

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA, 1917-1918:  
A STUDY IN POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

DAVID B. MORGAN, MAJOR, USA  
B.S., AUBURN UNIVERSITY, 1975  
M.S., TROY STATE UNIVERSITY, 1982

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1987



Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

87-3603

MASTER OF MILITARY ARTS AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of candidate DAVID B. MORGAN

Title of thesis AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA, 1917-1918  
A STUDY IN POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

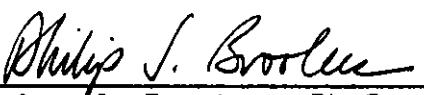
Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chairman  
Larry Yates, Ph.D.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member, Graduate Faculty  
Jerold Brown, PH.D.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member, Graduate Faculty  
Lieutenant Colonel William Connor, M.A.

Accepted this 5th day of June 1987 by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D. Programs.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA, 1917-1918; A STUDY IN  
POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS, by Major David B.  
Morgan, USA, 111 pages.

The intervention in Russia in 1918 was a momentous decision in American military and diplomatic history. In the chaotic months between January and July 1918, Wilson developed and implemented America's foreign policy toward the Russian revolution. As Wilson developed America's strategy, Russia was being torn apart first by war, then revolution, and finally civil war. This study examines the interaction between the American civilian and military leaders over the foreign policy decision to intervene in Russia. The focus of the study is on the extent of interaction of the American military leaders with President Wilson and his cabinet in regard to the final decision to intervene in Russia. Secondary sources such as George F. Kennan, David F. Trask, and Betty M. Unterberger are used in conjunction with various memoirs and most importantly Woodrow Wilson's Presidential Papers as edited by Arthur S. Link.

Chapter one provides an insight into the history of Russia prior to the Brest-Litovsk treaty of 1918. This treaty confronted the Allies with a major crisis concerning the removal of the Russian front. The Allies discovered that they could intervene in Russia under the pretext of restoring the Republican government, expelling the Germans, and influencing postwar Russia. The treaty also gave the Allies added leverage to convince the Americans to intervene. A review of the decision of the Wilson administration to intervene in Russia is essential insight in understanding the American policies of the period.

Chapter two concentrates on the political makeup of the American government in 1917-1918. This chapter gives an overview of the key military and political leaders that advised President Wilson on the decision to intervene. This includes their attitudes, concerns, and views, and how these affected their actions. This chapter discusses and analyzes issues such as military amalgamation, military expansion of the war, and priorities on the war front.

Chapter three concentrates on Wilson's attitude toward intervention and how he arrived at the decision to intervene. Allied pressure and influence as it developed is also examined along with the degree of the military's

influence over Wilson and the extent of the interaction of the military with the cabinet regarding the intervention. As the crisis neared, the military and civilian leadership constantly changed positions on the intervention question. This chapter develops those positions and explains the final decision made by those leaders in July of 1918.

In conclusion, the study offers a new prospective of the decision to intervene in Russia. This prospective concludes that the military did not significantly affect the overall decision to intervene. The reason for intervention was political, and the conception, force makeup, and mission was directed by the President without significant input from his military advisors. These insights are important for the historian as a means of examining potential relationships affecting a possible future low intensity conflict.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

THEESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
End Notes.....	3
CHAPTER	
I. BACKGROUND AND CAUSES.....	4
End Notes.....	28
II. CABINET POSITIONS ON INTERVENTION.....	28
End Notes.....	51
III. INTERACTIONS AND DECISIONS.....	53
End Notes.....	87
IV. CONCLUSIONS.....	91
End Notes.....	98
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY.....	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	105
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	111

## Introduction

Since the end of the First World War the causes of American intervention in Russia from 1918-1920 have been continually debated and argued. Why the United States intervened is difficult to answer. American intervention consisted of two separate actions that grew out of concerns over the general state of affairs in Russia and its effects on the outcome of the First World War. These actions were concentrated in North Russia and in Siberia.<sup>1</sup>

American intervention in Northern Russia began on 8 June 1918 when the USS Olympia sailed into Murmansk harbor and ended with the withdrawal of the last Americans on the 14th of September 1918. During this time some six thousand troops of the 339th Infantry Regiment and its support troops led by Col. George Stewart fought a bitter campaign against the Bolsheviks in some of the most severe terrain on earth. The American North Russian Expeditionary Force (ANREF) fought a defensive campaign against a numerically superior force for fifteen months in an extremely hostile environment. The campaign consisted of isolated small unit actions over large expanses of territory, in the worse weather imaginable.<sup>2</sup>

These troops had no combat experience, little training and no concept as to the scope of their military

role in Russia. To make matters worse, the Army Staff directed the command and control of the entire force to be handed over to the British.

In the Fall of 1918, General William S. Graves and the 8th Infantry Division landed in Siberia as the American Siberian Expedition (ASE). Here, Americans also fought a series of small unit actions that were defensive in nature. The Siberian Expedition consisted of more than 12,000 troops and suffered some two hundred casualties before completing its withdrawal on the 1st of April 1920.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to study the interaction between the U.S. military and civilian leaders with respect to United States intervention in Russia. This study will not discuss the details of either intervention, only the process leading to the decision to intervene in North Russia.

ENDNOTES

---

1Dennis Gordon, Quartered in Hell (Missoula, Mt.: The Doughboy Historical Society and G.O.S., Inc., 1982) pp. 10-13.

2Ibid., pp. 15-18.

3William S. Graves, America's Siberian Adventure 1918-1920 (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931) pp. 7-13

## Chapter One

### Background and Causes

By 1910 Europe was divided into two spheres of influence. One, the Central powers, consisted of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. The other was that of the Triple Entente of Russia, France, and Great Britain. Between 1900 and 1914 these rival groups faced each other on many occasions. Each conflict or impasse, however, was solved politically, although further polarizing the two spheres. By 1914 nationalism, ethnic prejudices, and imperialism so divided the two camps that a single tragic event could set off a major conflagration.<sup>1</sup>

On June 28, 1914 the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire was assassinated in Sarajevo. The ensuing crisis escalated into a general war within a month. Austria declared war on Serbia, and alliances drew the Triple Entente into war against the Central Powers.

As the First World War began, Russia was the Triple Entente's weakest member. The only autocratic member of the Entente, it was also the most backward and least developed, and the most politically unstable. This disadvantageous position became apparent almost at once.

The origins of Russia's weak position go back several hundred years. From Peter the Great until 1917 the Russian peasants were in a state of poverty.<sup>2</sup> This existence coupled with repressive, inadequate, and scandalous leadership during the 1800's allowed revolutionaries of all kinds to surface. The principle of autocracy without change and "Russification" of all the Empire's subjects alienated many within the Empire. Some of the most loyal sections of Russia were now at odds with the government. The armed rebellion in Poland in 1863, which was brutally put down by the Tsar, and the Jewish "pogroms" of the 1880's led to strengthened repression.<sup>3</sup> By the turn of the century, these factors alienated many elements of Russian society.

Russia's military power appeared first rate until the Crimean War of 1853 discredited it. Fifty years later, Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, and the unsuccessful revolution that resulted from it, demonstrated the weakness and backwardness of the autocracy's military powers. There was an increase in revolutionaries from repressed intellectuals and Jewish groups. One such group was the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, who stood for rigid control and discipline. Another major group was the Mensheviks who worked for mass labour movements and loosely controlled confederations. These groups continued to gather sound support through the first fifteen years of the Twentieth

Century.4 As revolutionary activities and internal discontent increased after 1905, ruthless suppression became even harsher, and increasing numbers of people were driven into the radical camps.

The last factor in the roots of the crisis before the war was the great economic boom at the turn of the century. Russia expanded and industrialized at a fantastically high rate. She had an abundance of raw materials but needed capital and heavy industry to process these materials. Both were obtained at high costs to her people and thus added to the internal upheaval. Russia compressed its industrial revolution, trying to solve within a single generation problems that had taken the West many generations to resolve. When Russia began to industrialize she concentrated her industry in key western areas. This brought, in the cities for the first time, many rural peasants together with revolutionaries. The revolutionaries, attempted to organize and control the peasants, meeting with success in many cases. It also ensured penetration by foreign investors, a process that brought very little in return for the Russian people themselves.

In March of 1905 a revolution occurred in Russia. The revolution started as a labor movement that was quickly crushed. It was, however, important because of the decisive split between the peasants that had previously been loyal to

the Tzar. From 1905 on the Tzar's support slowly eroded from a majority of the soldiers and peasants to a very small minority by 1917.

When war came in 1914, Russia struck into Germany and was beaten at the battle of Tannenberg and expelled from Prussia. Germany became bogged down on the Western front and, therefore, in 1915 attempted to switch directions and force Russia out of the war. In 1917, when this proved impossible to achieve militarily, Germany attempted to use the Russian Revolution to win by subversive means. Russia's great battle losses and government incompetence turned the Russian peasant as well as the intelligentsia against the war.

There were many causes for Russia's collapse, from a poorly fought war that had lasted too long to a destitute economy and people. All of this caused widespread discontent and, in the end, revolution. Tzar Nicholas II abdicated as a direct result of the March revolution of 1917.<sup>5</sup> A Provisional Government assumed power and attempted political and social reform.<sup>6</sup> This government also had to face the issue of Russia's future contribution to the Allied war effort.

The loss of the Tzarist Government and the possible withdrawal of Russia from the war sent shock waves throughout the West. Without the Eastern Front, the Central Powers could transfer up to two million troops to the

Western Front.<sup>7</sup> Neutral America and the Allies immediately supported the new Provisional Government and put pressure on it to stabilize and rebuild the Eastern Front. The Provisional Government decided to support the war effort and to launch an offensive in the summer of 1917. The offensive enjoyed some initial success, but then it stalled with enormous loss of life, thereby discrediting the Provisional Government.

Complicating the problems of the Provisional Government, from March 1917 until November 1917 it informally shared power with the Petrograd Soviet, a powerful organization of workers and soldiers. Of all of the soviets in existence, the Petrograd Soviet was the most powerful and best led. Each faction depended on the other for survival. The Petrograd Soviet despised the liberal tendencies of the Provisional Government and called for more changes at home. The Provisional Government, while having the expertise to run the country, did not command the popular support of the people. The collective soviets alone were trusted by the peasants and intelligentsia of Russia. These two parallel governments supported each other as little as possible. Each continued to try to overthrow the other, and neither trusted or helped the other. The Provisional Government acted in matters of international implications, while the Petrograd Soviet controlled all internal policy decisions.<sup>8</sup>

During the summer of 1917, the Petrograd Soviet was transformed from a socialist collective into a Bolshevik-led radical camp. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, or Lenin and Leon Trotsky took control during this time and began to impose their views upon the soviet. One of main aims of the Bolsheviks that Lenin espoused was to take Russia out of the war immediately. As the Bolsheviks gained influence in the Petrograd Soviet, the Provisional Government grew weaker in its ability to govern any of Russia.

The war in general and the catastrophic condition of the economy were strangling the Provisional Government.<sup>9</sup> The Provisional Government realigned ministers and cabinet positions constantly. As a result of the "July Days" unrest, Prince Lvov resigned on the 20th of July and Kerensky became the prime minister.

The term "July Days" refers to an attempt by the Bolsheviks to seize the government and, indeed, foreshadowed the end of the Provisional Government. The uprising failed due to the lack of support by the Bolsheviks in general and Lenin in particular. Lenin was unsure of Army support and felt that the timing was premature. He convinced the Bolsheviks to wait until he was sure of success.<sup>10</sup> When the uprising failed, many of the Bolsheviks, including Lenin, fled to Finland. From there, Lenin continued to lead the Bolsheviks and to influence the Petrograd Soviet. The time

came in early November as Lenin consolidated the Bolsheviks' power in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets.

Lenin returned to Petrograd from Finland on 23 October, 1917. The end of his exile signaled the beginning of the general uprising that ended with the November revolution. On the 7th of November the Bolsheviks took control of the capital. The transfer of power was almost bloodless as the Red Guards took control of the Winter Palace and arrested the members of the provisional government.<sup>11</sup>

Within days of the takeover, the Bolsheviks began to consolidate their power and to make good their promise to take Russia out of the war. They published secret treaties between the Triple Entente and Russia. The treaties were intended to show that the Allied Powers were no better than the Central Powers and that the only ones suffering were the common workers. This was done to gain support for the Bolshevik efforts to leave the alliance and to make a separate peace with the Central Powers. Peace was the main slogan of Lenin, and he intended to see it through. The call for peace was immediate and forceful. Lenin and his foreign minister, Trotsky, called for negotiation as soon as possible.

