance rests upon solid foundation, and that they can be brought around by skillful diplomacy to an acceptance of our aid against the common foe. But so long as they remain in power and are prepared to resist our intervention, the best of intentions on our part could not insure us against the disasters attendant upon a civil war from which only our enemies could possible profit.⁴

³"Intervention in Russia," New Republic 15 (1 June 1918), 130-32.

⁴Ibid.

There were others who saw intervention in Russia not only as a chance to re-open the Eastern Front, but also as a way to combat Bolshevism. The New York Times pointed out that there was a call for intervention in Russia by those who were desperate to combat the Germans, and also to save Russian civilization from anarchy and Bolshevism. The Times expressed the belief that the reason why the Russians had not been able to stop the Bolsheviks was that they did not have a nucleus around which to organize. With Allied intervention, it would be possible for the Russians to form around the nucleus of Allied troops and defeat the dreaded Bolsheviks.

Russia today is ruled by "the thug with a rifle," yet Russia has not become a nation of thugs with rifles. Russia is ruled by the thug with a rifle because the individual Russian cannot defend himself against this new despot of his. Give him a rock to put his back against, and he will defend himself fast enough.⁵

There were those who were not so confident that intervention was such a good idea. The editors of the Nation, a progressive news journal based in New York, were of the opinion that any intervention would be directed against the Bolsheviks, as well as the Germans. They believed the Allied intervention was intended to provide a rallying point for "sound and sane elements of the Russian people" that would be able to overthrow the Bolsheviks and rejoin the

⁵New York Times, 22 July 1918, 8., as quoted in Leonid I. Strakhovsky, American Opinion About Russia 1917-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 65-66.

Allied cause. However, "that such a scheme should find even a moment's consideration only shows the extent of popular ignorance in matters concerning the Russian revolution, and the popular belief in quick remedies against fundamental social ills."⁶ This opinion held that the Bolsheviks were more than mere usurpers. The Bolsheviks were seen as addressing genuine problems within Russian society, and having the support of a good number of Russian citizens. The editors of the Nation went on to say that a military expedition to overthrow the Bolsheviks would be equivalent to a declaration of war, and the resulting chaos in Russia would be the worst possible development.⁷

These opinions continued to be expressed throughout the public debate over American and Allied involvement in Russia up to the end of the war. With the signing of the Armistice, the perception of the problem changed complexion. The Administration maintained troops in Northern Russia until June 1919, and in Vladivostok until February 1920, as part of the overall Allied policy, although the Administration resisted plans to increase the number of troops committed to Russia. In addition, it maintained the policy of non-recognition of the Bolshevik government, and withheld economic aid from those Russian areas under Bolshevik control. The problem of assisting Russia

⁶"How Not to Help Russia," The Nation 106 (1 June 1918), 639.

⁷*Ibid.*, 640.

during the Great War ended, yet the problem of what to do with the Bolsheviks and the ongoing Russian civil war remained. Should the Bolsheviks be squashed or recognized? What political groups in Russia should receive American recognition? On these questions, American public opinion became divided further, and all sides clamored for the attention of Wilson. This policy disturbed those who believed America had no business influencing the internal affairs of another state.

Some who argued against continued military intervention still believed the initial reason for Allied intervention had been valid, as it was a wartime measure. However, to these observers, once the war was concluded, the presence of Allied troops in Russia was no longer valid. The mission seemed to change into an anti-Bolshevik campaign. Allied troops, including American troops, were engaged in fighting the Bolsheviks around Archangel in late 1918 and into the early Spring of 1919. To some observers in the United States this signaled hostile intentions since America was not technically at war with the Bolsheviks, and should not be at war. Intervention was seen creating resentment in Russia and strengthening the position of the Bolsheviks. If this were the case, then military intervention should be ruled out. A more acceptable policy would be economic intervention in order to prevent the

starvation of citizens, and to build contacts with the Bolsheviks in an effort to temper them into a reasonable government.⁸

The editors of the Living Age pointed out that the United States should allow the Russians to settle internal affairs for themselves. Through learning to live with and deal with the Bolsheviks, the Allies could have a positive influence, and the Bolsheviks could mellow over time into a respectable, or at least tolerable government.⁹

Some believed that the Allies had no business in Russia after the signing of the Armistice. The Dial, a journal of criticism and public affairs, wrote in December of 1918: "In a word, our intervention in Russia may have been undertaken with the best of intentions, but the practical situation with which we are faced today is either to support reaction and imperialism or to withdraw our troops."¹⁰ The United States had no vital interests in Russia, and had no business placing troops there. The mission violated the principles of the U.S. and the Wilson Administration should have honored self-determination and self-development.¹¹

⁸"What Happened at Archangel," Independent (1 March 1919), 279-80.

