

The American Invasion of Russia

Erik Merkel

*The jungle is full of words
that sound like one thing,
but mean another.*
-Rudyard Kipling

Wars are terrible tragedies and civil wars may be the most terrible of all wars, and the Russian the most terrible of those. Russia lost seven million lives in World War I and the revolutions preceding the Russian Civil War. During the course of the Civil War, countless more lives were lost. Possibly of more lasting importance, the principles of the vanquished party in a Civil War are lost seemingly forever, while the tenets which the victorious hold dear, become unassailable during their rule.

Lenin, the Bolsheviks, and their reputation are at their nadir now, but no one can deny that their desperate struggle to survive and finally to prevail through the revolutions and the Civil War required not only the greatest courage, but also the autocratic control of all resources. The Bolsheviks were born with the greatest of idealism, but because they faced soldiers from all the major countries and the Russian White Armies, the Bolsheviks were forced to centralized control of the people. It is necessary to understand the Russian struggle and its violence to understand Stalin, the dictatorships, and the resulting loss of any chance to test the experiment of economic communism.

Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Leon Trotsky and many others contended the Civil War would not have occurred, or, at least, would not have been so intense, long or costly except for the intervention of the United States and the other Allies. Ancillary to that issue is the question of why the Allies intervened; was it to crush the Bolsheviks as the same figures suggest? This paper will attempt to address these questions knowing that this does not provide either the depth or space the analysis deserves.

The Bolsheviks came to power on November 7, 1917. They moved swiftly, and the next day, a Decree of Peace was issued. On November 22, 1917, Lenin suggested to the Allies a general peace. When this brought no response, on December 3, he commenced negotiations of a separate armistice with Germany which were concluded twelve days later. The armistice was to extend for four weeks and to continue thereafter unless terminated by seven days notice by one of the parties. Ultimately, this led to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 3, 1918, which concluded hostilities between Russia and Germany.¹ The suffering Russians were happy; the still fighting Allies were mad.

As Lenin and Trotsky were concerned that Germany would not keep its word, they attempted to continue friendly relations with the Allies.² This was not precluded by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty; it was not an alliance. Russia continued diplomatic relations with the Allies, though the foreign embassies moved from Petrograd to Vologda.³

The Russian army under Czar Nicholas had collapsed during the chaos of the spring and summer of 1917, leaving diplomacy as Russia's only defense. Finland and the Ukraine had not entered into treaties with Germany. They were the immediate victims of German invasions, placing the most developed and industrialized parts of Russia in the jaws of the German military machine. With diplomacy, Lenin and Trotsky hoped to hold Germany to its promise of peace, but also, to be able to call on the Allies for help in the event of renewed German hostilities. It was, as stated by one writer, "obvious that the Bolsheviks intended to carry on a policy of playing off the Germans against the Allies and vice versa."⁴

¹Leonid I. Strakhovsky, The Origins of American Intervention in North Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937), 3-4; J. F. N. Bradley, Civil War in Russia 1917-1920 (New York: St. Martin's, 1975), 51-52. The dates are based upon the present day calendar.

²Strakhovsky, 12-14; The concerns about German hostilities were fueled by German conquests in Finland and the Ukraine which were not parties to the treaty.

³Benjamin D. Rhodes, The Anglo-American Winter War with Russia, 1918-1919 (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 7-8, 23; David R. Francis, Russia From the American Embassy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 261-62; Frederick Lewis Schuman, American Policy Toward Russia Since 1917 (Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion, 1928), 85-86, 99-100. A beautifully written description of Archangel and its history appear in John Cudahy, Archangel: The American War With Russia (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1924), 41, 47. The move to Vologda was triggered by Germany's invasion of Finland which placed the German front within twenty-five miles of Petrograd. Strakhovsky, 17.

⁴Strakhovsky, 10-23.

The position of Russia in this period of time is well stated by Edmond Taylor in his The Fall of The Dynasties:

[T]o the peace of Brest-Litovsk, Soviet Russia became for the time being a hostage of Imperial Germany. The Bolshevik power could only survive as long as the German Army was willing to see it survive. A policy of cooperation, almost of partnership, with Germany was therefore a vital necessity from the short-term viewpoint; from the long-term viewpoint discreet preparations for renewing the struggle against the oppressor, possibly with Allied help, and for throwing off the chains of Brest-Litovsk were no less essential.⁵

Trotsky said "We were between hammer and anvil."⁶

As much as the Russians needed the potential help of the Allies, the Allies needed an eastern front even more. The prophetic words of Winston Churchill were:

Above all things reconstitute the fighting front in the East . . . If we cannot reconstitute the fighting front against Germany in the East no end can be discerned to the war. Vain will be all the sacrifices of the peoples and the armies. They will tend only to prolong the conflict into depths which cannot be climbed. We must not take "No" for an answer either from America or from Japan. *We must compel events instead of acquiescing in the drift.*⁷

The French ambassador to Russia stated: "The capital problem was that of reconstituting an Eastern front."⁸ Though new to the war, the United States also recognized the importance of the eastern front.⁹

The first American troops landed six days after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty on March 9, 1918, in Archangel. Soon there were 35,000 Allied troops on shore which alarmed not only Germany but

⁵Edmond Taylor, The Fall of the Dynasties (New York: Dorset, 1963), 310.