The Bolsheviks' overtures for a Russian-German peace rapidly became a nightmare for the Allied cause. The possibility of Russian resources, agricultural and

industrial, becoming available to the Germans along with all of the Central Powers' troops that were released for duty on the Western front could spell defeat for the Allies.

Against this backdrop, non-recognition of the Soviet State was born. The Allies felt that recognition would end the chance of another government coming to power that would be friendlier to the Allied cause. Many diplomats present in Russia, however, felt that recognition of the Bolsheviks would at least keep Russia neutral and that non-recognition would drive the Bolsheviks into the German camp permanently.<sup>12</sup>

Peace treaty negotiations were held in the city of Brest-Litovsk, Byelorussia. Without Allied consent, a treaty was signed on March 3, 1918. The terms of the treaty were harsh, as Russia lost 26% of her population, 27% of her land and large sections of her industrial base. Russia also had to pay a large war indemnity.<sup>13</sup> Lenin felt that this was the price he had to pay in order to survive. In opposition to his colleagues' advice, he ordered the treaty signed.

The treaty of Brest-Litovsk and its aftermath brought with it American intervention and permanent enmity with the Soviet government. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, knew very little of the situation in Russia. He did not have a working knowledge of Russian politics nor did he ever indicate prior to the Fourteen

Points speech that Russia was of more than a passing interest.

President Wilson was trained as a historian, political scientist, and American lawyer. Prior to entering politics, he had a long and rewarding career as a teacher, writer, and administrator. He was the supreme moralist and believed that the American Government should use its influence to promote peace, freedom, and justice. As president in 1914, he believed that the United States could best be served if neither the Central or Allied powers won the First World War. Mr. Wilson desired a termination of the war without a clear cut victory. As late as 1918 Wilson still believed he could maintain America's neutrality, but he began to support programs for strengthening the army and navy for future operations.

With the advent of German submarine warfare, most Americans supported President Wilson's armed neutrality. It was only after the German announcement of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, that Wilson reluctantly decided to ask Congress to declare war on the Central Powers. Congress declared war against Germany on 2 April 1917. From this point until the announcement of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, America and the Wilson administration were pulled more and more into the Russian crisis.

In response to the treaty negotiations and accusations that the Allies were trying to divide up Russia

and Germany as postwar imperialistic spoils, Mr. Wilson presented his Fourteen Points to Congress on January 8, 1918. The Fourteen Points attempted to prove that the United States had no territorial ambitions and wanted a permanent peace. Wilson's pronouncement also attempted to keep Russia from signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Wilson sought to show Lenin that Bolshevik aims and American objectives were similar if not identical, and that the U.S. desired no territories or indemnities from the war.

Furthermore, Point 8 stated:

The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development...<sup>14</sup>

When Mr. Wilson made this speech, the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were still underway and no conclusion had been reached. The 14 Points, however, failed to prevent Russia's withdrawal from the war.

The treaty and the results outraged the Allies and gave further credence to the accusation that Lenin and Trotsky were German agents and therefore were not trustworthy. America strengthened her resolve not to recognize the Bolsheviks and treated the affair as if it had not happened. The Allies believed that the Bolsheviks were not in complete control of Russia; instead, they believed the country was on the verge of total anarchy. Wilson and

the West considered the treaty null and void since, in their opinion, the Bolsheviks were not the true representatives of the Russian government. Mr. Wilson used non-recognition as the basis for totally ignoring the treaty. If the state did not exist, then the treaty did not exist. His main challenge now was to keep the Germans tied down in the East until American forces could be brought to bear on the Western front. The Bolsheviks were at the same time trying to play the Americans against the Germans and gain support to help ameliorate the harsher aspects of the treaty. Trotsky sought support throughout the spring of 1918 by trying to solicit Allied intervention. The British and the French saw this as an opportune time to get a bridgehead on the Russian mainland and keep the Germans tied down.<sup>15</sup> Once on the mainland the Bolsheviks would either conform to Allied pressures or be replaced. With this in mind, the British and the French began applying pressure on Mr. Wilson for an expedition into Russia.

The problem facing the Allies was how to convince Mr. Wilson to send troops into Russia. The French and the British had few troops available themselves and so concentrated on American troop support. Mr. Wilson's non-intervention policy was well known. The British felt that the only way America would commit troops would be under severe military necessity or moral grounds so compelling as to leave Mr. Wilson no choice.

In May of 1918 Britain presented its arguments to the Americans. The British concerns were:

1. The possibility of up to twenty German divisions being released to the Western front.
2. Up to 500,000 prisoners of war being released into Russia compounding her internal strife.
3. All of western Russia's industrial and agricultural capacity being released to Germany, thus negating the Allied blockade and starvation policy.
4. Germany's ability to seize Murmansk and set up submarine bases to harass further Allied shipping. In conjunction with the Murmansk operations the Germans could then attack Archangel and seize millions of tons of war material originally destined for Tsarist Russia and the Eastern front.
5. Concern over the unknown status of the Russian navy. If the navy proved hostile she could overtax the Allies ability to control the sea lanes between America and Western Europe.
6. The final and most important point used to convince Mr. Wilson was the Czechoslovakian troop problem. There were Czech brigades fighting on the Eastern front against Germany when the Bolsheviks signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty in 1918. Part of the treaty stated that the Czech brigades had to leave Russia immediately. These units

started due east across Russia for Vladivostok, where they hoped to be picked up and sent to the Western front.<sup>16</sup>

The British gave Mr. Wilson the impression that the Bolsheviks and German prisoners of war were openly attacking the Czechs who had few supplies and even less transportation. This argument was the one that finally convinced Mr. Wilson, a champion of the movement to create an independent Czechoslovakia, that military intervention was the only solution.<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Baker decided that an American fact finding mission needed a military man who was familiar with the American problems of supplying the Allies as well as the American effort in France. This task fell on General Tasker Bliss.

General Bliss was a soft spoken career military officer of the highest distinction. A former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Bliss was both a military expert as well as an adept political infighter of extraordinary ability. While understanding the needs of the military, he could weigh political <sup>SE</sup> consequences and act in the best interests of the country.

Mr. Wilson compounded the problem by not giving General Bliss specific instructions and being too vague on the essence of his mission. He sent his close advisor Col. House to meet with General Bliss.

Colonel Edward House, a wealthy Texan, became the trusted personal advisor to the president. He served as the president's alter ego in many crucial matters of state. He held an honorary title, as he was never in the service. House was a man who enjoyed power and all of the trappings that came with it. He believed that Germany must be defeated but not completely destroyed. It was Col. House's idea to keep Germany strong enough to act as a counterbalance against Russian expansionism.<sup>18</sup> Mr. House felt that Russia was a future threat to Europe as well as the United States. He disliked Autocratic Russia and Germany equally. Col. House felt that any government that was not a democracy was a potential threat and needed to be countered.

The Allies realized that with Russia out of the war, Germany was now in position of forcing a military solution on the Western Front. The Allies began at once to consult with General Bliss and convince him that American Forces were needed even more to fill out the ranks vacated by the Russian withdrawal and the Italian defeat. General Bliss by this time was moving onto firmer ground. Even though he had received no further guidance from President Wilson, he continued to move ahead with fact finding and laying the framework for future operations.<sup>19</sup>

A military crisis is to be apprehended culminating not later than the end of next spring,

in which, without great assistance from the United States, the advantage will probably lie with the Central Powers.

This crisis is largely due to the collapse of Russia as a military factor and to the recent disaster in Italy. But it is also largely due to the lack of military coordination, lack of unity of control on the part of the allied forces in the field.

This lack of unity of control results from military jealousy and suspicion as to ultimate national aims.

Our allies urge us to profit by their experience in three and a half years of war; to adopt the organization, the types of artillery, tanks, etc., that the test of war has proved to be satisfactory. We should go further. In making the great military effort now demanded of us we should also demand as a prior condition that our allies also profit by the experience of three and a half years of war in the matter of absolute unity of military control. National jealousies and suspicions and susceptibilities of national temperament must be put aside in favor of this unified control, even going, if necessary (as I believe it is), to the limit of unified command. Otherwise, our dead and theirs may have been in vain...

To meet a probable military crisis we must meet the unanimous demand of our allies to send to France the maximum number of troops that we can send as early in the year 1918 as possible. There may be no campaign of 1918 unless we do our best to make the campaign of 1918 the last... 20

General Bliss dispatched this letter to the President as soon as he arrived back in the United States. It represented the essence of the findings of General Bliss's mission. One of the profound changes was the attitude of General Bliss toward a massive troop infusion on the Western Front. Contact and conversations with the members of the future Supreme War Council helped change his mind.

After the battles of 1915, Lord Kitchener first suggested the need for an inter-allied body that could give a unified direction to the Allied effort. At the time this was such a radical idea that none of the national field army commanders would agree to it. They were afraid of losing control of their forces. The Italian disaster of November 1917 finally forced the creation of the council. The Supreme War Council as the first joint war fighting body in modern history exerted great political influence over the Allies. The council was an attempt to unify the Allied war effort and give direction to the international armies in the field.

With the first contact of the Americans with the Allied Supreme War Council, the American Military faced a totally new situation. The military as well as the economic situation definitely lacked Allied unity. General Bliss and Col. House both realized that the common problem was the inability of the British and French to allow more foreign policy decision-making to the military. The composition and function of the council was not clearly defined at this time. The one thing that was clear was the opposition by the British to allow the British military to cooperate outside of political control. The horrendous losses and military setbacks were taking a drastic toll on the prestige of the British Army.<sup>21</sup>

The British wanted the council separate from the Chiefs of Staff. Mr. Lloyd George did not trust such an important policy-making body to men that had cost such strategic and terrible losses of life in the past few years. The French, however, trusted their staff and so had a difficult time in understanding why the British wanted to subordinate the military part of the Supreme War Council. Generals Bliss and Pershing understood the situation and felt that the unity they sought was unattainable as long as the council was left without any teeth.

Colonel House to the President

Paris, November 23, 1917

Dear Governor:

I foresee trouble in the workings of the Supreme War Council. There is a tremendous opposition in England to Lloyd George's appointment of General Wilson. Neither Sir William Robertson, Chief of Staff, nor Sir Douglas Haig have any confidence in him, and they and their friends look upon it as a move to put Wilson in supreme command.

The enemies of Lloyd George and the friends of Robertson and Haig believe that George wants to rid himself of these generals and supersede them with Wilson. They claim that Wilson is not a great general, but is a politician and one that will be to George's liking.

...I have had long conferences with Bliss and Pershing on the subject, and I think they see the danger as I do. I am trying to suggest something else which will give unity of control by uniting all involved rather than creating dissension...22

General Bliss agreed that the overall conduct of the war could and should be left to the political leaders and that war was just an extention of politics. General Pershing was convinced that there was a need for a theater command structure. Without a military supreme commander,

unity could only be achieved through a military council with political powers. This turned out to be the idea presented to the President in how General Pershing intended to fight the war. As Wilson did not disapprove of the concept, it led General Pershing to believe that approval was given. From this point on, the A.E.F. commander directed the conduct of fighting the war on the Western Front.

During this same time General Bliss and Col. House first entered into the political quicksand of the Russian situation. Col. House and General Bliss attempted to convince the Allies that a Joint statement of war aims would be in the Allies' best interest. This step would have the effect of maintaining friendly relations with the Russians and help to counter the Bolshevik peace proposals. The propaganda victory secured over the Bolsheviks would be two fold. First, it would nullify the Bolsheviks' propaganda edge, and, second (and more important), it would reassure the liberal and socialist elements as to the true motives of the Allies in the post-war world order. There were many who believed that the Allies had imperialistic aims and felt that the war was being prolonged to futher these aims.

Most of the people that supported the Bolsheviks were not communists but were intensely nationalistic. The Bolsheviks played on this and used their fears to solidify their power base. General Bliss and Col. House tried to convince the French and British that a joint statement would

soothe internal discontent in their countries as well as blunt the Bolshevik's propaganda offensive against the West.

The events during 1917 and 1918 were probably the most confused and uncertain of the war. The United States and some of the European States were moving from secret treaties to a more open system of political alliances. The Allies were unable to agree on the best way to defeat Germany. Even though the German people were near exhaustion, their leaders were not standing idle at this time. They concentrated almost all of their efforts on Russia and the Eastern Front. The driving force behind both sides was a desire to force a military solution to the war. The political leaders turned once again to the military for assistance. To them it was a means of using the military as an end to their political objectives.

The Germans had scored earlier with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. By the fall, not only had it freed some fifty divisions for duty on the Western Front but, more importantly, it had offset the political gains of the Wilson diplomacy. The Fourteen Points had great appeal to the peoples of the Central powers. It was the treaty that pacified the people and created support for the German spring offensives. Many believe that without this treaty, the Germans would not have held out until November of 1918.