⁹"Who Are the Russian Allies of the Allies?," Living Age 300 (1 February 1919), 285-86.

¹⁰"Withdraw From Russia," Dial 65 (14 December 1918), 527.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 528.

The editors of the Dial also pointed out the character of the anti-Bolshevik forces and noted that the Bolsheviks did not deserve the support of America. Admiral Kolchak, the leader of White Russian forces in Siberia, was seen as nothing but a warlord. It was argued that his military support came from Japan, his economic support came from profiteers and a vodka monopoly, and his supporters were reactionary, imperialist, and renegade Socialists.¹²

The Nation was a continuing outspoken critic against intervention in Russia. When commenting on Senator Hiram Johnson's resolutions of December 1918, it complained that the policies followed by the Administration in blocking Senator Johnson were an example of un-democratic foreign policy. It complained that such obstruction was a deficiency in representative government, and suggested the State Department, and foreign policy in general, should be democratized.¹³ Later, the Nation criticized what it considered to be the confused and ridiculous policies of the Allies towards Russia. "Never, we believe, has there been, in any international entanglement in recent years, such contemptible fumbling, such tortuous diplomacy, such breathing war and peace at the same time."¹⁴

¹²"Kolchak's Backers," Dial 67 (9 August 1919), 87.

¹³"Responsible Diplomacy," Nation 107 (28 December 1918), 793-94.

¹⁴"The Crime Against Russia," Nation 109 (2 August 1919), 136.

It also lambasted the President by opining that intervention "has been the acid test of his democracy. It has bitten into the metal of his declarations as to self-determination, and has proved it to be not pure metal but the basest alloy." The proper path for the U.S. was non-intervention, and in so doing, the nation would "once more be true to our American forefathers, and our highest ideals."¹⁵

The Literary Digest, a journal of public affairs, presented a picture which showed the dilemma faced by Wilson in Russia. It explained that the presence of troops had achieved the wartime objectives. The problem with the post-war situation was that anti-Bolshevik forces had rallied to the Allies, and to abandon them at this time would have been both cruel and irresponsible.¹⁶

The New Republic, another progressive journal, was representative of those who modified their views on intervention once the war was over. Its editors were no supporters of Bolshevism, but they wanted the U.S. to tread lightly in its affairs with Russia. As intervention began in mid-1918, the New Republic proposed that arms alone would not defeat the Bolsheviks. Any intervention had to be accompanied by economic aid and food relief. In this way, the Russian people would see they had friends in the West.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶"Why We Are Invading Russia," Literary Digest 58 (10 August 1918), 14.

¹⁷"Alternative Policies in Russia," New Republic 15 (20 July 1918), 329-31.

As intervention dragged on, the New Republic voiced more concerns regarding Allied policy. It appeared as if the Allies were encircling Central Russia with anti-Bolshevik states, and trying to strangle the Bolshevik government by starving its people. This approach was seen as more cruel than actual war. The real purpose of the Allies should have been to help the Russians form a more democratic government, or failing that, to try to mold the Bolsheviks into a responsible government. By giving economic aid and by recognizing the Bolshevik government, the Allies could modify the more outrageous aspects of the Bolsheviks. By exchanging aid and recognition for the cessation of Bolshevik attempts to export its revolution to the rest of the world, the Soviet Union would become an acceptable government.¹⁸ This position did not advocate total withdrawal of American forces from Russia. A unilateral policy of withdrawal not only disregarded the European associates, it would mean the resumption of isolationism and ruin the Peace Treaty negotiations going on in Paris. Any policy of withdrawal should be done in connection with the rest of the Allies, and there should be provisions for the continued relief of the Russians.¹⁹

¹⁸"Revolution vs. Reaction in Russia," New Republic 17 (4 January 1919), 267-70.