⁶Leon Trotsky, My Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 395.

⁷Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, Vol. II (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1927), 191. Emphasis has been added.

⁸Strakhovsky, 18.

⁹Francis, 229-260; George A. Brinkley, The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 53-55; Louis de Robien, The Diary of a Diplomat in Russia, 1917-1918, trans. Camilla Sykes (New York: Praeger, 1967), 263-64.

also the Bolsheviks. When the local Russian leader, A. M. Yuriev, refused to order the Allies to leave, the Bolsheviks declared Yuriev an enemy. With that, Yuriev and his troops became a part of the White Army cooperating with the Allies.¹⁰ This was not the only White Army. In the east Japanese troops with White forces later pushed westward along the Trans-Siberian railroad; but the strongest White Army was in the south in Cossack country.

The first real military leadership opposing the Bolsheviks came from General Mikhail Alekseev, the imperial chief of staff under Czar Nicholas. When the Bolsheviks came to power, Alekseev was sixty years old, diagnosed with cancer, and had only eleven months to live. With his last energies, he formed the strongest White army based on the northern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains. On his death, Alekseev was followed by Kornilov, then by Krasnov, Denikin, and finally Kolchak. Already strong in May 1918, the White army united with 40,000 Czech troops who had deserted from the Austrian armies. They had also fought against Germany with the Czar's army and since the coup, had been stranded in the Ukraine. Other Czech troops had reached Vladivostok earlier, where they were waiting for troop ships to return them home. With their presence, the Czechs became a factor in the eastern intervention. Some Czech troops were sent north by the French to Archangel for transport home which caused the Bolsheviks to fear and suspect that they were a part of a plot to overthrow the government. In any event, because of this and other incidents, the remaining Czechs felt they would have to fight their way out and the best way to do this was to unite with the White forces. United with the Czechs, the White army pushed northward with great success and rapidity. This resulted in two consequences.¹¹

The apparent strength of this drive persuaded the Allies to help all White forces with badly needed armament and supplies, as well as credit for purchases. This stalled any quick resolution of the Civil War,

¹⁰Strakhovsky, 65-70; Schuman, 108-137; Rhodes, 34; Francis, 264; a detailed description of this war in the north from a military viewpoint appears in Joel R. Moore, The History of the American Expedition Fighting the Bolsheviks, Capt. Joel R. Moore, Lieut. Harry H. Mead, & Lieut. Lewis E. Jahns, comp. and ed. (Detroit: Polar Bear Publishing, 1920). The United States troops were commanded by General F. Poole initially and then by General Edward M. Ironside. See Rhodes, , 45-48.

¹¹Bruce W. Lincoln, Red Victory (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 72-97; Taylor, 310-17; Schuman, , 92-95; Bradley ,60-67.

and enabled the White forces to do battle on more equal terms. The Reds had more men, but now the Whites had superior firepower.¹²

The other consequence of this northward drive was the death of the imperial family. By now, the Czar and his family had been moved from Tobolsk to Ekaterinburg which was in the direct line of this advance. Obviously their rescue could not be allowed. "The ordeal of the Romanovs must have been all the harder on their nerves because rescue was so near at hand; yet the nearer it approached the more deadly became their peril."¹³ On July 16, 1918, their ordeal ended in execution. The White Army took the city nine days later.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Civil War was heating up in the far east at Vladivostok. This was the major Russian port in the Far East on the Sea of Japan. Vladivostok was linked to Moscow and the rest of Russia by the Trans-Siberian Railroad. With the German army cutting across Europe north to south there were two entrances into Russia--Archangel and Murmansk, ports which were frozen over in the winter. Vladivostok would have been very valuable, but the cargo landed there would have to be transported by the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Thus, Vladivostok became the focal point of the eastern battles of the Civil War. Actually, however, the major battles started in the western part of Siberia, west of the Urals on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and moved east to Vladivostok along the Railroad. For this reason, these battles came to be known as the Siberian battles, or by the United States, as the Siberian Expedition.