As the cries for intervention in Russia began to surface it was the French that were most vocal. The French

had asked the Americans about intervention during the interallied conference in November of 1917. Mr. Clemenceau asked Col. House, President Wilson's personal advisor, if the Americans would support a Japanese intervention in the far East. The French thought that Russia was finished and wanted to replace Russia with Japan as the power in the East. Col. House and General Bliss thought that this was not the best course of action and did not support the idea of intervention. Col. House thought that Russia was finished and that the industrial destruction suffered would not allow for a second front. Because of his close ties with the British Consulate in Moscow, the information he received led him to believe that the Bolsheviks were well entrenched and supported by the people. He was most impressed by the land reform <sup>4</sup> begun by the Bolsheviks.<sup>23</sup>

Col. House in concert with General Bliss felt that an expeditionary force could cause only damage to the Allied cause. They wrote a letter to the President as well as the head of the French Government stating that it would be useless and costly during a time when all men and material <sup>24</sup> was desperately needed on the Western Front. General Bliss thought that interfering in Russian politics was very dangerous. He and General Pershing discussed this issue on 13 December 1917. They wanted to drop completely any type of direct military involvement in Russia.<sup>24</sup>

Col. House, upon his return from Europe, advised the President that any intervention would be a mistake. The President agreed with House and opposed any intervention, especially by Japan. After January 1918, the State and War Departments agreed with the President's evaluation of Japan's motives. They presented the President with intelligence that confirmed Mr. Wilson's suspicions of Japanese motives.

By February 1918, the Allies were putting a tremendous amount of pressure on Wilson over the intervention issue. House and Wilson met to discuss the Russian problem. They could not decide upon a firm position, and so Wilson withdrew his objections as far as Allied intervention was concerned. In his memo, Wilson would not join in his support, but he would no longer object to the Japanese intervention.

This pressure surfaced in the Supreme War Council in March. Mr. Clemenceau wanted the council to send a note to Mr. Wilson to get the support of the Americans. The entire council supported the French concept of intervention. The British were delighted to see another Allied power support the idea of a military presence in Russia.

General Bliss was at a great disadvantage with the official method of consulting with the President. All governments except the United States were politically represented on the council. The time it took to receive an official answer<sup>had</sup> very short. Only the United States had an

extended delay on almost all presidential level decisions.

This caused continual confusion and mistrust within the council.

With this as the mode of operation for the American advisor, American foreign policy was directed in a fragmentary method. The Allies were suspect of our motives and thought us as bungling inadequate newcomers. Within the War Department and Mr. Wilson's cabinet, there was a crisis brewing as to the direction that American policy should take and which Department should take the lead in its formulation. The Russian problem brought this to a head in June of 1918.

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup>Daniel M. Smith, American Intervention, 1917 (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968) p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to our Day (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 229-241.

<sup>3</sup>Betty Miller Unterberger, American Intervention in the Russian Civil War (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath and Company, 1968) p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-8.

<sup>5</sup>The Gregorian calendar will be used throughout this study. Russia used the Julian calendar until 14 February 1918. This accounts for the thirteen day difference in references throughout.

<sup>6</sup>Foster Rhea Dulles, The Road to Teheran (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944) pp. 115-121.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-140.

Of the six million men often cited by many scholars there are different interpretations as to how many troops were non-German and therefore available for duty on the Western Front. Most agree that of the six million available that no more than two million were German and could have been sent to the Western Front.

<sup>8</sup>George F. Kennan, Russia Leaves the War (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956) p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 509.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 509-511.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 512.

<sup>12</sup>Dulles, The Road to Teheran, pp.115-118.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 527-531.

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Government, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933) Supplement 1, Vol. I, p. 15-17.

15Dennis Gordon, Quartered in Hell (Missoula, MT: The Doughboy Historical Society and G.O.S. Inc., 1982) pp 4-6.

16Ibid., pp.3-5.

17Michael Kettle, The Allies and the Russian Collapse March 1917-March 1918 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) pp. 21-30.

18Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers Of Colonel House, December 3 1914 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company), pp. 43.

19Palmer, Bliss, Peacemaker, p.186.

20Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), pp. 305-322.

21Ibid., pp.251-255.

22Ibid., p.156.

23Alexander and Juilette L. George, Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House (New York: Dover Publications, INC.,1958), pp. 378.

24Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, p. 354.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CABINET POSITIONS

During the first months of 1918, the U.S. Government wrestled with the Russian problem in fragments. No single cabinet department held total jurisdiction over the Russian situation. The Wilson Government was by this time becoming emotionally drained and intellectually stretched by the endless, international complexity of the war in Europe. The problems of directing and managing the American War effort from Washington as well as participation in the Allied coalition was consuming more and more of the Wilson Administration's time. The fragile Allied coalition consisted of many countries with varied and often conflicting interests. The Wilson Administration often found itself as arbitrator of Allied policy disputes that had a direct impact on the war effort. The Russian situation was an example of the diversity of the problems facing the Wilson Adminstration at this time.

The Russian situation was chaotic. Washington still had little concern or interest in what was happening in Russia, nor was there any attempt to find out. Most senior Washington officials believed that German agents were behind

Russia's problems and that when the Allies won the war Russia's problems would be solved. The over-amplification of Germany's strength and resolve consumed the Wilson Government. This led to exaggerated concerns and misguided intentions over how to properly direct the war effort. The Administration continued to concentrate on the Western Front and ignore the situation in Russia. Wilson was convinced that winning the war in the West was the best way to help Russia in the Long term.<sup>1</sup>

The Wilson cabinet had no clear rules regarding their areas of responsibility. There was no effective or responsive cross fertilization of issues within the cabinet regarding Russia. This lack of defined areas of responsibility led to interdepartmental in-fighting in Washington and mass confusion in the field. The relationships within the Wilson Government were strained considering the pressure that the administration was under. Wilson acted as his own chief of staff in directing cooperation and defining areas of responsibility within the cabinet. He allowed friction to exist between the departments and nowhere was it greater than between the War and State Departments. Friction took the forms of conflicting interests, uncoordinated efforts, and fragmentary solutions frequently counterproductive to the aims of America's general foreign policy and war fighting strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Futhermore, Americans working in Russia did not often pool their information or work as a team. Their work was compartmentalized within their departments and not shared with their colleagues. The State Department for example, did not consult the military mission on many of the matters in which both sections had vested interests. This, too, led to greater confusion in the field and a greater conflict of interest in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

The positions of each of the departments differed and were based on input from their field operatives or agencies. As the summer of 1918 arrived, the positions of the departments became transitory and shifted constantly. It was these positions that formed the basis of interaction by the cabinet and the army. Each had their own idea about the true nature of the Russian problem and how it should be solved. These early positions set the stage of interaction within the Wilson government over the Russian intervention.

#### The State Department

The State Department concentrated on the Russian situation in earnest as the Brest-Litovsk treaty was being completed. One of the first issues to arise was that of intervening with advisors and support troops on behalf of the Soviet Government.<sup>4</sup> Through the American Military

Mission, Trotsky had unofficially requested aid in reorganizing the Soviet State to include the military. Now the State Department's overriding concern was the possibility of Russia cooperating with the Germans.

The State Department began to consider the possibility of a regular soviet military force conducting operations with the Germans. The American Military Attache, Colonel James A. Ruggles, and his assistant, Captain Francis Riggs, sent the State Department information concerning the concept of creating a regular soviet force.<sup>5</sup> The department was unsure of the ability, purpose, and trustworthiness of such a force. When the request for advisors for the Soviet Army arrived, it set off some very grave concerns within the department. The State Department wired Ambassador Francis to clarify the reasons including the intent of the creation of this force.<sup>6</sup> Even after the official request for aid from the Soviet government, the State Department was unsure of the total situation and how the use of military advisors would affect the Japanese forces in Siberia. The State Department also wanted to know if the Soviets were going to observe the agreements made with the Provisional Government on the Railway Corps work along the trans-siberian railroad.

After consultation with Francis, the State Department issued instructions on the fifth of April that specified the U.S. position on military aid to the Bolsheviks. The Department's attitude was that America

could give no further military assistance. The best way to help Russia was to win the war on the Western Front. The Department wired Francis not to try to force concessions from the Soviets as it would only aid the Bolshevik and German propaganda effort.<sup>7</sup>

While officials of the State Department were working on the Russian problem, the Secretary of State Robert Lansing was not personally involved. State Department officials briefed Lansing on isolated events on several occasions but as of the first of March had not informed him of the State Department's general Russian strategy.

Robert Lansing served as Secretary of State for Wilson from 1915 until 1920. He was a New York lawyer with much international experience. A formal person who traveled extensively, Lansing brought with him a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. In later years as Secretary of State, he had much influence and often tempered Wilson's ideological desires with practical policies. However, when Lansing first became the Secretary of State no one was more surprised than the Wilson Cabinet. Lansing was originally appointed as Secretary ad interim. Most political observers felt that it was a temporary measure taken by Wilson until a more suitable Secretary was found. It was well known that Wilson did not think Lansing well suited for the job and considered his appointment temporary. Mr. Wilson remarked,

that Lansing would not do, that he was not a big enough man, did not have enough imagination, and would not sufficiently vigorously combat or question his views, and that he was lacking initiative.<sup>8</sup>

Washington political observers believed that Wilson was his own Secretary of State and that Lansing was a bookkeeper and not involved with major policy questions.

This initially put Lansing at a disadvantage *from which* that some felt he never recovered. From his appointment in 1916 until the Winter of 1917, Lansing continued to gain Wilson's confidence and trust. It was only when the Russian problem *broke* *out* surfaced that the old problems of trust and confidence resurfaced.

The Secretary of State's position on Russia was simple. Lansing was opposed to any contact, agreement, or sympathy with the Soviets. He would not recognize any group that claimed to represent the Russian people, unless he had proof that they represented the bulk of the Russian people. He fought any movement, both from within and without the State Department, that wanted the United States to recognize the Soviet government or any other splinter organization. Lansing did not want to deal with the Russian problem as a general policy but he wanted to address all questions as separate incidents and not tie them together.<sup>9</sup>

In early March 1918, Lansing's position on Russia began to take a more definitive form. His stand on intervention centered around the question of whether the

United States should send a war ship to Murmansk. Col. Ruggles requested through the State and War Departments that an American show of force be sent to Murmansk to offset the British forces there and reassure the Russians that the British were not there as a power bent on colonial annexation but as an ally with America. Lansing forwarded the request to Wilson without a recommendation from the State Department. This demonstrated that Lansing had, even as late as April, no firm understanding about the situation in Russia or of the true intentions of the British. Wilson approved the idea and forwarded it to the Department of the Navy.<sup>10</sup>

By mid-April 1918, a second event involved the State Department. The event centered over the removal of Raymond Robbins and other members of the American Red Cross Commission in Moscow. Robbins and the American Red Cross mission were involving themselves in State Department matters. Lansing was surprised to learn that the Allies in Moscow thought Robbins was the official American representative to the Soviets. The State Department also learned that Robbins was communicating foreign policy matters via the Red Cross, to Washington without their knowledge or consent. Lansing took action on the 23rd of April. He contacted members of the Red Cross in Washington and suggested that their Moscow mission be removed for their own safety. It just happened to coincide with the same

recommendation made by Mr. Robert Sisson on the 24th of April. At this stage, Lansing became aware of the complexity of the Russian problem and tried to consolidate and control the number of Americans speaking for the United States Government.<sup>11</sup>

From late April until early June, the State Department continued to debate internally the merits of American intervention. Siberia and North Russia were treated as separate issues by all to include Lansing himself. Lansing was undecided but leaned to nonintervention. All others in the Department had formed the opinion that intervention in Siberia was acceptable and that North Russia was a minor operation of little consequence. On the 14th of June, Lansing conducted a meeting with Secretary Baker and Chief of Staff Marsh. He asked for their opinions on intervention and wished to know if intervention was supportable from a military standpoint. Lansing, felt that something should be done but was still undecided regarding a proper course of action. This indecision was evident to Baker and Marsh. It gave them the impression that the State Department was not in firm control and was operating in a vacuum.<sup>12</sup>

From the June 14th meeting until Wilson called a Cabinet meeting on June 25th, Lansing vacillated on the entire Russian issue. He was not active but was waiting for something to happen regarding a solution to solve the issue

for him. On the North Russian situation, it came as Supreme War Council Joint Note 31. This note, which was signed by Gen Bliss, implied that the North Russian troop intervention was only for the defense of the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. Neither General Bliss nor the State Department ever envisioned Allied troops conducting operations into the interior of Russia for any purpose. Lansing's approval came as mute silence on the question. After the 14th of June, Lansing and the State Department were silent on the entire subject of intervention in North Russia. As far as Lansing was concerned, the affair was already decided and needed no further consideration.<sup>13</sup>

On the Siberian situation, the Czechs presented Lansing with an alternative on the 17th of June. The Czech uprising in Vladivostok supplied justification in Lansing's mind for American intervention in Siberia. Lansing could support an American expedition to rescue and safeguard the Czechs and simultaneously keep a respectable distance from collaboration with the Japanese and French over seizure of territory from Russia. In a series of meetings and memoranda, Lansing convinced Wilson that America could satisfy the Allies with this action and keep their principles of not interfering with the internal affairs of the Russian state. Lansing sent Wilson a memo on the fifth of July, outlining his recommendation and support for

intervention. Upon receipt, Wilson called for a key meeting on the sixth of July.<sup>14</sup>

While the Secretary of State and Washington State Department officials were trying to make sense of the Russian problem, America's Ambassador to Russia was himself trying to analyze the chaotic situation he confronted.