¹⁹"American Policy in Russia," New Republic 18 (8 February 1919), 38-39.

Not everyone was unhappy that Allied troops were fighting Bolsheviks, nor that none of the Allies had recognized the Bolsheviks. Rather, these critics believed that the Allies, and the United States in particular, were not doing more to vanquish the Bolsheviks either through direct military action, or through support of any of a number of anti-Bolshevik groups. The New York Times editorialized:

Sooner or later we shall have to do something with the Bolsheviks. We cannot expect the starved, disarmed and terrorized population of Russia to overthrow them unaided. We shall have to do it some time; and if we wait another year we shall recover only cities of the dead.²⁰

These differing views were all serious alternatives to Wilson's policies. It should be noted that rarely, if ever, could unqualified support for Wilson's policy towards Russia be found in the public forum. Was this because Wilson followed his own counsel and ignored the public? Or was it because his policy was neither sufficiently expressed to, nor understood by the American public?

Wilson and Public Opinion

When looking through Wilson's papers, and the papers of his close advisors, it appears that although Wilson was not unaware of public sentiment, he did not allow it to change his approach to the Russian problem. In June of 1918, just prior to intervention, Sir William Wiseman, the chief British intelligence officer in America during World War I, sent a letter to his superiors

²⁰New York Times 17 December 1918, as quoted in Strakhovsky, 91.

in which he commented upon American opinion regarding the Bolsheviks. Wiseman noted that opinion was just beginning to be formed upon the subject, and it appeared to be anti-Bolshevik, but no definite administration policy had been developed. There was a general feeling that something had to be done, but just exactly what that was had not yet been decided. He added that Wilson was genuinely concerned about the problem of intervention, and he was of the impression that intervention could be a political adventure with no way of knowing what the effects would be. There was no way of knowing where intervention would lead. Wiseman was of the opinion that if Wilson thought public opinion was against him, he would change his mind on intervention.²¹ This is an interesting insight, and it may lead to conclusions that Wilson was following the lead of the more vocal anti-Bolshevik views. However, Wilson firmly resisted any plan or pressure to increase troop presence in Russia or to recognize anti-Bolshevik governments.

When Wilson faced his most serious Congressional opposition in the winter of 1918 and 1919, he received word from Newton Baker, the Secretary of War, on 1 January 1919, that there was a potential for political controversy. The "most delicate situation here just now is the retention of American troops in

²¹Sir William Wiseman to Sir Eric Drummond, 30 June 1918, Link, Papers, 48: 470.

Russia."²² Secretary Baker indicated that the troops in Russia had been anxious to get home since the Armistice, and they were becoming impatient because they found themselves in a situation they could neither understand, nor was it explained to them. The men had written letters home and Secretary Baker was concerned about the effect the letters were having on the public. He wrote, "the result is that wild stories are afloat, particularly in Michigan, from which State most of the soldiers in Northern Russia come."²³ Pressure was placed on the Federal representatives from Michigan by the families of soldiers in North Russia; they were demanding to know how long the troops were to remain in Russia.²⁴ Secretary Baker also pointed out that Senator Hiram Johnson had picked up this sentiment, and was sponsoring resolutions in the Senate demanding information from the Administration about the mission of American troops in Russia. He was further insisting that they be brought home as soon as conditions made such movement possible. Though these resolutions never passed Congress, and although it may seem that the Administration found itself on the defensive, at no time did Wilson scramble to placate opponents. The overall effect was that Wilson followed his original

²²Newton Diehl Baker to Woodrow Wilson, 1 January 1919, Link, Papers, 53: 582.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 583.

course, while politicians such as Johnson used the Russian situation to embarrass and criticize Wilson.

Two points stand out when looking back on popular opposition to Wilson's policy. The first is that the radical left was virtually silent. This could be explained in that most of the radical left organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World, and the American Socialist Party were greatly damaged during the war years. The Socialist party had reduced in size to approximately 75,000 members by 1918, and the radical left had been smeared as un-American.²⁵ The only opposition to Wilson came from progressives and those who thought Wilson was not pursuing intervention with enough vigor.

The second point is that Wilson himself did not go on much of a public relations offensive. Only on occasion did he or those within his Administration take their position to the public and try to rally opinion. This is probably due to the fact that during much of late 1918 and 1919 Wilson was absorbed with the Paris peace talks, and he did not have the time to devote to this topic. Another possibility is that it was not his style to allow those people with opinions opposed to him to modify or change his views.