On the outbreak of World War I, Russia recruited for its army less than a thousand Czechs and Slovaks who had settled in Russia years before. This Czech brigade fought bravely with significant publicity and became the object of pride among Czech nationalists, led by Eduard Benés and Toma Masaryk, who were seeking an independent Czechoslovakia, and separation from the Hapsburg Empire. As the war progressed, Russia in its victories against Austria, captured several hundred thousand Czech and Slovak prisoners but the government

¹²Lincoln, 198-99, 213. The Allies delivered to each of the three main White armies 1000 field guns, 250,000 rifles, 7,000 machine guns, and millions of rounds of ammunition. Grove C. Haines & Ross J. S. Hoffman, Origins and Background of the Second World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 112-114, 76; "The American Government's Policy," Current History: Volume XXXII, April-September, 1930 (New York: The New York Times, 1930), 59-64; Bradley, 56-58; William S. Graves, America's Siberian Adventure (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1931), 20-21, 99.

¹³Taylor, 314.

¹⁴Ibid., 315-16.

would not use them since they might represent a large dissident nationalist force. After the March revolution, Kerensky asked for volunteers from these prisoners. The Czech brigade immediately became a Czech army of 100,000, and fought well until the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Those that originally came from Russia stayed. Others sneaked back through the lines to home. Others had been captured and more were casualties so that after the treaty there were about 55,000 to 60,000 Czech troops stranded in the Ukraine. Masaryk wanted them transported out to fight on the western front. The Germans wanted them back as prisoners to be exchanged under the treaty. The Allies wanted them to fight the Reds one way or the other. The Reds were distrustful of them and thought they were pawns of the Allies. The Czechs themselves probably just wanted to go home, at least initially. In any event there was no way out except with Red approval.

In March 1918, Masaryk and Lenin negotiated an agreement of safe passage by the Trans-Siberian Railroad and Vladivostok but the Czechs would have to first surrender all of their weapons. By May, approximately 10,000 Czechs had reached Vladivostok and were waiting on ships for passage home.¹⁵ Then on May 25, the Czechs intercepted a telegram from Trotsky directing the shooting on the spot of any Czech with a weapon. This convinced them that they had been betrayed and the stranded 40,000 joined the White forces to fight their way to the 10,000 comrades already at Vladivostok.¹⁶

Just as in the case in the south, the fortunes of the White forces in the east were largely dependent on the stranded 40,000 Czechs. The French had pressured the Czechs into trying to escape by way of Archangel, probably knowing that this way was blocked by the Reds and that battles between the Reds and Czechs would ensue, which they did. This left Vladivostok as the only outlet.

By this time, the Reds had secured the railroad and most of Siberia. Raymond Robins, director of the American Red Cross, had traveled from Vologda to Vladivostok without any incident, as had the personnel of the YMCA. "Siberia was completely under Soviet control and at peace."¹⁷ This was about to change.

¹⁵Lincoln, 93-97; Rhodes, 3-4; George F. Kennan, Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 97-107; Graves, 38; Betty Miller Unterberger, America's Siberian Expedition, 1918-1920 (New York: Greenwood, 1969), 55; Edward T. Heald, Witness to Revolution, Ed. James B. Gidney (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1972), 211; The number of Czechs at Vladivostok is cited as being 8,000, 10,000, or 12,000, and the number stranded as being 35,000, 40,000, 45,000, or 60,000 depending on the source. Several sources confuse the origin of this Czech force and more ignore the problem. The story is quite interesting.

¹⁶Lincoln, 92-94.

In the latter part of May 1918, there were approximately 20,000 Czechs in trains scattered along the Railroad from Kazan, on the Volga west of the Urals, to Irkutsk, just west of Lake Baikal, a distance of 3,000 miles. In spite of their agreement not to carry weapons, the well armed Czechs were actually the strongest force in this area.¹⁸ There were disagreements and minor skirmishes all along the line, but on the night of May 25, a skirmish broke out that killed ten and wounded ten others. Another skirmish resulted in ten dead Czechs, which brought about the end of peace and the beginning of the Siberian battles. A group of Czechs with thirty carbines and some grenades were ordered to surrender their armaments within fifteen minutes. They did not, but engaged in conversation. At the end of the fifteen minutes, without further warning, the Reds machine-gunned the Czechs. The Czechs fought back, and though they had fewer weapons, the Czechs greatly outnumbered the Reds. In a fierce fight, mostly hand to hand, the Czechs prevailed. From this point on, the Czechs fought, killed, and captured Reds and weapons until they were victorious. There was no longer peace, just bloody fighting.¹⁹

Meanwhile in Vladivostok there was turmoil. On April 3, 1918, several Japanese civilians were killed in a street brawl, apparently by Red soldiers. This provided Japan with an excuse to land a few soldiers to protect its citizens. On the same pretext so did England, but England was really more concerned about the territorial ambitions of Japan than about the safety of any civilians. In the spring of 1918, confronting about 100 Red soldiers, there were approximately 20,000 Japanese, English, and Czech soldiers, all eagerly looking for a pretext to start a fight. The Czechs provoked skirmishes from May 18 to June 29, 1918, when the Czechs overthrew the Reds and took over the city. Now with Vladivostok in their possession, the Czechs started moving along the railroad toward their brothers who were fighting eastward from Irkutsk. By early July, the Czechs and Whites had complete control of the Railroad from west of Omsk to Vladivostok.²⁰

¹⁷Schuman, 90. Heald, 211-225.