David R. Francis was the American Ambassador to Russia from 1918 until he was withdrawn in 1918. The Wilson Cabinet depended on him for timely and correct intelligence on the situation in Russia. In Russia, Ambassador Francis had few able assistants in which he could trust and even fewer who were competent on the subject of national Russian politics. Mr. Francis had little practical experience on the subject of Russian politics. Therefore, the Cabinet was depending on the wrong man at a most critical time.

In early April, when Col. Ruggles requested a show of force in Murmansk, Francis personally endorsed it. He agreed with this recommendation and felt that the only solution for Russia was a prompt intervention by military force since the Soviet Government had requested it.<sup>15</sup> Francis wanted to help the Bolsheviks with military aid. He was concerned with the stability of the Soviets, and he felt that while the Bolsheviks were in power that America was morally bound to help them. He did not especially like the Bolsheviks, but he thought that any government was better than the old Tzarist rule.

Within a month of his approval of helping the Soviets, Francis reversed his views and recommended intervention in North Russia and Siberia against the Soviet government. He concluded sometime in May that the Soviets were not going to stand against the Germans. The only way to safeguard the northern ports and military supplies was through military action against the Soviets.<sup>16</sup> Francis was concerned with the Soviets and their relations with the Germans and not with the internal affairs of the Russian State. Francis accepted that the Soviets were not friendly to the Allies, but since they were also against the Germans as well, he was tolerant of them. Only after the middle of April did Francis become aware of the stated principles of the Soviets. It appears that Francis was one of the first Western Diplomats who began to take the Soviets seriously in their policies.

On the 2nd of May, Francis cabled Washington that it was time for Allied intervention. He stated that it was long past the point of no return and that he held hope that the Soviet government would request aid all the same. Francis had worked for strengthened ties with the Soviets and held hopes that they would request aid. By the end of May, Francis felt that the Allies could wait no longer. From this time on, he felt that intervention was necessary and needed to be executed when possible. He also talked to

Col. Ruggles and asked him persuade the War Department to recommend intervention.<sup>17</sup>

#### The War Department

To understand the position on intervention within the War Department, one must understand the background of the United States Army and the War Department before World War I.

When Mr. Garrison resigned as the Secretary of War in 1916, he was in direct conflict with the President and Congress. He left with the support of the army and a large part of the public sector that was hostile to the president and his foreign policies. After much debate, Mr. Wilson appointed Newton Baker as the new Secretary of War. Baker was heralded as a pacifist and was as great a lover of peace as Mr. Wilson. Both men believed in preparedness if war should come. When bitter critics assailed Baker and tried to make the nation believe that his pacifisms endangered the American Military, Wilson wrote of Baker:

He is as genuine and gifted<sup>a</sup> man that I know, and I am sure that the better he is known the more he will be trusted, loved, and admired. <sup>"</sup><sup>18</sup>

Newton D. Baker was the Secretary of War from 1916 until 1921. As Secretary of War, Baker listened to his military advisors, implemented many of their recommendations

and supported policies favorable to the Army and Navy. He developed a remarkably good relationship between the War Department and the State Department. Mr. Baker's quiet and logical methods kept cabinet level squabbles to a minimum.

Baker's first mission was to gain the confidence of the Army. With his reputation as a pacifist, this was no easy task. He took over the job just as the Congress was trying to reduce the size of the army. This proved to be the battle ground that bloodied Baker for the first time. The National Defense Act of 1916 tried to reduce the Army Staff and reestablish the old bureau system. Secretary of War Baker took it upon himself to prevent this from happening under any circumstances. It was during this era that Baker earned the loyalty and respect of the military.<sup>19</sup>

The professional officers that made up the core of the United States Army believed that America would eventually be drawn into the war. These officers busied themselves with preparing the Army for modern conflict that they felt was inevitable. One of the key members of this group of officers was General Tasker H. Bliss. Together with Secretary of War Baker, Bliss forged the Wilson Administration's civil-military link that would see the country transformed from a continental backwater into the preeminent force of the twentieth century. These two men together would speak as one and direct the War Department goals as a united force incapable of separation.<sup>20</sup>

During the latter half of 1917, the War Department was fighting several engagements simultaneously. The first was the expansion of the army into a global fighting force. As many within the military knew, General John J. Pershing had a wealth of experience in the diplomatic arena. He had received this experience in the Philippines and on the army staff. General Pershing kept a keen eye open during his tour of the Western Front. He believed that expansion of the Army was a matter of organization and priorities.<sup>21</sup>

Members of the Allied Missions disagreed about the effectiveness of the American war preparations. They were writing to their governments, and the fallout was returning to the White House and Mr. Wilson's political enemies. Because of this and the failing performances of the Allies during the summer, Mr. Wilson decided to send a mission abroad to support the Allies and determine the true requirements for the American effort.<sup>22</sup>

The night before his departure, in November of 1917, General Bliss met with Col. House and asked for instructions from the President. Col. House had received no definite instructions and communicated this to General Bliss.<sup>23</sup> When General Bliss arrived in London, he did not have any clear instructions, he was also greeted with a new crisis. In early November the Italian Army had suffered a major defeat, and the Russian Provisional Government had been overthrown. The Allies gave General Bliss a complete update and painted

a very grim picture. It appeared that the reason for the Italian situation was resulting from the infusion of German troops from the Russian Front and a total lack of interallied military coordination. This was the first indication of German troop movements from the Russian Front. Until this time, the proof of troop disengagements along the Eastern Front was purely speculative and not confirmed. This spread near panic among the Allies.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the summer, the Allies had ignored warnings about troop movements in Italy, as they ran counter to the Allies' policy of waging war in their own sectors. Until the Italian debacle, no one considered fighting together in a joint theater. General Bliss realized this immediately, and he began a damage assessment regarding the overall effect for the result of the war. More important, he was drawn into an identity crisis with the other members of the Supreme War Council. Bliss, himself, did not have the political power of his colleagues and had to refer all political matters to Wilson. This caused a tremendous amount of concern and delays.

Secretary Baker kept a close relationship with the President. His views were the same as Wilson's in the Spring of 1918. His view was one of nonrecognition of the Soviets and intervention in Russia only as a last resort and then only if the people were in dire need. Under no circumstance, would Baker consider armed intervention in

Siberia because of the drain on resources that were needed for the Western Front. He was suspicious of the Japanese and was concerned for American interests in the Far East. As early as the 15th of May, Baker changed his mind and agreed with the North Russian operation. He consulted with General Bliss on the matter and felt that the operation as he understood it was acceptable. He assumed that the operation was of coastal defense for stores abandoned on the docks in Murmansk and Archangel. He also thought that the operation was temporary and limited in scope. Baker never considered the North Russian operation anything other than a limited military operation without political implications. Unfortunately, he was under the same erroneous view as was Bliss and Lansing.<sup>25</sup>

Baker and the career diplomats of the War Department continued to complain about undue Allied pressure over the question of intervention.<sup>26</sup> He was incensed over the political aims of the British when he discovered them. General Bliss had been misinformed over the purpose of the North Russian expedition, and then the original troop requirements that he approved were changed by the British after he had seen them. Baker and Bliss reviewed the entire situation and determined that the expedition was not practical. Baker then checked with Marsh and found that he agreed with him. With this information, Baker attended the

28th of June meeting in the hopes of changing Wilson's mind. 27

#### The Supreme War Council

General Bliss requested a feasibility study of the Russian Intervention to put the entire question into perspective. Bliss and Pershing led the American military opposition to intervention. They told Clemenceau in March that an expedition to Murmansk or Siberia was impractical militarily and then turned Clemenceau's own words against himself. Clemenceau was told that the war must be fought and won on the Western Front and not in the vastness of Russia as he had stated to Wilson earlier.

After this discussion was held, Bliss convinced the Supreme War Council that a study should be made to determine the feasibility of a North Russian intervention. As a compromise, he allowed separate French and British appeals forwarded to Wilson for action in Siberia. Bliss felt that separate appeals could defuse the issue until some sense could be made of the chaos of Russia. 28

When the sixth session of the Supreme War Council ended on the third of June, the Allies again issued their call for American participation in a Russian Expedition. Even with the Sixth German Offensive of 1918 approaching,

The Supreme War Council continued to press for intervention. The American war effort was outstripping all expectations, and the Allies now saw a chance to put troops in Russia and continue the war on the Western Front. This pressure to intervene continued to mount daily,

...with access to so prolific and so willing a recruiting station, the champions of Russian intervention envisioned reserves enough for another great adventure. Although the fourth German offensive had been stopped and American divisions were concentrating against the Marne Salient, the easterners were more than ever convinced that the only way to win the war was the restitution of the Russian Front...<sup>29</sup>

The Allies were in no mood to allow the United States to continue vacillating over intervention. /Loyd George and Clemenceau were thinking beyond any of the Allied military planners. They wanted total commitment to such an expedition. This was the position Bliss found himself when the Seventh Session of The Supreme War Council met on the 2nd of July.<sup>30</sup>

Bliss, however, had one idea that he could not get across to the Allied members of the Council. He thought that the Russian problem belonged in a separate category and that the Allies should win the war against Germany first. He had seen the military requirements for such an adventure and felt that the requirements far outweighed the capabilities of the Allies. He did not believe that the Allies could finance an adventure in Russia nor would the

populations of the Allies themselves support such an adventure. The French and British also saw this and therefore tried to tie the Americans into their plans. This would help them meet their aims without the cost of their own personnel and equipment. In the Allies' minds, the Russian problem had to be solved before the War ended, or it would have to be abandoned altogether. Bliss turned to French Marshal Foch in an attempt to slow the impetus of the intervention. He wanted to abandon any attempt of a large scale operation in Russia by the Allies. Foch, however, was unconcerned with the diversion of a few troops from the Western Front by this time and so concurred with the Allies over the question of intervention. This left Bliss isolated and in a position of vulnerability with the Allies.

As the Supreme War Council convened the seventh session on the second of July, the position on intervention in Russia was set, and the Americans were left isolated. The Allies felt that the Americans were delaying and not conducting themselves as true Allies. The Americans considered the problem a strategic one, and the Allies considered it as a variation of the tactical problem in the War.

The Army Staff /

While Bliss was fighting the Allies and representing the Wilson government, the Army Staff was becoming involved in the Russian problem. General March was involved only at the last minute by the Wilson Cabinet. When asked if the operation was possible, March immediately said that it was a mistake and that the military could not support either the North Russian or Siberian operation without cutting back on critical capabilities elsewhere. March and the War Department completely agreed on the subject. He was against intervention from a military point of view and so informed Wilson in a memo. The problem was that Wilson did not confer with March and had not requested an opinion from him. March met with Wilson and discussed the Russian situation for the first time on the 26th of June after Wilson had already made up his mind.<sup>31</sup> The Army's position became one of duty and obedience to the Commander-in-Chief. March made himself very clear on his position and never changed his mind. Wilson was visibly irritated with him and never discussed the affair with him again.<sup>32</sup>

Of all the observers that played an active part in the decision to intervene in Russia, none were in a better position to report the true situation than the military attaches and observers. Colonel Judson and Lieutenant Colonel Ruggles played a critical role in the entire affair. Judson was of particular interest since he was appointed by Wilson personally. Wilson appointed Judson to the Root

Commission as an observer in the Spring of 1917. He did so based on the advice of his friend Albert Burison, the Postmaster General. The relationship that developed between Judson and the Postmaster General had a profound effect on the result of the decision to intervene in Russia.