This indicates that Wilson was not ignorant of public opinion, but the voice of the public was so diverse, and favored so many different policies, that

²⁵Arno J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles 1918-1919 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 330-31.

Wilson could not have been able to satisfy them all, or even a majority of them. In following his own policy, Wilson did not let himself become trapped into following the winds of public opinion. Here is a case where a President made a policy and did not allow the public to derail that policy.

Nowhere in Wilson's papers, or those of his close advisors such as Colonel House or Secretary of State Lansing is there evidence that opposition to his stand towards Russia was a major concern. Wilson was determined to follow a policy of watchful waiting and co-operation with the Allies, and no amount of dissension, especially diffuse dissension, was going to influence him. This is a case where diplomacy from the bottom up, diplomacy made by the people, fell upon deaf ears.

CHAPTER IV

RUSSIAN INTERVENTION AS A PRELUDE TO WORLDWIDE POLICE ACTION

The Russian expeditions were curious affairs. The public viewed the extended occupation of North Russia and Vladivostok as an attempt to influence the civil war, and both those in favor and those opposed to intervention were displeased with the outcome. The Allied troops did accomplish their wartime goals, yet these successes were overshadowed by the fighting in northern Russia and the prolonged occupation of Vladivostok. This division was expressed in the popular press. In Congress, opposition led by Senators Johnson and Borah had nearly given the President an embarrassing political defeat with the resolutions for withdrawing American troops from Russia in January 1919. It appears from most accounts that the issue ended when the last Allied troops left Russia. Yet the issues involved in the Russian intervention did not end there. This event took place just prior to the long Senate debate over membership in the League of Nations, and those Senators who were most vocal in denouncing the intervention in Russia were among those who were quite vocal in their opposition to the League of Nations. The reasoning of those Senators on both issues was similar. They

argued that it was not the business of the United States to become involved in the internal affairs of another state. Though some writers do not connect the two cases, and some indicate that too much of a connection can be made,¹ it can not be denied that the Russian case was seen by some influential members of the Senate as a case study of what the future would bring if the United States made collective security, as embodied in the League of Nations, its foreign policy priority. Robert J. Maddox does attempt to link opposition to Wilson's Russian policy and opposition to the League of Nations. In his book The Unknown War with Russia, Maddox writes that some members of Congress and some members of the press sought to link the Russian situation with the League of Nations. It was warned that membership in the League would require American participation in interventions throughout the world upon the demand of a foreign body.² Maddox, however, does not identify who those Congressmen or members of the press who attempted to make the link. This is not to say that all Senators, nor even all of the Irreconcilables³ made this connection. In reviewing Congressional debates, it is clear that

¹Ralph Stone, The Irreconcilables: The Fight Against the League of Nations (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 40.

²Robert J. Maddox, The Unknown War with Russia: Wilson's Siberian Intervention. (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1977), 118.

³Those Senators irreconcilably opposed to membership in the League of Nations.

many of those Senators who were against membership in the League of Nations cited reasons as varied as a loss of control over immigration policies, the abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine, and the distribution of votes within the League as reasons for their opposition. Irreconcilables such as Senators James Reed and Philander Knox expressed their concern that the League of Nations would force the United States to become the world's policeman.⁴ Indeed, Senator Reed noted in a speech on the floor of the Senate that one of his many concerns about the League was that it would require the United States to maintain the international status quo, even to the point of intervening in revolutions and civil wars.⁵

Most of those who spoke out against the League as a body which would require that the United States intervene continually in the world's problems did not make an analogy between future intervention and the ongoing Russian expeditions. However, in the arguments of Senators Borah and Johnson, it can be seen that they made a connection between the experience in Russia and the potential for similar actions if the United States joined the League of Nations. There was the concern that Article X and Article XI of the League charter would take control of American foreign policy out of American hands.

⁴Denna F. Fleming, The United States and the League of Nations, 1918-1920 (New York and London: Putnam and Sons, 1932), 123, 233.

⁵Congress, Senate, Comments on the League of Nations, 65th Cong., 3d sess., Congressional Record (22 February 1919), vol. 57, pt. 4, 4029.