¹⁸Kennan, 97-98; George Stewart, The White Armies of Russia (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 105-106; Bradley, 82-92.

¹⁹John Albert White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950), 92-93; Lincoln, 94-97; Stewart, 105-118.

²⁰Schuman, 92-93; Bradley, 92-96; Kennan, 98-107; Graves, America's Siberian Adventure, 38; Unterberger, 39, 55-59.

The Reds believed the Allies had incited the Czech uprising. Since the Czechs controlled the railroad and the port, there was no longer anything to prevent them from leaving. Because they stayed and fought, the Reds suspected collusion between the Allies and the Czechs. There is substantial evidence that France and England had ulterior motives, but little to implicate the United States. In any event the Allies, including the United States, were happy with the end result.²¹

After the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the Allies debated on whether to intervene in Siberia. Intervention at Vladivostok and in Siberia called for mediation, at least, in the United States. The French and the English, however were, from the very beginning, clearly and strongly for intervention, not only as a force against Germany, but to wipe out Bolshevism. Japan was in favor of intervention for the same reasons; additionally, they secretly hoped to incorporate Vladivostok, the offshore islands, and far eastern Russia into Japanese territory.²²

President Woodrow Wilson was generally opposed to intervention. Initially he stated that the United States would not intervene because it would constitute interference in the domestic affairs of another country, which was contrary to his proposal for peace known as "The Fourteen Points." Throughout the debate and even after his decision to intervene, Wilson stuck to this philosophical principle.²³ However, what was right and what was politic or even possible were two different matters.

The pressure on the president to change his mind was tremendous. First, there was a supposition among American leaders that the Red government was only temporary. After all, the Kerensky government

²¹Kennan, 98-103; Stewart, 113-114; Victor Serge, Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 87-88; Alexander F. Kerensky, The Crucifixion of Liberty, Trans. G Kerensky (London: Arthur Barker, 1934), 299-302; Alexander F. Kerensky, Russia and History's Turning Point (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1965), 498-504. Kerensky had unsuccessfully attempted to secure financial aid from the Allies and was told by Albert Thomas, a French minister that the Allies had decided to divide up Russia after the war. Kerensky, Russia, 504. The French continually favored intervention and, as previously discussed, had pushed a Czech group to start the fighting in the south; England was more discreet but very liberal with money and supplies giving the Czechs over 13 million dollars. Kennan, 94-95 and 115-116; Graves, 99; Stewart, 113-114; Schuman, 114-15, 145.

²²Graves, 20-27, 64-65, 69; Kennan, 94-95; Schuman, 116-119, 145; Kerensky, Russia, 498-504; Kerensky, Crucifixion, 312; de Robien, 149-150, 263-264; Brinkley, 53-55; Moore, 47-48.

²³Schuman, 82-83; Kennan, 94-95, 117-118; Unterberger, 19-38.

did not last a year, and Lenin's was believed to have even less public support. Soon there would probably be a moderate White government, and the United States could wait until then to do business with Russia. In the meanwhile, the United States should support the Allies and fight Germany.²⁴

There was no doubt as to what the Allies wanted. They wanted United States troops to fight along with the Whites to drive the Reds out and to hold some German troops along the eastern front. All of their troops were in trenches along the western front and no more could be spared. The leaders of France, particularly, and England were afraid that communism would spread to their countries. They sent delegation after delegation to see the president. Primarily, they argued that intervention was necessary to win the war against Germany. In addition, Russia's position that it would not pay the czar's debts, suspicion of an alliance between the Reds and Germany, Trotsky's publishing of secret treaties between the czar and the Allies, and the presumed atrocities of the Reds, all strengthened the argument to intervene. The President listened to each delegation and consistently said "No".²⁵

Pressure to intervene from within the United States was even stronger and more difficult to ignore than that from foreign powers. There was a real fear of Bolshevism, a fear played upon by a variety of those wanting intervention. E. H. Harriman and J. J. Hill, railroad magnates in the United States, wanted the Trans-Siberian Railroad as a part of their around the world railroad network, and saw no chance of that with communism. International Harvester Company, J. M. Coates Company, Singer Sewing Machine Company, and many other United States companies in Russia wanted to avoid nationalization of their plants. They all brought a great deal of pressure to bear directly on the president, but more importantly pressure came indirectly through the Congress and the newspapers.²⁶ It was the zenith of yellow journalism

²⁴Schuman, 50-51; Bernard Pares, My Russian Memoirs (New York: Ams, 1969), 589; Strakovsky, 100-1; "The American Government's Policy," 59-64.