A major problem facing the American Military Mission was that before the arrival of Judson and Ruggles in Petrograd in 1917, the senior American Military Officer was Lieutenant Riggs. He was perceptive but not matched for the requirements of the job. The War Department had not seen fit to place a senior officer in Russia until the summer of 1917. Until the arrival of Ruggles and Judson, Washington neither accepted recommendations from nor gave instructions to the American Military Mission. Washington lost a valuable asset in Riggs and the Wilson Cabinet missed a key insight regarding the problems in Russia.<sup>38</sup>

Judson remained in Russia as the military attache by the direction of the President. When Judson became the military attache he assumed a dual role within the American community. As the military attache he was responsible to the Ambassador but as the senior military officer, he had direct access to the War Department. Judson had a third chain of information and that was through the Postmaster General to Wilson himself. This arrangement was not suited for the importance of the requirements placed on Judson in 1918. This had an adverse effect on the American community

and made cross fertilization impossible. Judson's ability to bypass any particular chain made the situation confused. Judson unintentionally led to uncoordinated efforts in Washington ~~at~~ when they could least afford them. Washington was receiving fragmentary information, and that was making a coherent strategy impossible.

### Summary

By the middle of June, the Fourth German Offensive had been stopped and the Allies were beginning to see the end of the war. Even though the Germans were forming for their fifth and last offensive, the Allies were looking toward the postwar political realignment of the Western World. Wilson was concerned over Japan and the Far East as well as the ambitions of the French and British in Russia and Germany. Up to this point he had resisted all overtures by the Allies to intervene in Russia and was still trying to balance his principles with the foreign policy goals that he had set. Wilson's attitude and vision of future peace was being weighed against the cost of intervening in Russia.

As the Wilson Cabinet gathered for the June 26th meeting, the different members had already decided which action they favored. The Army Staff and General Bliss of the Supreme War Council were against intervention in any

form. The War Department and Secretary Baker were against the intervention in Siberia but not against a small force in North Russia to safeguard Allied stores. The State Department with the exception of the Secretary himself was for total intervention at the earliest moment. Lansing was vacillating in favor of intervention but had still not made up his mind. Ambassador Francis and the military Attaches in Russia were for intervention but were hoping that the Soviets were still going to invite them in. Wilson and House were leaning toward intervention but still could not justify it at this time. They were on the verge of a decision but had yet to reach one. The United States policy on intervention in Russia was nearing fulfillment.

ENDNOTES

---

1 American Intervention, 1917 (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966) pp. 236-239.

2 Ibid., p. 250.

3 Betty Miller Unterberger, American Intervention in the Russian Civil War (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath and Company, 1969) pp. 22-25.

4 George F. Kennan, The Decision to Intervene (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968) p. 114.

5 Ibid., pp. 118-117.

6 Ibid., pp. 117.

7 U.S. Government, Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, Vol. I (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932) pp. 480-482.

8 Julius W. Pratt, The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929) pp. 53-57.

9 Ibid., pp. 132-138.

10 U.S. Government, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933) Supplement 1, Vol. II, p. 488-490.

11 Kennan, The Decision to Intervene, pp. 183.

12 Ibid., p. 381.

13 Dulles, The Road to Teheran, pp. 122-132.

14 Kennan, op. cit., pp. 395.

15 Ibid., p. 55-57.

16 Ibid., p. 212.

17 Ibid., p. 214-216.

18Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era, Years of Peace 1910-1917 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp.451.

19Palmer, Bliss, Peacemaker, pp. 124-127.

20Ibid., pp.130-142.

21Frank E. Vandiver, Blackjack, The Life and Times of John J. Pershing (College Station and London: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), pp.727-741.

21Palmer., op. cit., p.185.

22Palmer, op. cit., p.190.

23Alexander and Juilette L. George, Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House (New York: Dover Publications, INC.,1966), pp. 378.

24Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, p. 372-380.

25Kennan, The Decision to Intervene, p.368.

26Fredrick Palmer, Bliss, Peacemaker (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), p. 294.

27Ibid., p. 389.

28David F. Trask. The United States in the Supreme War Council (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), p. 113.

29Palmer, op. cit., p. 295.

30Ibid., p. 296-87.

31Kennan, op. cit., p. 378.

32Ibid., p.379.

33Trask, op. cit., p. 107.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INTERACTIONS AND DECISIONS

Wilson's centralized leadership and his ability to organize led him into the White House. Once he became president, these same traits became liabilities in some cases instead of assets. Wilson's ability to organize was designed around <sup>a</sup> system that was restrictive and did not allow for subordinates to disagree. This led to a backlash of alienated influential friends and members of Wilson's political opposition. Many of his critics did not confront Wilson personally/as the president) but instead attacked his policies and programs. Wilson could not understand this and either took personal offense or tried to coerce them into submission. This only caused friction and resentment.

Col. House, on the other hand, understood Wilson's thinking and played upon it for his own advancement. House played on Wilson's ego and concerns and by doing so built a power base of presidential influence rarely seen in this country.<sup>1</sup>

Also, the way in which Col. House developed his relationship with Wilson affected the rest of the cabinet.

House rose above the cabinet members in his relationship with Wilson and exerted influence over the president where no one else could. He was always sympathetic and attentive to the President. Furthermore, he was careful not to antagonize or disagree with the President. House gave Wilson continual compliments and did so in such a manner as to lead Wilson to make decisions in House's favor. House was careful and calculating and always presented facts in such a manner as to convince Wilson to make a decision that he favored.<sup>2</sup>

House had been advising Wilson on Russian foreign policy issues since 1916. He had an important impact on many foreign policy issues during the Wilson years. He opposed intervention as a policy tool in general and throughout the Wilson years he did not change his mind. The one exception was in Russia in 1918.

Initially, House influenced Wilson in regard to Russian foreign policy. In late 1917 the two agreed that intervention was not a viable option. House continued to argue against intervention until June of 1918. He managed to support Wilson in his resolve and gave him added strength to resist tremendous Allied pressure regarding intervention.

On the 4th of March, House suggested that the State and War Departments start using a courier service to deliver messages with reference to Russia to Wilson via himself.

Today has been a stirring one. The President telephoned Gordon over Lansing's private wire and asked whether his memorandum which was to be sent to Japan had been submitted to me before I wrote my letter to him of yesterday which he had just received.

The State Department has started a courier service between the Department and me, using two of the Secret Service men for the purpose. This is done to avoid the danger of important despatches and papers becoming lost or stolen in the mails. It is a quicker and surer method.<sup>3</sup>

The courier policy began on the 4th of March, 1918. It lasted through the end of 1918. It is another example of how House consolidated his power and influenced the rest of the cabinet. House and Wilson continued to work together in the form of private meetings. Wilson used these meetings as a time when he could relax and not worry about offending or arguing with anyone. Col. House was used as a tension and frustration release point. This combination of events and personalities led Col. House to be Mr. Wilson's confidant and trusted assistant. The ability of Col. House to act as an intimate sounding board, free from political repercussions, was his biggest asset. From this developed one of the most famous relationships of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

Because of his absence at a critical time, he did not directly have a decisive influence on the course of events in Russia. The fact of his absence indicates that Wilson was devoid of a key advisor during a critical time.

This in itself is a significant factor in the decision to intervene in Russia.

Just as the Russian issue was approaching a climax, House departed on a programmed vacation. He left Wilson at a most critical time. House's vacation in Massachusetts lasted the entire month of June. Although House stated that he kept a close assessment of the Russian situation, his help was less than optimal to Wilson. House received many callers in Massachusetts with opinions on the subject of intervention. There is, however, no record about him passing on the details of these conversations to Wilson or the Cabinet. During this time House stated that he now also felt that something needed to be done but he was still not sure of the proper course of action.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to Russia, Wilson worked on several other crises at the beginning of 1918, including defending the efficiency of his administration as a whole and the War Department specifically. Mr. George Chamberlain, chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, tried to take control of the war effort from the President. He introduced a bill that allowed for the creation of a Ministry of Munitions, separate from the War Department and answerable only to Congress. In effect, this would have removed Wilson and the Cabinet from directing the war effort. From the sixteenth of January until defeat of Chamberlain's bill on January 23rd, Wilson concentrated completely on these

issues.<sup>6</sup> He did not spend any significant time on developments in foreign policy, including Russia, during this period.

The time lost in January resulting from Wilson's distraction reveals an important defect in his ability to direct a unified foreign policy effort toward Russia.<sup>7</sup> His personality and attitudes colored his foreign policy judgments in general and the policy toward Russia in particular. He reconfirmed his poor relationship with the cabinet. Not for the first time, Baker and the Cabinet realized that Wilson did not involve himself with many of the important policy considerations needed for a smooth running of the war effort. Wilson had a one-track mind and often neglected policy issues at the expense of others. The danger was that many of Wilson's subordinates interpreted this as either blatant unconcern on the president's part or a complete delegation of his authority to them on a particular issue. Wilson left some departments alone entirely, yet he over-involved himself in others to the extent that some of his most trusted advisors quit making some key decisions. This was particularly true of Secretary Lansing and the Department of State.<sup>8</sup>

Wilson's personality determined the manner in which Cabinet members worked with each other and with the War Department officers. Because of his personality Wilson did not inform his subordinates of an overall situation and so

they were limited in their knowledge. This forced his civilian leaders to give the military an often incomplete picture and seemingly incoherent policy from the military point of view. Many of the General Officers who directed the war did not understand this facet of Wilson's personality and, therefore, were confused in their relationships with the civilian members of the Wilson government. Wilson's personality created confusion and resentment among senior government officials in Washington. Wilson's style of complete control and centralized decision making powers led to many decisions being delayed or not made at all.

Wilson was under a great amount of strain because of the way he directed the government. There is evidence that he was tired and overworked to the point of making major policy errors in Russia. House was aware of the strain on Wilson and recorded in his diary on the 4th of March as the Siberian question was in the forefront of Wilson's concern.

The president was much disturbed over my letter and has stopped for the moment, the memorandum or note which was to go to Japan. A copy of this first note, which really embodies what he and I agreed upon before I left Washington is attached. I did not know that he was going to act so quickly. The truth of the matter is that I was not well while in Washington and was not able to give the matter as clear thought as its importance deserved. The President, too, was tired. I never realized before how important it is for both of us to keep in good physical condition and not over work. Neither of us, I think, was altogether fit last week to properly solve the problems which

confront us. There was never a more critical week in our history and the fact that it found us both at a rather low ebb was unfortunate to say the least.<sup>9</sup>

This fragmented control conflicted with the military style of leadership and command and control in the army. The senior War Department officers felt constrained by decisions that affected the internal operation of the army, and as such they felt that the civilian leadership was encroaching into areas in which they had no expertise. This created a spill-over effect on the relationship between the military and the civilian leaders in the Wilson government. Wilson's personality also affected the way that the U.S. government conducted foreign policy, and to a large extent it set the tone by which the departments interacted. General Marsh had a difficult time in seeing the President. He was frustrated by Wilson's regard for the military as a nonintellectual group which caused more problems than it solved.

Wilson's methods baffled his allies and further alienated his enemies. Wilson was very closed-minded once he decided an issue. He felt that his position was both the only correct moral and intellectual position, and all others were wrong. This attitude that ultimately affected the formulation of policy in Russia was well fixed by the time of the Mexican affair in 1914. Wilson's dislike for Mexican junta leader Huerta and his policies led to American support for Carranza and the Constitutionalists faction fighting in

Mexico. Against the advice of Secretary of State William J. Bryan, Wilson lifted an arms embargo against Mexico. He did so to help Carranza. Wilson wanted to rid Mexico of a dictator but he wanted to do so in an indirect way that would not directly involve the American government. But his obsession with American honor and duty led to intervention in Mexico a short while later. Wilson's attitude during the crisis was that he was:

Suffering under moral responsibility that he had assumed, he besought his colleagues to ask God for peace if they believed in the efficacy of prayer.<sup>10</sup>

This is an example of how he combined his traditional religious beliefs with American foreign policy. Wilson's responsibility for the Mexican situation shows how his attitudes and religious beliefs tended to take any topic out of the realm of discussion. Anyone who challenged the official view was looked upon unfavorably. When General March challenged Wilson over the Russian intervention, Wilson ignored his arguments and would not listen to the soundness of his advice.<sup>11</sup> To compound this, Wilson was also impatient with delays. Once he decided to act on an issue, he then expected compliance immediately. He did not realize that frequently the only way to accomplish foreign policy goals was through patience and time.

Wilson's personality, coupled with less than candid opinions expressed by his advisors, proved to be a major

stumbling block in finding a solution to the situation in Russia. Wilson's knowledge of Russia was factually incorrect, outdated, and totally insufficient for making complex foreign policy decisions. His view of Russia as the United States entered the war is an example.

Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude towards life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long had it stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honour.<sup>12</sup>

His advisors, who should have been knowledgeable and able to provide a more sophisticated analysis of the situation, were not and could not. People such as General Judson and others who had firsthand knowledge and experience on the current situation in Russia could have given valuable assistance to Wilson but were not close enough to the president to talk to him.

General Judson was recalled from Russia in February, 1918. He asked for a meeting with the Secretary of State to give an updated assessment of the developments in Russia.

Lansing received Judson on the 21st of February at which time Judson recommended recognition of and cooperation with the Bolsheviks as a general Russian policy. Lansing did not agree with these views and thought that Judson was neither competent nor capable of formulating Russian foreign policy objectives.<sup>13</sup> After the meeting, Judson dispatched several memorandums to the War Department titled "Action in Russia, Urgent." These notes were written in February and March. They contained options, courses of action, and recommendations on how to proceed in formulating Russian policy. No action was taken as Judson continued to proceed through War Department channels to affect this policy. When Judson found out about a possible intervention in Siberia by the Japanese he became alarmed and concerned over the consequences. On the fourth of March he wrote to the Chief of Staff:

On February 28, 1918, I submitted to the Acting Chief of Staff a memorandum on the subject "Action in Russia, Urgent." This memorandum was subsequently returned to me with the notation by the Secretary of War that "The Secretary of State has charge of this." In the meantime the Secretary of State had requested from me a copy of the memorandum, which was furnished him on the morning of March 1...<sup>14</sup>

Baker informed Wilson of Judson's note, and Wilson requested a copy of the memo on 4 March. Wilson did not ask to see Judson afterward, and even though Judson tried to see Wilson, he never did. Without Judson's knowledge, Wilson

and Lansing had directed his recall from Russia as a result of his public support of the Bolsheviks and non-support of the current American policy. It is unclear if that was the driving force behind Wilson's refusal to see Judson but it is an indicator of Wilson's personality at work as well as the inability of knowledgeable subordinates to gain access to him.<sup>18</sup>

From January to March, 1918, the Allies continued to press for America's intervention in Russia. Wilson resisted this pressure and courted the Soviets in many of his speeches and statements. He did not, however, officially offer anything of substance for their use. On March 11, 1918, Wilson sent a message of hope and support to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. He stated:

The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves forever from autocratic government and become the masters of their own fate.<sup>18</sup>

Wilson sent this message five days after he told the Japanese that he would not support any armed intervention in Siberia. The Allies were surprised and angry with Wilson. However, they kept pressure for intervention on the Americans throughout the first part of 1918. Wilson and House felt that unless the Japanese subjected themselves to the Entente regarding Siberia that the West would look as if they had a hand in Japan's overt conquest of Siberia. Wilson wanted nothing to do with an affair that looked as if it

could be compared with Germany's conquest of Western Russia.

House agreed and recorded in his diary,

We discussed, at great length, the question of Japanese intervention in Siberia, but came to no conclusion. There are arguments both for and against it. My thought was that unless Japan went in under a promise to withdraw, or at least be subject to the disposition of the peace conference, the Entente in backing her would place themselves in exactly the same position as the Germans now occupied toward Western Russia, to which there is such vociferous objection among the Western Powers.<sup>17</sup>

From the end of February until May, Wilson concentrated on the war. He had by this time defined the administration work load and area of responsibility of the domestic cabinet positions. With the passage of the Overman bill, he reorganized and directed functional areas within the Cabinet.<sup>18</sup> Areas such as the War Industries Board and the Armaments Board were streamlined and made more productive. In the area of foreign policy decisions, Wilson recognized that problems in cooperation were surfacing at an alarming rate. He decided to create an inner circle war council to solve the conflicts personally. He created his group on the 20th of March, 1918. Wilson intended to manage the war effort himself and end all conflicts between the War and State Departments. At this time he was concerned with U.S. foreign policy toward Russia because of Allied pressures, so he took it up as one of the first issues in the council. As the council did not consist of any cabinet

members, Wilson effectively took any decision making powers away from the cabinet members. He used the regular cabinet for information briefs and his war council for action. The council was a group of Wilson's close personal friends in the private business and academic sectors. The council consisted of his son-in-law William McAdoo; Wall Street speculator Bernard M. Baruch, National Food Administrator Herbert Hoover, Edward Hurley who was head of the Federal Trade Commission, Vance McCormick, chairman of the National Republican Party, and President Harry Garfield of Williams College. He wanted the council to meet weekly with the intent of solving conflicts and streamlining foreign policy operations.<sup>18</sup>

On Wednesdays he conferred regularly with his war council--men of action and achievement, lieutenants who could be given responsibility with the knowledge that they would accept it conscientiously, function within its limits, and soon report solid accomplishment. The value of his cabinet had been impaired by personal ambitions and animosities and by indiscreet talking after meetings, so that the sessions of that body were devoted to storytelling and trivial matters. But in the war council the atmosphere was more nearly that of a corporate executive committee.<sup>20</sup>

Wilson was discreet in meeting with the war council. He did not keep official notes or records of the proceedings. By not discussing the existence of the group, he tried to avoid hurting the feelings of his regular cabinet members. The council met in the White House by personal invitation of the President. He would meet them at

the door and escort each member to his upstairs study in an informal manner. This was a very awkward position for Lansing and Baker, and they resented this council and Wilson for creating it.<sup>21</sup>

By March, the difficulty in obtaining Wilson's approval for policy decisions on Russia increased. Because of Wilson's interest in Russia, he demanded complete control over the formulation of Russian policy. He felt that his prestige and personal ethics were tied to the future of Russia. In the beginning Russia was an example of the new style of democracy in the world with which Wilson identified. The Soviet rise to power and the prospect of Allied intervention greatly concerned him. For these reasons he wanted to solve the problem and bring about a just solution on his terms. He wanted a democratic society and a lasting peace for the Russian people. For these reasons, if Wilson did not approve policy decisions in advance, they were not made. Wilson missed many of the regular weekly cabinet meetings for the first five months of 1918. Without Wilson, many official policy decisions were simply not made. Lansing and Baker had a difficult time in completing many of their tasks because of Wilson's personality. There was too much to be done by one man; many decisions were not made, and opportunities were lost or decisions were made without Wilson's knowledge or consent. This did not happen often, but, as in the case of Lansing,

for example, it was a contributing factor to Lansing's eventual break with Wilson and resignation in 1919.<sup>22</sup>

As a direct result of Wilson's vacillating attitude and inability to reach a decision over Russia, Lansing and Wilson started formulating possible solutions for Siberia during the first of March. As the volume of communication with the Japanese increased, Wilson and Lansing tried to keep the Japanese from putting ground troops into Siberia. They wanted to keep the Russians from becoming hostile to the Allies. There was, in their opinion, no military reason for intervention in Siberia yet. The Japanese sent Wilson a message on 20 March regarding their intentions for operations in Siberia. It came as a surprise that the Japanese were not totally committed to a unilateral military expedition at this time.<sup>23</sup> Wilson was surprised and gratified with the result. He planned authorizing troops in Siberia only as a means of controlling and observing the Japanese. The news gave him a reason again to resist the operation.

Then the possibility of German prisoners causing trouble surfaced. Wilson learned on March 21 there was a possible riot of 80,000 prisoners-of-war in the Far East. Lansing felt this essentially changed the situation in Siberia. He believed there was a real possibility of the Germans taking over the whole of Russia to include Siberia. The possibility of 80,000 potentially organized Germans in

Siberia was unthinkable to Lansing. Lansing now reversed himself for the second time and recommended intervention. Wilson did not agree and did not at this time change his mind. Lansing argued with Wilson on 24 March for the intervention in Siberia.

If the reports, which persist, that the military prisoners in Siberia are being organized under German officers and have succeeded in occupying Irkutsk are confirmed, we now have a new situation in Siberia which may cause a revision of our policy. It would seem to me, therefore, that we should consider the problem on the hypothesis that the reports are true and be prepared to act with promptness.

...If the reports turn out to be correct will we lose anything by making Japan the mandatory of the Powers, and giving approval to her sending an expeditionary force to Siberia to oust the Germans and restore Russian authority in that region?

Ought we not adopt this policy in the event that Irkutsk is actually controlled by the Germans?

I think that the situation requires careful consideration and a policy should be adopted in advance because no time ought to be lost to meet and offset the German activities in Siberia...<sup>24</sup>

Wilson would not agree and was angry over continual changes in the State Department's policy recommendations. He told Lansing that the situation was unclear and did not warrant a change in policy at this time.<sup>25</sup> As it turned out, the report was false, and Wilson held his ground and returned to his original policy of nonintervention in Siberia.

Also, in March, Wilson's attention was diverted for a second critical time. This time it was to have

far-reaching consequences for American intervention in Russia. The first German offensive of 1918 was not a surprise, but it was more effective than anyone thought possible. The German successes were the greatest of the war to date. Within a few weeks, the British were near defeat, and for the first time the Germans were close to forcing a military solution on the Western Front. The British and French assailed Wilson for immediate help in the form of amalgamation of the American Army. Wilson found himself in the middle of a dispute that threatened to destroy the coalition. In addition to Allies, Wilson had a major crisis between the War Department and the Army with which to cope. Based on the emergency in France, Baker agreed to postpone the creation of the A.E.F. as an independent force in France. Pershing would not agree to this and forced a crisis in the War Department. The result was a compromise with the Army that gave autonomy to Pershing with combat troops and the delay or disbandment of support and auxiliary troops in France. Wilson found a solution but at a cost to the Allies. Wilson felt afterwards that he had let the Allies down. As the Russian intervention problem moved to the forefront here, Wilson was increasingly reluctant to turn the Allies down again.<sup>26</sup>

It was at this time that Wilson came to the conclusion that the Russian problem was in reality two separate issues, and he proceeded accordingly. He divorced

North Russia from Siberia as far as American foreign policy was concerned. Wilson saw North Russia as a limited operation along the North Russian coastal ports to secure and safeguard supplies and watch over the Allies there. To him the operation was not an intervention but a small limited military operation that would end quickly. Wilson came to this conclusion as a result of the way that the Allies presented their case for intervention. They proposed the operation for protection of supplies, material, and a short limited operation designed to help the Czechs. Wilson was not aware of the greater intentions of the Allies at the time of his decision. The British and French were interested in a permanent influence in Russia. They were trying to design a post war Europe favorable to their interests. As this ran contrary to his philosophy, had Wilson requested more information or assessments from the State or War Departments, he might have changed his mind.

While the North Russian plan was becoming clear in his mind, Wilson was unable to come to grips with the reality of Siberia. To him it was not as much a military operation with clear military objectives as it was a political requirement to placate the Allies and maintain American interests in the region. Wilson had made this determination as early as March, although he neglected to let the War Department, Allies, and the Army Staff know until the end of May.

This led to a tremendous waste of time and effort in the cabinet. If Wilson had communicated this to the rest of the cabinet, then the result might have been different. Baker and the Army Staff had always considered the question as a single problem and so based their support or dissatisfaction on it. All of the contingency planning for Russia was done on the assumption of intervening as a single action. It had the effect of disregarding possible courses of action that were otherwise viable options. As an example, the outfitting of troops destined for Siberia could have been faster if the army had used American weapons and equipment. Since the army planners considered the expedition as a single action, they tried to outfit both forces with the same material. They thought that, politically, Americans using Russian material would be less offensive to the Russian people. They thought that logically the forces would seem less formidable and hostile if they used local ammunition and repair parts. North Russia as a military operation could have used American material and equipment easier since there would be no political considerations as to their mission. From March until the end of May, Wilson worked on the Russian situation as two distinct operations and so here they are presented. It is important to note that with the possible exception of Lansing, the rest of the Cabinet worked on this issue as a single problem and so based all their recommendations.<sup>27</sup>

## North Russia

In March, the Allies started to take a different approach to intervention. They used the German offensive and Wilson's reluctance to amalgamate to mount pressure on Wilson again to intervene in Siberia and North Russia. While this was happening, the Secretary of the Navy, through Admiral Simms, also argued with Wilson for simultaneous intervention. Admiral Simms convinced Wilson that a show of force in the area would benefit the Americans and the Russians. The Navy's attitude toward intervention was similar to the Allies even though the reasons were very different. Simms felt that a U.S. warship in Murmansk harbor would calm mounting anti-American feeling and have a unifying effect on the Allies. Simms told Wilson that Americans would be able to keep an eye on the Allies and show support for the Russian people. Simms' advice together with Allied pressure was key in helping Wilson to make the decision to send a show of force to North Russia. Wilson had still not yet decided to intervene but he began to move the forces within range if it became necessary.

Wilson took the first step in North Russia on 4 April, 1918. He sent a letter to Lansing authorizing the U.S.S. Olympia to proceed to Murmansk.