These two articles called on member states to preserve the territorial integrity of other member states and stated that any war or threat of war affecting one member state was to be a concern of all member states. Opponents saw these two articles as an open ended, unlimited commitment necessitating constant policing of the world.

Senators Borah and Johnson saw the intervention itself as contrary to the ideas held in the Fourteen Points, and they saw it as "a harbinger of how the League would function."⁶ Borah saw potential for disaster in the League. He believed that the United States would be forced to uphold the international status quo, and that the United States would have to engage its troops throughout the world in order to maintain stability. He pointed to a speech made by former President Howard Taft in which Taft, a firm supporter of the League, said that the best way to deal with Bolsheviks was to kill them. In Borah's mind, this meant that supporters of the League were those who wished to police the world and interfere in internal revolutions. Borah saw that the future of the League would be one which would be "based on the principle of oppression" and which would "not only determine controversies between different nations, but which will go into Russia, which will go into this country and into that country, and adjust the internal affairs of that particular nation in

⁶Stone, 40.

accordance with the program of the league."⁷ Borah believed that by joining the League, the United States would have to have a large peacetime military, staffed through a peacetime draft, which would be used by the League to enforce peace, to include interference in internal affairs of state. The small scale of the Russian intervention then, was only a precursor of what was to come if the United States adopted collective security. In fact, the body would become just another repressive and reactionary international organization.

Borah believed the League would encourage the worst aspects of American diplomacy, namely gunboat diplomacy. American policy would be subordinated to those who did not refer policy decisions to the American people, and any chance at popular control over foreign policy would be lost.⁸

Senator Johnson held similar views to those of Borah. While engaged in fighting with the Wilson Administration over Russia, Johnson wrote that the proposed League would necessitate the keeping of a large standing army, and would require the United States to guarantee the safety of the newly formed states of Europe. Even by December 1918, his traditional, America first views led him to believe that it was not the duty of the United States to "police the

⁷Congress, Senate, Comments on the League of Nations, Congressional Record, 65th Cong., 3d sess., (14 Jan 1919), vol. 57, pt. 2, 1385-86.

⁸Robert J. Maddox, William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 60. Maddox cites a letter from Borah to Lenora Austin, 3 September 1919, Box 550, William E. Borah Papers.

world or quell riots in every rotten European back yard."⁹ Such a duty, he believed, would become reality if America joined the League. Johnson also feared that League membership would require the United States to engage in every dispute in the world because of the wording in Article X. He believed it would force America to uphold the status quo, police the world, and force America to submit its internal policies, such as immigration, to an international council.¹⁰

Johnson spoke out on the floor of Congress on 29 January 1919, maintaining that the intervention in Russia violated expressed policy and the Constitution; and he wanted the troops brought home. He added that it was his understanding that the Peace Treaty was to create sixteen states, and that it would be the policy of the United States to help guarantee their security. He stated his belief that it should not be American policy to guarantee security for other nations. He added that as the threat of the Central Powers was over, and any conflict that would arise in the future would come from internal strife, it should not be the policy of the United States to guarantee other nations' internal security. He returned to the issue of Russia and said American policy there was an interference in internal matters. Allied troops had displaced Soviet governments, and helped install a new government at Archangel. The

⁹Letter to Jack Johnson, 25 December 1918, Burke, n.p.

¹⁰Letter to Archibald Johnson, 16 March 1919 and 1 April 1919, Burke, n.p.

Allies had maintained an embargo of supplies intended for Soviet held Russia. He pointed out that American troops were under the command of British officers. In effect, the United States at that moment was participating in internal intervention and its own troops were beyond its command. He insisted that this scenario would be repeated in the future if the United States joined the League of Nations.

The post war experience in Russia played into Johnson's fears of America policing the world, and he believed that if he were to present his concerns to the public, they would recognize those issues as well.¹¹ He believed so strongly on the matter that he was prepared to defy all of his constituents and vote against the League since he believed it would make the United States 'the 'goat' of everything rotten in the world.'¹²

Johnson consistently noted in letters to his family that the League of Nations, with Article X and Article XI intact, would cause eternal sacrifice. "It involves us forever in the bickerings, and the controversies, and the little wars of Europe. It mortgages our manhood indefinitely and will require us, in the future, to send American youth to unknown peoples to guard frontiers of which we have never heard."¹³ Indeed, his concern bordered a bit on paranoia: "I

¹¹Letter to Jack Johnson, 25 December 1918, Burke, n.p.