²⁵Schuman, 56-60, 66; Haines & Hoffman, 111-14; Kennan, 78-79; Graves, 22-27; Unterberger, 61-69. A British general expressed the typical Allied attitude toward the Reds in saying "There will be no faltering in our purpose to remove the stain of Bolshevism from Russia and civilization." Cudahy, 37. Lord Milner of England said if the Allies withdraw "barbarism will reign throughout." Schuman, 121. "The Allied Powers themselves still viewed the intervention as a part of the war against Germany and her Allies, but the Bolsheviks were now definitely considered one of the latter." Brinkley, 56.

²⁶White, 128-129. E. H. Harriman was the father of William Averell Harriman who would become ambassador to Russia in the 1940's.

and vitriolic speeches in Congress. There were news stories and speeches discussing the Reds shooting all prisoners, castrating them, disemboweling them, burning them either before or after they had been killed, raping women, killing children, free love, and all other imaginable atrocities.²⁷ Roger E. Simmon of the Department of Commerce testified of "blood-curdling tales of butchery and horror," and stated that a United States withdrawal "would mean the murder of every man, woman, and child in the evacuated territory." Senator McCumber wanted to save the Russian peasants from the "grasp of these damnable beasts", and declared that "the civilization of the world demands the extermination of such beasts." The newspapers utilized just as inflammatory and sensationalist vocabulary. Even the staid Times on November 1, 1918, called the Reds "ravaging beasts of prey, a large part of them actual criminals, all of them mad with the raging passions of the class struggle."²⁸

The decision for the American intervention was difficult for President Wilson. He asked his ambassador to Russia, David Francis for his advice. Francis was a rich grain merchant and politician from Missouri, who later became its governor. Without the restraint of his wife, left in Missouri, Francis showed more interest in his mistress than the world crisis about him. He adored the czar and his bountiful hospitality, and hated Bolshevism in general, and Lenin and Trotsky in particular.²⁹ Francis pleaded for intervention time after time, even after the Civil War was over.³⁰ On the other side of the debate, Raymond Robins of the Red Cross, Jacques Sadour, a French military attaché,

²⁷Unterberger, 19-38, 61-69; Schuman, 100, 151-64.

²⁸ Schuman, 125, 123, 154.

²⁹Rhodes, 6-8, 30; Shuman, 98, 127; Unterberger, 47; Strakhovsky, , 41; Kerensky, Russia, 498; When advised of Lenin becoming premier and Trotsky minister of foreign affairs, Francis said: "disgusting!--but I hope such effort will be made as the more ridiculous the situation the sooner the remedy." Shuman, 56. In memoirs Francis clearly and continually reflects his hatred and jingoistic attitude toward the Reds. Francis: "The Bolsheviks are inhuman brutes,"(283),"my policy of exterminating Bolshevism,"(337), and "to eradicate this foul monster--Bolshevism--branch, trunk, and root If we would save society from Barbarism and humanity from slaughter."(349) Francis states: "The situation might have been saved had President Wilson permitted me to return to Petrograd accompanied by 50,000 troops, but he doubtless felt that some antidote to Bolshevism would be found by the Peace Conference."(348)

This was after the Reds had already driven out the Czechs with 60,000 troops, Britain with 6,000, Japan with over 70,000, France with 1,500, the United States with 12,000 and the Whites with uncountable numbers.

³⁰Francis, 283-348.

Bruce Lockhart, England's vice-consul in Russia, and others believed that by diplomacy, the Reds could have been persuaded to become Allies, and the Allies by riding the Whites were picking the wrong horse.³¹ Their reasoning was lost in the shouting of the anti-Reds.

In a political world, President Wilson had to find a way to intervene without breaking his fourteen points, and once again the Czechs were the key. Wilson sympathized with small countries and oppressed peoples such as the Czechs, and on July 5, 1918, while refusing to help form an eastern front, saying it was impossible, he decided to intervene with the Japanese to protect the Czechs. Marines from United States ships landed immediately to help protect Czechs in Vladivostok. By the end of September, General William Graves led 7,000 troops which, with the help of an equal number of Japanese was intended to cover the expected Czech evacuation. By that time, however, the Czechs constituted the strongest force in the area and had complete control of the railroad and Vladivostok. They had no intention of leaving.³²

Upon landing in Vladivostok, the United States troops had little to do. The Czechs had already done it. The United States assumed some administrative duties from the Czechs in Vladivostok and the guarding and maintaining of the railroad, which released the Czechs to fight Reds in the field. The United States troops engaged in only one minor skirmish with the Reds. Because the United States was not actively attacking the Red army, they perceived themselves as neutral, only being present to protect the Czechs. However, because the United States had released the Czechs from guard duty, freeing 40,000 to 60,000 troops to aid the Whites, the Reds recognized the United States intervention as an act of aggression.³³