I am willing that a warship should be sent to Murmansk, if there is one available near those waters, and I am willing to have its commander cooperate there; but I think it would be wise to ask the Secretary of the Navy to caution him not to be drawn in further than the present action there without first seeking and getting instructions by cable from home.<sup>28</sup>

The Navy complied with Wilson's order except in one area. For some unknown reason, they did not include instructions for the Olympia to limit its involvement unless first consulting home. The Olympia's captain overextended his authority by the extent of his involvement in Murmansk. The captain of the Olympia put ashore American seamen in direct confrontation with the Murmansk Soviet. Shots were exchanged and the first Americans were wounded. Wilson found himself committed to a military expedition a short time later. This sent incorrect signals to the Allies.<sup>29</sup> With the landing of American troops from the U.S.S. Olympia, the Allies assumed that Wilson agreed in principle to a full North Russian operation that included intervention on the mainland. Wilson had not agreed but the Allies did not know this. The Allies assumed that the Commander of the Olympia was acting on orders of the President when he in actuality was not. This led to many misunderstandings within the Allied camp. That is nothing compared to the confusion that the Soviets and the American Mission in Russia, to include Francis, felt. Baker and the Army continued to object to sending troops into North Russia. They still maintained

that it constituted a drain of the Western Front and that Americans could not make a difference militarily in Russia.

With the policy distinction between North and Siberian Russia, Wilson solved the dilemma of North Russia. Wilson did not intend to allow a foreign power to invade Siberia while he could oppose it, nor did he condone any landings in Siberia. This was not the case in North Russia. Wilson did not appear interested in North Russia as a question of ethics. He rationalized that it was in the defense of supplies supposedly on the docks of Murmansk and Archangel. He even recalled that Francis had stated that Trotsky had requested aid in the recent past. The problem was that he never checked with Francis to see if the request was still valid.<sup>30</sup>

On the fifteenth of April, the Murmansk Soviet revolted against the central authority in Moscow. Throughout May and June, the Soviets were in disarray and open fighting broke out between the Murmansk Soviet and the Lenin Government. Neither Wilson nor any of the Americans in Russia knew of this until well after the fact. This was despite American Naval forces on station in the port of Murmansk. For some unknown reason again, the Navy failed to transmit critical information to Washington.<sup>31</sup> After the Czech uprising in May and new troop movements in Murmansk, the Soviets were paranoid about the true intentions of the Allies. They did not believe the Allies and, so, openly

began to oppose them. Wilson did not know of this until after the fact, although he probably would not have changed his mind in any case.

While the Czech problem occupied Wilson, the Supreme War Council's Joint Note 31 was delivered to him. The note was another attempt to convince Wilson to intervene. Baker, because of the size of forces required and design of the mission as he understood it, was committed for a show of force in North Russia. Also, the note had the tentative approval from Bliss, and Baker trusted his judgement. Wilson thus passed the issue to Foch and the Allied military planners in Europe. He stated that he would accept their decision. The Germans were still gaining on the offensive and Wilson did not believe that Foch would divert troops from France yet. The problem was that the Germans had stalled by this time, and Foch had no objections. This strategy backfired on the Americans, however, and Wilson moved forward with the North Russian operation.

The cabinet and General March argued as late as 15 June against the operation. More by chance than by design, General March was able to talk to Wilson on two separate occasions about Russian Intervention and he recommended noninterference on both occasions. He did not believe that the political considerations outweighed the military reality of a problem plagued campaign in Russia.<sup>32</sup> They were shocked when they found out that the expedition was to be

commanded by the British and that it was more extensive than earlier thought.<sup>33</sup> General March was beside himself when he learned that the Allies were suggesting a British commander. He compared the situation with that of the amalgamation issue on the Western Front. Even though, March had a semi-formal relationship with Wilson, he stated later that it was one of the lowest points with his relationship with Wilson.<sup>34</sup> The problem was that Wilson had handed the issue to the Allies and withdrawing from their decision now would split the Alliance. Lansing and Baker did not inform Wilson about the extent of the dissatisfaction within the War Department and cabinet. Wilson did not suspect that there was the amount of dissatisfaction in the administration at the time. The sense of frustration continued to build in the lower levels of the administration.

The British played on Wilson's idiosyncrasies and ideology to get the Americans to intervene. Wilson still did not agree with the concept of armed intervention but he was torn between his ideals and his seemingly continual nonsupport of the Allies. By the 10th of May, Wilson had decided to support a limited intervention in North Russia. He did so primarily to appease the Allies, although he was still not willing to support intervention in Siberia. He had already made up his mind but had not informed any of his advisers or key members of the Cabinet. The salient fact to surface here is that only the State Department had now

started treating the Russian problem as separate issues. The Army Staff and the War Department still did not know that Wilson was also thinking along those same lines.<sup>35</sup> The army planning was still based on a single option intervention in two locations in Russia.

### Siberia

Almost all Wilson's correspondence in the last weeks of May were taken up with this central problem in Russia. Wilson was concerned with how to placate the Allies, maintain focus on the war in the West, and keep the Germans and Russians from forming an alliance. He did not know how to compensate for the power vacuum created in the Far East by the Russian Revolution and the growing presence of the Japanese.<sup>36</sup>

He took no one fully into his confidence; but there is every indication that his mind was incessantly occupied at this time by the anxious search for some expedient that would demonstrate America's friendship for the Russian People, give them the needed reassurance, and strengthen the anti-German forces in Russia, without committing the United States to pretentious military adventures or linking it to the ulterior political designs of the other Allies.<sup>37</sup>

Toward the end of May, Wilson agreed with the War Department about the futility of a military expedition in Siberia. While Wilson did not believe in intervention as a

solution, because of his concern for the Russian people he thought that something had to be done. Wilson noted that some action was called for by this stage, but he was unsure of which action to take and how to execute it. These then were the elements that attracted Wilson's attention in Siberia.

On the first Wednesday in June 1918, several Cabinet members held impromptu talks on the subject of a Siberian intervention. The War and State Departments found themselves in conflict over Russian policy. Resulting from the Czech uprising, Lansing and State wanted to intervene in Siberia, and Lansing was even in the process of staffing the logistical requirements for such an operation. The negative results frustrated him to the point of despair. He wanted to do something but was at a loss regarding the proper choice. Lansing was convinced that America was going to have to aid the Czechs if they were to survive, and he was now determined to do so. The problem was that he could not find a feasible way to affect the situation without coming in conflict with the America's priority for the war effort. It was apparent that the amount of aid required was beyond American capability at the time.

Baker and the War Department, on the other hand, were still against intervention and were incensed over the change of attitude in the State Department. Baker did not understand Lansing's change in attitude and felt he had

capitulated to Allied pressures.<sup>38</sup> There were no solutions or understandings coming from this meeting, only a feeling out of each others' positions and the rationale for such positions. The only real benefit was the time spent together by the two men. Baker and Lansing gained a better understanding of each other regarding the Russian question. They merged their knowledge and information on the problems in Siberia. Lansing gained an insight about the difficulties of mounting a sustained military operation and Baker learned about the political, behind-the-scenes maneuvering over Russia. This was one of the few times that the two could talk to each other with Wilson not in attendance. The two men began to support each other and used this relationship to an advantage in dealing with Wilson. There is no direct evidence that suggests this relationship affected the decision to intervene. However, this advantage began to surface as Wilson left for the Paris conference. As a result Lansing and Baker had a united front as to the makeup of the delegation and to the direction America should take in the development of a post war Europe.

This then set the stage for the American involvement in the Siberian intervention. The month of June was filled with reports, contradictions, and misunderstandings that continued to complicate an already incredibly complex issue. Throughout the month, the President and his individual

cabinet members dedicated almost all their time to the Siberian issue. As the crisis neared, the Allies inundated Washington with letters, cables, notes and personal envoys to all levels of the Wilson government. Baker was overwhelmed by recent Russian travellers with opinions for action. Lansing complained that he could no longer work because of all the messages that called for his attention. Wilson himself was not unaffected by all this. He continued to search for answers and replied to the Allies regarding his position. The problem was that Wilson was still vacillating and in reality had no firm foreign policy on Siberian intervention.<sup>39</sup>

These distractions, coupled with the Supreme War Council's Notes of June, pushed the Wilson Government closer to the decision. The last distraction in the affair was the awkward political problems that surfaced from the domestic side of American politics. The Republican party began a campaign in early June to use the intervention issue for partisan gain in the Congress. The Republicans proposed a commission for the purpose of determining if intervention in Russia was warranted. This put the White House in a very difficult position. The complexity of the foreign policy decision aside, the spread of the Russian situation into the domestic political scene was unthinkable to Wilson.<sup>40</sup> He did not want a commission appointed by Congress looking into such a volatile issue. House and Lansing tried to get

Wilson to appoint Herbert Hoover as the head of such a commission. Wilson talked to Hoover but never offered him the job officially. Wilson's idea was to tie up the bureaucratic wheels of government until he had a chance to solve the problem in his own way. Wilson successfully delayed the issue for six weeks. He played both sides by not agreeing with either side. No one knew if Wilson favored the idea of a commission or not. He talked to Hoover but did not offer him the job. It was a flawless deception that gave Wilson time until a better solution came available.<sup>41</sup>

As the pressure continued to mount on Wilson, one last event helped him to make a decision on the Siberian operation. Fighting broke out in late May, between the Soviets and Czech prisoners of war. The Czech prisoners, together with the Czech Legion, rioted in Vladivostok and announced to the world that they were going to fight on the Western Front or if the Allies wanted, they would remain in Russia and reopen the Eastern Front. From late May until 17 June, fighting continued in Siberia between the Czechs and the Soviets. The Czechs started fighting for Vladivostok on 15 June. From that point on, the Czechs controlled almost all Siberia. Wilson did not receive word of this until the late afternoon of 17 June. He received the information from the American Mission in Peking. It took the form of a request for the Czechs to be allowed to remain in Siberia

and protect the Russians there. Wilson saw a solution to the crisis and wrote a short message to Lansing,

There seems to me to emerge from this suggestion the shadow of a plan that might be worked, with Japanese and other assistance. These people are the cousins of the Russians.<sup>42</sup>

From this moment on, the plan for American intervention accelerated at alarming speed. Wilson showed his complete lack of understanding of the Russian situation and people. It is inconceivable that any knowledgeable person would believe that the Czechs and Russians were cousins, as though it made a difference. Wilson was concerned over the fighting in Siberia and was unsure of the fate of the Czechs. He agonized over their fate and concerned himself with their safety.<sup>43</sup>

Wilson called for a cabinet meeting on the evening of June 25th. It was a momentous meeting for it was the one that Wilson used to bring his cabinet to speed on the situation. The only person missing was House. Wilson did not tell anyone of his plans, but he gave them guidance for the staff planning. This allowed Wilson to divert his cabinet's attention from inaction to action, even if they were not proceeding in the direction that Wilson would ultimately direct them. With all the past month's confusion over a course of action, the cabinet was almost paralyzed now, and Wilson wanted action. He believed that action in the wrong direction was better than further inaction.<sup>44</sup> The

cabinet prepared several options that ranged from economic, commercial, and a civilian political, commission to military intervention with America retaining control over Siberia.

Vladivostok fell to some of the Czechs on the 28th of June. American lives there were in danger from the fighting, and Wilson concerned himself with their safety. Wilson confirmed the fall of Vladivostok on the 2nd of July, by when he had also received the Supreme War Council's last appeal for intervention. These last two events were all that Wilson needed to make his final decision and relay it to the Allies and the cabinet. He pondered the situation on the second and third of July.<sup>45</sup>

Wilson drafted an early memorandum on the fourth of July. He did so with the aid of Lansing and no one else. The president decided the Siberian foreign policy issue in a single afternoon without the aid or assistance from the cabinet. He did not ask for or receive input from Baker or the Army Staff. Lansing did not disagree, or if he did there is no record of it. The memorandum states,

After debating the whole subject of the present conditions in Siberia as affected by the taking of Vladivostok by the Czecho-Slovaks, the landing of American, British, French and Japanese forces from the naval vessels in that port,... and after reading and discussing the communication of the Supreme War Council favoring an attempt to restore an eastern front against the Central powers; and also a memorandum by the Secretary of State

The following propositions and program were decided upon:

FIRST: That the establishment of an eastern front through a military expedition, even if it was wise to employ a Japanese force, is physically impossible though the front was established east of the Ural Mountains;

Second: That under the present conditions any advance westward of Irkutsk does not seem possible and needs no further consideration;

Third: That the present situation of the Czecho-Slovaks requires this Government and other Governments to make an effort to aid those at Vladivostok in forming a junction with their compatriots in Western Siberia; and that this Government on sentimental grounds and because of the effect upon the friendly Slavs everywhere would be subject to criticism if it did not make the effort and would doubtless be held responsible if they were defeated by the lack of such effort;

Fourth: That in view of the inability of the United States to furnish any considerable force within a short time to assist the Czecho-Slovaks the following plan of operations should be adopted, provided the Japanese Government agrees to cooperate:

(a) The furnishing of small arms, machine guns, and ammunition to the Czecho-Slovaks at Vladivostok by the Japanese Government.. This Government to share the expense and to supplement the supplies as soon as possible;

(b) The assembling of a military force at Vladivostok composed of approximately 7000 Americans and 7000 Japanese to guard the line of communication of the Czecho-Slovaks proceeding toward Irkutsk; the Japanese to send troops at once.