¹²Letter to Archibald Johnson, 16 March 1919, Burke, n.p.

¹³Letter to Archibald M. Johnson, 29 April 1919, Burke, n.p.

am hoping I may be able to make public what I have learned, that the League of Nations is just a huge war trust, backed by international capitalists, who prefer to have an International clearing house, where they can deal with and control a few individuals instead of many different nations."¹⁴

All of these fears and suspicions were collected, and presented to Congress, and the American people with Johnson's speech to Congress on June 2, 1919. He claimed the League of Nations was a resurrection of the Holy Alliance, and it would continually involve the U.S. in foreign wars. The United States would be compelled to maintain the status quo of the British and Japanese empires, and would forever find itself involved in civil wars. It would also submit internal U.S. policies for approval by international tribunal, and it would destroy the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁵

The Irreconcilables took their case to the public during the Summer of 1919 in an effort to gain support for their position. Johnson took up a rigorous speaking tour in which he laid out his concerns over League membership. He particularly looked forward to speaking in Detroit (the home of many of the troops sent to Russia). He believed that as their sons and husbands had been sent to fight in Russia, the citizens of Detroit would naturally embrace his

¹⁴Letter to Jack Johnson, 20 May 1919, Burke, n.p.

¹⁵Congress, Senate, Comments on the League of Nations, 66th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record (2 July 1919), vol. 58 pt. 1, 503-05.

concerns that the League would force the United States to intervene throughout the world.¹⁶

The Russian expeditions were a perfect example for those opposed to League participation. Troops were sent without Congressional approval. They participated in joint action, and were under foreign command. The troops had no idea what they were doing in Russia, and the United States had no vital interests to be protected there. America was stuck in North Russia, and had to walk gingerly when it decided to withdraw troops, so as not to disrupt the other Allies. These issues were brought up directly and indirectly, by Senators Borah and Johnson, when citing their opposition to the League of Nations. Though it is not clear that the Russian expeditions caused opposition to the League, and though it was not cited as the definitive example of what would happen if America joined the League, it should not be ignored as an important factor causing opposition to the League. It was a stark example of the difficulties inherent in joint military operations, and the type of confusion that result when policies are not well expressed.

Public Reaction

As the reader has seen, Senators Borah and Johnson expressed concerns that League of Nations membership would require continual overseas military

¹⁶Letter to Archibald Johnson, 2 July 1919, Burke, n.p.

intervention. These concerns were entirely consistent with the positions they took when arguing for withdrawal from Russia after the signing of the Armistice. The public press also took up positions on the League similar to those taken on Russian intervention.

The editors of the left wing journal Nation were absolutely convinced the League of Nations was an appalling organization conceived of for pure exploitation of the world by the remaining powers. They echoed the concerns of the opponents of the League when they wrote that the League was a "calm, arrogant and ruthless formulation of a plan for world-domination by the five conquering powers, a device for causing the exploitable territories of the earth to stand and deliver without the risk and cost of war."¹⁷ The Nation's editors did not initially declare that membership in the League would lead to repetitive involvement in conflicts around the world, rather they saw the League in almost Leninist terms. They thought of it as a tool of the imperial powers to divide the world amongst themselves. Later, the editors of the Nation promoted the defeat of the Peace Treaty and the League of Nations as it would bring nothing but continuous wars in the future. They echoed the concerns of Borah, Johnson and Lodge that the League would bring a "new hell of future wars, which covenants not for peace but at this moment for death--death in Russia,

¹⁷"The Ends and the Means", Nation, 22 (March 22, 1919), 416-17.

death in Poland, death in a dozen different places."¹⁸ The editors believed that the Peace Treaty, and the League covenant should be scrapped and written anew. Although the editors did not make an explicit connection between the League and Allied intervention in Russia, it is clear that they were concerned that there would be actions taken by the League to preserve the status quo, which would necessitate intervention by the United States throughout the world.