From the summer of 1918 to the summer of 1919, the White forces under the military leadership of Denikin, an old czarist general, and Wrangel in the west, and the Czechs and Whites under Kolchak in the east, had their greatest successes. In the west Denikin was rolling northward towards the new capital of the Reds, Moscow, taking Kiev, Kursk, Orel, and Kharkov. They were within two hundred miles of the Kremlin towers. In the north, the Whites were within thirty miles of

³¹Schuman, 90; Kennan, 60. Kennan claims diplomacy would not have been successful.

³²Kennan, 98-108; Graves, 38, 55, 66, 79; Uterberger, 60, 69-89, 99; Schuman, 114, 98; Stewart, 140. The aide memoir issued by Wilson authorizing the intervention stated: "Military action is admissible in Russia...only to help the Czech-Slovaks." Graves, 7.

³³Kennan, 107, 108-10; Schuman, 135-45; Graves, , 55-99,180-90.

Petrograd. In the east Kolchak had control of Siberia and was pushing west from Kazan towards Novgorod and Moscow. In October 1919, and the Allied diplomats and newspapers were declaring victory. This was the high point; they would go no further.³⁴ It was at this point that the Red Army turned the tide.

In the meantime, an armistice with Germany was declared on November 11, 1918. The war with Germany was over, and there was no longer a need for an eastern front, but the Allied intervention continued. As Trotsky stated: "During the course of the year 1918 the Allies were forcing a Civil War on us, supposedly in the interest of victory over the Kaiser. But now it was 1919. Germany had long since been defeated. Yet the Allies continued to spend hundreds of millions to spread death, famine, and disease in the country of revolution."³⁵ With the armistice, the original excuse for intervention had passed, but the directive to the military was to continue, though many questioned its legitimacy. It was as though nothing had happened.³⁶

The Allies continued fighting and furnishing supplies to those in opposition. The British asked Kolchak to become dictator of the Whites, with his capital in Omsk. The French recognized his leadership. The United States did not, but helped to supply him. Private groups in the United States raised money for the Whites. The YMCA provided the Whites with supplies and services. United States troops still guarded the Railroad.³⁷ Nothing had changed except the expressed excuses; now it was, as British General Maynard clearly stated, "to throttle in its infancy the noisome beast of Bolshevism."³⁸

Stories of atrocities continued to fuel the hatred toward the Reds. As in all wars, the atrocities of Civil Wars seem to be the most bitter, but the Whites certainly rivaled the Reds in brutality. Kolchak in the east committed unspeakable atrocities. He bragged about burning prisoners alive, left prisoners hanging from trees so they could be seen from trains on the Railroad, ordered the immediate execution of all prisoners, jammed prisoners in box cars without adequate food, water, or clothes for the cold so that 800 died out of one trainload of 2,100,

³⁴Stewart, 154-85, 239-80; Unterberger, 118-27; Taylor, 310-17; Serge, 90.

³⁵Trotsky, 425.

³⁶Brinkley, 75; Unterberger, 103-5, 135.

³⁷Unterberger, 118-27, 161-65; Graves, 99; Schuman, 118-19, 145, 157; Heald, 226-31; Stewart, 239-51.

³⁸Stewart, 206.

purged dissidents in his own staff and army, massacred entire villages, tortured women, and killed rather than helped wounded prisoners. His partner, Semeonoff, robbed \$500,000 in furs, murdered three United States soldiers, established "killing fields" where villagers and prisoners after digging their own mass graves were executed, and said he "couldn't sleep unless he had killed someone that day." Yet, despite his unarguably criminal past, he was admitted into the United States in 1922. Nearly every writer says something of the brutality of Kolchak and Semeonoff and their White forces. Even United States Officers ordered their troops to shoot prisoners, probably because the they had heard exaggerated stories about Red atrocities.³⁹ The ultimate sacrifice came too often.: "every day I hear the roll of drums beating time for the march of a guard of honor and announcing a grim ceremony." Before the Allies left they had suffered over 2,485 casualties.⁴⁰ No one knows how many were suffered by the Russians, both White and Red.

After the 1918 armistice, the Reds attempted unsuccessfully to engage the Allies in peace talks. The French and English wanted to continue to fight, but the mood in the United States was changing with the surge of isolationism. In response to some pressure to end the allied intervention, President Wilson on February 18, 1919, delegated William Bullitt to negotiate a proposed peace with Russia. Bullitt came back and advised the president that United States troops were not serving any useful purpose and stood in danger of being destroyed by the Reds. He recommended that they be withdrawn. He also brought back a peace proposal from the Reds which was nearly identical to an earlier British proposal that had not been made public, but had been discussed among the Allies.