In an effort to gauge the public's opinion towards membership in the League, the editors of the Literary Digest conducted several reviews of editorial opinions during the debate over membership. It found that there was a majority of journals which were in favor of membership of the League. In fact, one such survey revealed that journals affiliated with the Democratic Party, the Republican party, and independent journals were in favor of the League. Indeed, the Irreconcilables appeared to be trying to frighten the public away from the League with wild fears.¹⁹

In April 1919, the Literary Digest conducted another nationwide survey of newspapers in an attempt to gauge public opinion regarding membership in the League. The editors acknowledged that theirs was not a scientific survey,

¹⁸"A Covenant with Death," Nation, 109 (November 1, 1919), 557.

¹⁹"Will the Senate Defeat the League of Nations?" Literary Digest, 60 (March 8, 1919), 11-13.

yet they expressed the belief that most journal editors not only shape public opinion, but that they are in a position to communicate with their readers, and become aware of where their readers stand on a particular issue. The Literary Digest's poll counted some 1377 respondents from across the nation. They found that of those numbers, 718 were in favor of membership, 181 were opposed, and 478 would accept membership in the League with some conditions. One noteworthy piece of information was the conclusion that all of the William R. Hearst owned papers were defiantly opposed to membership in the League, carrying on in the fine jingo traditions of their owner. The editors of the Literary Digest found that of those who expressed opinions against the League, the most frequently cited reason for their opposition was that the League would abrogate the Monroe Doctrine. The second most common reason to deny membership to the League was the fear of a loss of sovereignty. The editors of the Literary Digest believed that the desire to stay out of the affairs of Europe was still strong throughout the country; however, it appeared that the vast majority were in favor of unconditional acceptance of the League charter.²⁰

The editors of the Outlook conducted their own study of newspapers across the United States, and they came to the conclusion that the nation was,

²⁰"Nation-wide Press Poll on the League of Nations," Literary Digest, 61 (April 5, 1919), 13-16, 120-128.

as a whole, split into two camps. Those who opposed the League because it would lead to constant conflict and worldwide commitment, and those who believed that it would be irresponsible for the United States to turn her back on the world. The editors concluded that it was possible that American sovereignty and freedom of action might be curtailed with membership in the League, however, if that was the price to be paid for the preservation of worldwide peace, then so be it.²¹

Of those opposed, it appears that there was a fear of becoming part of a repressive, reactionary body, which was pledged to uphold the status quo and interfere in internal disputes. It appears as if the journals and newspapers did not make a direct connection between the Russian policy of Wilson, and arguments against League membership. However, here too similarities are striking. In both instances, it was argued that it was not the job of the United States to interfere in the domestic politics of a foreign state. America's position in the world did not include the duty of preserving the status quo. It was not the business of America to guarantee the territorial integrity of the world, and it was not the duty of the United States to preserve the stability of governments. This may be seen as knee-jerk isolationism; however, it is sincere. There were

²¹"Popular Discussion of the League of Nations," Outlook 121 (19 March 1919): 470-72.

genuine concerns that membership in the League would lead to unforeseen consequences.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

President Wilson participated in Allied intervention in Russia for specific wartime purposes. He set rigid guidelines as to what America's role would be in the expeditions, and reserved the right to withdraw from participation if the expeditions lost sight of the stated goals. Wilson, as well as the Congress and the American public had no doubts as to the propriety of wartime intervention as an attempt to aid an Ally, and to thwart German attempts to slice up Russia. Intervention was seen as being entirely consistent with the aims of maintaining the territorial integrity of Russia and promoting self-determination.

Some historians have argued that intervention was primarily an anti-Bolshevik policy. It is true that no attempts were made to co-operate with the Bolsheviks either during or after the war, and there was assistance given to White Russian forces. However, intervention rather than being expressly anti-Bolshevik, can be seen as an attempt to salvage something from the Eastern front, and to maintain the territorial integrity of Russia while promoting self-determination among her people. The Allies did not co-operate with the Bolsheviks because they did not believe them to be a legitimate government.

The Bolsheviks were seen as a revolutionary minority who treacherously seized power with the barrel of the gun during a time of national crisis and sold Russia to Germany. As they were not seen as representative of the will of the Russian people, to co-operate with them would have been to abandon the concept of self-determination. The Allies were willing to assist the White Russians hoping they would continue fighting the Germans and form a democratic government.

In Eastern Russia, there was the additional concern of keeping an eye on the Japanese forces in Siberia. The Wilson administration worried that Japanese troops would have an adverse impact upon the Russian population. It was believed that the Russians might turn against the Allies if it appeared they had been abandoned to a Japanese army which had invaded the area just fourteen years earlier. The presence of other Allied troops would not only calm the Russian population, it would guarantee the Japanese would not permanently establish themselves in Siberia. Again, the maintenance of Russian integrity was a primary concern of the Wilson administration, and it led to participation in the expedition to Vladivostok.

Though wartime intervention was seen as valid, the attitude of Congress and the American public changed with the signing of the Armistice. There was no longer a German threat to confront, and the only fighting which remained was that of the Russian civil war. Therefore, the reasons for the intervention

were no longer valid. However, rather than withdrawing their forces, the Allies stayed on in Russia. The Allies saw that the White Russians they relied upon to help fight the Germans were in turn relying upon the Allies for aid in their struggle against the Bolsheviks. The Allies reasoned that they could not leave their compatriots in the lurch, and therefore had to stay and assist them until some sort of settlement to the civil war could be made. This could very well have been acceptable to the American people and Congress; however two factors stood in the way. First, the action was not explained to the American public nor to Congress. Second, by engaging in fighting against the Bolsheviks in Northern Russia, the message was sent that the Allies were taking sides in the civil war, and in effect declaring war against Bolshevism.

The combat in Northern Russia gave Wilson's political opponents a marvelous opportunity to embarrass him. What was a coalition attempt to save an Ally during a war was later perceived as a coalition attempt to defeat Bolshevism, which was a policy which had not been discussed in Congress. American troops were engaged in warfare with a people against whom a state of war had not been declared. Furthermore, those troops were under British command. These points gave ample ammunition to politicians such as Senators Borah and Johnson, who believed that America was being cynically used as a tool by the British and French. They argued that continued

American participation in Russia violated traditional non-involvement in European affairs, and the principles of the Fourteen Points.

The public had conflicting views on American participation in Russia due in part to a lack of information from the Administration. Aside from the original statement of the purpose of American participation in the expeditions, little information was given to the public regarding the subsequent events in Russia. Therefore, there were conflicting interpretations of the reasons for sending American troops to Russia. Some journalists argued that the Allies were in Russia to defeat Bolshevism, but if that were the case, then certainly not enough was being done to assist these troops in Russia, nor was there enough being done to aid the White Russians. Other journalists believed the Allies were in Russia to aid in self-determination, and yet by taking sides in the civil war and fighting against the Bolsheviks, they were acting contrary to this policy. Other journalists argued that there were better ways to promote democracy in Russia. Rather than giving military support to reactionaries such as Admiral Kolchak and blockading areas controlled by the Bolsheviks, the Allies should negotiate and trade with all parties, including the Bolsheviks. That way democracy could be promoted, and the Bolsheviks, if indeed they were the government of choice, could be molded and shaped into a reasonable and responsible government.

Yet none of these interpretations or suggestions influenced policy. The Wilson administration took a watch and wait approach to the problem, while troops were left to struggle on in Russia with no clear policy to guide them. Under these circumstances, no aspect of the public could be satisfied with this attempt at coalition policy.

The expeditions, occurring immediately prior to the debate over the League of Nations, gave a concrete example of the worst fears of isolationists such as Senators Borah and Johnson. In this instance, American troops were perceived to be fighting in an area where there were no American interests. The American troops were under the control of foreigners, and used to promote the goals of foreigners. This is exactly the situation the isolationists feared would take place under the League of Nations. In Russia, it was argued, American troops were being used to put down an internal revolution, and were being used to advance the interests of Britain and France; the League of Nations would be used for the same ends. Britain and France would use the League to maintain the status quo, and American troops would be the tool to maintain British and French preeminence in the world.

The Russian intervention did play some role in helping to define and focus the fears of the opponents of the League of Nations. They argued that the power of Congress to declare war would be usurped by the League. In Russia, American troops were engaged in fighting without the approval of

Congress from December 1918 to May 1919. Senators Borah and Johnson argued that under the League of Nations, American troops would be used to advance the interests of foreign powers. The experience of the Russian intervention embodied the concerns of the opponents of the League of Nations, and served as a concrete example of the dangers inherent in co-operating with Europeans on international security matters.

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