Since the Red proposal was more favorable to the Allies than the British proposal, Bullitt assumed it would lead to an immediate peace, particularly in view of his other observations of social and political stabilization. Amazingly no action was taken and the Allies let the peace proposal die. Since it was so close to the British proposal discussed by the Allies, it was apparent the Allies expected the British

³⁹Semeonoff quoted in Graves, 241, 313; Lincoln, 85-87; Trotsky, 431-2; Rhodes, 72-74; Current History, 64-70; Serge, 83; Heald, 327; Schuman, 166-8; Heald, 248-54; Bradley, 104-?; Graves, 125-?, 287, 284, 315, 150-64, 146-150; Unterberger, 118-27; Bradley, 104-5; Schuman, 166-7; Rhodes, 72-74.

⁴⁰de Robien, 298; Cudahy, 211.

proposal, if issued, to be rejected by the Reds and that the Allies really had no interest in peace. In disgust, Bullitt resigned May 17, 1919.⁴¹

While the Allies were losing this opportunity for peace, they were also losing the war. The Czechs were becoming disillusioned with Kolchak and his brutality and, following the armistice, they were beginning to question whether anything more could be gained by their continuing to fight. Most of the Czechs quit on December 18, 1918, and in many cases revolted against the Whites. Without Czech support, Kolchak and the Whites immediately collapsed. The last act of the Czechs in Russia was to turn Kolchak over to be executed. They left starting on January 20, 1919, and by that time, the Reds had recovered nearly all of Siberia.⁴²

The Civil War in the north ended with the evacuation of the Allies in the summer of 1919. After the armistice, the Allies got as far as Plesetskaya, but after that, they were pushed back on all fronts to defensive positions. On July 29, 1919, the decision was made to withdraw. The evacuation was completed September 27, 1919. United States troops had left Northern Siberia earlier in May and June with the British calling them "quitters".⁴³

For the United States, at least, it appeared that the war should have been over, but they stayed in eastern Siberia. Was it to continue the fight against the Reds, or something else? Graves, as general of the United States troops, suspected it was to aid the fight against the Reds. When the United States went into Siberia, they brought the Japanese with them. The Japanese had hoped to annex Vladivostok and the far east Siberia. The United States probably stayed in Siberia not to fight the Reds, but to control Japanese ambitions. They could not publicly state the reason because Japan was presumably an ally. Since no reason was given for staying, it was assumed to be a continuation of the anti-Red campaign. Out of fear of being overtaken by the Reds, the United States withdrew its troops from Vladivostok on April 1, 1920, nearly one and one-half years after the armistice. On

⁴¹For the section regarding the Bullitt mission and report I have relied upon Haines and Hoffman, 111-14; Bradley, 55; Schuman, 131-35; Bullitt, The Bullitt Mission to Russia (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919), 54; Uterberger, 147-48.

⁴²Schuman, 120, 168-71; Unterberger, 176-78; Kennan, 115-18; Graves, 116, 268-74; Bradley, 100-3, 107-14; Heald, 289; Pares, 563.

⁴³Cudahy, 95-100, 150-210; Rhodes, 91-121; Schuman, 135-7.

October 26, 1922, the Japanese left. On the same day, the Reds occupied Vladivostok. The allied intervention was over.⁴⁴

The causes of the losses by the Whites and Allies were many. Surprisingly the Reds were much better administrators than the Whites though the Whites had all of the experienced administrators. The Reds had better military control. The Red soldiers executed orders more loyally and quickly. The Reds had the shorter interior lines. The Allies not only had the exterior lines, but long supply lines. Trotsky, with no military experience, turned out to be the war's best general, maybe because he had the best mind. The Whites and the Allies were like most coalitions--different agendas, too many egos, too many different supporters to satisfy, and suspicions leading to divisiveness and lack of unity; the Reds had none of these problems. Morale deteriorated among the Allies, particularly after the armistice. They had no common goals, unlike the Reds who were fighting for their motherland and fervently held principles. The atrocities of the Whites committed by the likes of Kolchak soured many on the war and turned them to the Reds. These were all reasons for the Red victory but not the main reason. The major reason was the overwhelming support of the Russian peoples. Many peasants joined the Reds because of their land reforms, and because the Whites kept the old czarist generals who had treated them so badly in prior wars. France had committed atrocities against not only the Russian peasants, but even the Whites. The English were nearly as bad, treating many White soldiers as laborers. This caused many White soldiers of the lower classes to decide they had been deceived, and they deserted to the Red army. Regardless of the propaganda to the contrary, there was virtual unanimous support for the Reds among the masses particularly after the Allied intervention.⁴⁵ Support of the people was important, and the

⁴⁴Unterberger, 99, 176-230; Schuman, 171; Graves, 243-348; Bradley, 115-16. The Japanese had increased their troop total to over 70,000, according to Unterberger, 96. An incident that occurred in 1933 when the United States was considering recognition of Russia, lends credence to the theory that it was to expel the Japanese from Siberia that the United States stayed. One of the conditions of United States' recognition was that Russia waive any claim for damages arising from the Siberian expedition. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, made available to the Russian Foreign Minister Litinov various documents apparently confirming Hull's argument that the United States stayed to avoid Japan taking control of eastern Siberia. With this assurance Russia waived its claim for damages. Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 299-300.

⁴⁵Bradley, 176-84; Serge, 93-94, 87-88, 83; Stewart, 208; Schuman, 135-7; Cudahy, 61-75; Rhodes, 91, 101; Unterberger, 91, 230; Haines, 114; The French and British attitude toward the Russian peasants could be summed up by British General Knox's observation that they could be treated like swine; Graves, 337-338.

Reds had it in part because the Allies pushed the people in that direction.

In the United States, after it was over, there was much analysis by the public that could be summed up with the following popular ditty: "some might have liked us more if we had intervened less, that some might have disliked us less if we had intervened more, but that, having concluded that we intended to intervene no more nor no less than we actually did, nobody had any use for us at all."⁴⁶ Ambassador Francis wanted to go back in and exterminate the Reds with 50,000 troops.⁴⁷ Because reason prevailed over passion, this position lost support, except for a hard core that remains to this day. The issue became whether there should have even been invasions, and the consensus is, that there should not have been. The invasions prolonged the Civil War and assured an ultimate Red victory. The intervention spread ruin, famine, and disease across the country, killed, injured, and destroyed many, left the Russians suspicious and angry at the Allies, and provoked the founding of a Russian military dictatorship. Instead of a constant ally, the United States raised an enemy, costing casualties in confrontations throughout the world, and hundreds of billions of dollars.

Was the United States there by invitation? Only in Archangel can that be argued. If so, the United States was the proverbial guest who was invited to dinner and stayed. Later "such action could no longer be based upon even a tacit agreement with the Bolsheviks, either locally or at the center, but on the contrary involved overthrowing local Bolshevik authority and ignoring the protests of the Soviet government."⁴⁸ It is nonsense to suggest that because an intruder was initially invited into a home, he is to be excused for sacking the home and trying to kick the owner out of the home while killing the owner's family and friends. Was it intervention or invasion? It probably doesn't matter. The United States landed armed troops in Russia and killed Russians. It fought against the Reds, who constituted the de facto government of Russia. No effort was made to intervene between or reconcile the Reds with the Whites.

The American expedition to Siberia thus failed as completely and ingloriously as the force sent to Archangel to achieve the purpose for

⁴⁶Unterberger, 183, quoting from the Literary Digest, LXII (Sept. 6, 1919), 60.

⁴⁷Graves, 348.

⁴⁸Brinkley, 56.

which it was intended . . . Russia had been invaded, blockaded and disrupted with subsidized civil strife that wrought ruin and destruction to her cities and farms and carried suffering and death to thousands of her people . . . more complete and tragic debacle would be difficult to imagine.⁴⁹

From the British viewpoint, it was later described as "a blunder comparable with the worst mistakes of the Crimean War."⁵⁰

George F. Kennan is one of the foremost students of Russia. About the invasion he said:

These ventures, without exception, were serious mistakes. They reflected no credit on the governments that sent them. The impression they made in Russia was deplorable. Until I read the accounts of what transpired during these episodes, I never fully realized the reasons for the contempt and resentment borne by the early Bolsheviki toward the Western powers. Never, surely, have countries contrived to show themselves so much at their worst as did the Allies in Russia from 1917 to 1920. Among other things, their efforts served everywhere to compromise the enemies of the Bolsheviki and to strengthen the Communists themselves. So important was this factor that I think it may well be questioned whether Bolshevism would ever have ever prevailed throughout Russia had the Western governments not aided its progress to power by this ill-conceived interference.⁵¹

It might be that the last word should be left with Kennan, but an observation is warranted. One reason for studying history is to learn from the mistakes it discloses. Yet, less than fifty years after the United States' debacle in Russia, it invaded Vietnam ignoring again the desires, principles, and nationalism of the peoples being invaded, seeking instead to save the village by destroying it. The Vietnam experience is what the United States remembers today when it considers involvement in another country's problems. But the first such experience arose from the United States' tragic invasion of Russia, now all but forgotten. One can only hope that those lessons learned in Russia, and taught again in Vietnam, will be longer remembered.

⁴⁹Schuman, 171.

⁵⁰Rhodes, 123.

⁵¹Kennan, 117.