(c) The landing of available forces from American and Allied naval vessels to hold possession of Vladivostok and cooperate with the Czecho-Slovaks;

(d) The public announcement by this and Japanese Governments that the purpose of landing is to aid Czecho-Slovaks against German and Austrian prisoners, that there is no purpose to interfere with the internal affairs of Russia, and that they guarantee not to impair the political or territorial sovereignty of Russia; and

(e) To await further developments before taking further steps. 48

There is some question about the timing of the memorandum. George Kennan maintains that Wilson wrote the document on July 4th and then presented it to the cabinet on the sixth for their review. Wilson and Lansing do not mention a draft of the memorandum before the sixth. The memorandum is officially listed as a conference letter and the cabinet as the primary authors.<sup>47</sup>

The meeting was one of great intensity. The members were seated, and then Wilson read his views on the subject. There is no record of dissent from the decision except for General March. March was still unconvinced and challenged Wilson after all others agreed with the context of the memorandum. He challenged the wisdom of the operation from a military standpoint and told Wilson that he still believed it to be a mistake. March repeated the problems of supplying the expedition, draining of valuable resources destined for France, and the inability of the American Force to achieve any decisive outcome within Russia. March again told Wilson of his personal experiences with the Japanese and Russians and why he felt that the mission was a mistake. Wilson replied that he would take the chance come what may.<sup>48</sup> March stated in later years that Siberian intervention was one of a very few times that Wilson directly interfered with War Department actions during the war. He felt that the decision to intervene was politically

inspired and that it left the American soldier in the middle of an impossible situation.<sup>49</sup>

This was the main decision of the intervention. Wilson used the memorandum and incorporated it into his 17 July aide-memoir for the official act of intervention. He did not call another cabinet meeting until after the 17th and did not have another crisis meeting until after the armistice. The text and the lack of dissension is a result of the way Wilson treated and dealt with the cabinet.

This then was the beginning of the intervention as a part of American foreign policy. The cabinet did not proceed with the operation as a disorganized group opposing the president. The cabinet, once committed, executed the operation with a great deal of vigor and enthusiasm. The Army tried to execute the mission although the senior officers did not believe the mission practical or achievable.

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup>Arthur Walworth, Woodrow Wilson (New York: W.W. Norton Inc., 1985) pp. 124-134.

<sup>2</sup>George and Juliette Alexander, Woodrow Wilson and Col. House (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1986) pp. 35-42.

<sup>3</sup>Author Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 48 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986) p.532.

Wilson's memorandum to Japan concerned the possibility of a joint Allied action in Siberia. Wilson wished to convey to the Japanese in the strongest terms that the American government would not accept unilateral Japanese action in Siberia unless the Japanese agreed in advance to subject themselves to the directives of the Supreme War Council.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 19280 pp.388-391.

<sup>5</sup>George F. Kennan, The decision to Intervene (Princeton, New York: Princeton, University Press, 1944) pp.375-85.

<sup>6</sup>Link, op. cit., pp. 82-85, 204-205.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

Wilson and Baker worked aggressively to defeat the Chamberlain Bill. They then pushed through the Overman Bill that consolidated Wilson's power and gave him a free hand in directing the American war effort. The Overman Bill allowed for complete reorganization of all governmental agencies to include bureaus and departments connected with the war effort that were part of the executive branch of government. Wilson managed to consolidate his influence, but he lost valuable time in doing so. He could not concentrate on Russia from the Fourteen Points Address of January 8, where he attempted to keep the Bolsheviks in the war, until the 11 February peace principles speech before Congress.

<sup>8</sup>Walworth, op. cit., pp. 182-184.

<sup>9</sup>Link, op. cit., p. 532.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

11 March, The Nation At War (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, INC., 1932), p. 361.

12 Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 41, p. 524.

13 Ibid., pp. 534-537.

14 Link, op. cit., p. 537.

15 Ibid., pp. 44-46.

16 Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 47, p. 598.

17 Ibid., pp. 445.

18 Ibid., p. 94.

19 Ibid., p. 43.

20 Walworth, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 165-169.

21 Ibid., pp. 167-74.

22 Seymour, op. cit., pp. 53-57.

Lansing resigned in February of 1920 over a series of disputes with Wilson and his wife. Wilson had suffered several strokes in 1919 and was incapacitated for approximately six months. While he was incapacitated, Lansing conducted cabinet meetings and continued to keep the government functioning. Once Wilson recovered, he felt that Lansing was disloyal by making decisions that should have been postponed until Wilson's health improved. He eventually provoked Lansing into resigning.

23 Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 47, pp. 92-93.

The Japanese government at this time was divided over the question of intervention in Siberia. Japan's leaders like those in the United States had divided opinions over the proper course of action to take. They wanted an independent solution for Siberia without Allied interference. Wilson mistakenly believed that the Japanese response was due to their support for his views on Siberia. In fact, Japan was unconcerned with Wilson's views and agreed not to act unilaterally only because of a lack of support for intervention within the government.

24 U.S. Government, Foreign Relations of the United States, The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, Volume II

(Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. 357-358.

25 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

26 Kennan, op. cit., pp. 367-369.

27 Ibid., p. 365.

28 Link, op. cit., p. 246.

29 Kennan, op. cit., p. 58.

30 Ibid., p. 268.

31 David R. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy: April, 1916-November, 1918 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 72-75.

Initially the Navy used diplomatic courier service to transmit message traffic from North Russia. As with most couriers, the American Embassy had a priority system to determine which documents were to be transmitted. While no conclusive evidence to the contrary, the Navy's records show that the message arrived at the American Embassy and was not retransmitted for reasons unknown.

32 March, The Nation At War (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, INC., 1932), pp. 113-120.

33 Kennan, op. cit., p. 368.

34 March, op. cit., pp. 381-383.

35 Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era, Years of Peace 1910-1917 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 321-338.

36 Link, op. cit. volume 47. pp. 426-470.

37 Kennan, op. cit., p. 382.

38 Ibid., p. 391-394.

39 Walworth, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 406-407.

40 Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 48, pp. 204, 306-307, 606, 611.

41 Kennan, The Decision to Intervene, p. 388.

42 Link, op. cit., p. 335.

43 Ibid., p. 387.

44 Kennan, op. cit., p.389.

45 Ibid., pp.394-396.

46 Link, op. cit., p.542.

47 Kennan, op. cit., p. 388.

48 Ibid., p.387.

49 March, op. cit., pp. 358-359.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Wilson and many of the world democratic heads of state depended on the bureaucratic infrastructure that their predecessor left them. Wilson needed the options, information, and estimates this infrastructure provided. The men comprising the infrastructure worked to provide Wilson with the options that allowed him to make educated choices regarding foreign policy. This civilian bureaucracy within the American governmental system was a very powerful one. Without its support, there was very little chance of any presidential directives being carried out. Wilson's cabinet is an example of such a bureaucracy that supported him in a time of war.

The military establishment in 1918 was a force that supported Wilson and his decisions as the President. The military, however, gave Wilson some unexpected problems in an area that he did not foresee. Wilson's limited subject matter knowledge in the area of the application of military power proved to be a critical disadvantage. Wilson was unfamiliar with military theory and its application in a limited conflict. Wilson also did not appoint the military

leaders and their staffs. They were not a segment of his team nor were they subject to his influence as were his appointed civilian cabinet members. The military supported Wilson when they thought he was correct and protested to him when they thought he was incorrect. It is this inconsistency in their support that led Wilson to seek other sources of advice. This advice was from men who were not experts in the military field. Instead they relied on the military for the facts to base their analysis. Contrary to military sources, they tempered the analysis with the political reality of the day.

Wilson's dynamic executive ability reflected the attitude of "civilian control" over the military. The President's principal military adviser General March, who generally represented the views of the top military leaders, rarely had direct access to the White House. The degree of influence of the military on the decision to intervene in Russia depended upon the nature of Wilson's desires and that of the personalities and abilities of the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State. Wilson, exerting civilian control, demonstrated successfully to Lansing and Baker the political requirements for intervening in Russia. Wilson then raised the political issue of intervention over the objections of the Chief of Staff. March was, however, permitted to voice his objections directly to the intervention on one occasion. During the Wilson years,

military policy did not control American foreign affairs. The military influence regarding Russian intervention was conditioned by political considerations not known to the military, and therefore the military did not understand.

Because Wilson considered the military organization and attitudes as non-democratic, he reconfirmed the traditional American civilian attitudes toward the military of disdain, distrust, and fear. Wilson as a student of history believed that the military was a remnant of the exalted and privileged class of the aristocratic societies of Europe.

America's intervention in Russia and the decisions that preceded it were a direct response and product of Woodrow Wilson's political attitude and international morality. Throughout his presidency, Wilson believed that all people should be free to build and expand their own political system. This attitude, together with his religious teachings, led him to believe that if a people were not mature or stable enough to complete these goals then they should be guided and helped by those nations that were. He applied this concept to the Filipino rebels and the Russian people. Wilson's conscience bound him to the precept of calling for America to shield these peoples from exploitation until such time they could stabilize their governments and function for themselves. He codified these beliefs while at Princeton and continued to develop them as

President. This attitude guided Wilson throughout his presidency and influenced the way he conducted foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the nature of the Wilson presidency, there was no significant interaction between the Wilson Administration and the military over Russian intervention. Wilson had the facts and knowledgeable advisors available to him. He chose to ignore the military and their advice. The decision to intervene was political, and the military view was not accepted or even considered in the final analysis.

Wilson as the President had the prerogative not to listen to the military considerations given. He did understand the view of the military and the cabinet during this time. But, being tired and worn down from the self imposed burden of his style of leadership, Wilson decided not to take the military's advice. A series of endless meetings wore down Wilson and his cabinet.

The greatest fault found with American civil-military policy during this era was the misconception by the diplomats and military attaches involved in the events occurring in Russia. These misperceptions led to errors of policy that in turn were a contributing cause of the debacle. Mr. Wilson and his advisors badly miscalculated the motives of the Bolsheviks and the will of the people in Russia. The State Department (based on information from Ambassador Francis) advised the President

to wait out the Bolsheviks. Based on Francis' advice, the State Department thought that a new, more friendly government would eventually seize power from the Bolsheviks. Mr. Wilson's available information was biased not only by his diplomats' ignorance but also by his own ideological views of man and the politics of the world. The United States was up against a new ideology and did not know how to cope with it. American foreign policy and the use of the military was a product of ideology and misperceptions at the national level. This proved to be the path that the United States followed for the next thirty years.

The Bolsheviks invited the Americans and all the Allies to attend the peace talks. If the Americans had been at the negotiations, they could have greatly influenced the result. But, this could have been at great peril to the rest of the war. The Brest-Litovsk treaty was both drastic and potentially catastrophic to the Bolsheviks and the Allies. Russia lost one fourth of her people and half of her territorial, industrial and agricultural assets.

After the end of the World War, the United States refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet state. America continued the policy of nonrecognition until the 1930's. The Soviets felt directly isolated and threatened by the United States until the beginning of the Second World War. This mistrust and hatred was as a direct result of

Soviet ideology and America's Intervention policies, reinforced by America's nonrecognition policy of the 1930's.

The civil-military relations problems that surfaced during the Russian intervention were not new. Lieutenant Commander Knox, USN wrote in 1916 about "the disastrous results that must follow a failure [in civil-military relations] in Washington."<sup>2</sup> Knox believed that the answer was not in the civilian government but in the military. He believed the military needed to present its views in such a manner to confirm that the requirements and consequences were clearly understood and appreciated by President and his civilian advisors. It did not take Wilson long to realize this and that the intervention was a mistake.

Wilson decided to keep the troops in the Archangel area until the Paris Peace Conference. He cabled his strategy of wait and see to the American forces. Mr. Wilson then travelled to Paris. He was convinced that all forces should be withdrawn from Russia and that Allied intervention was helping the Bolsheviks, while hurting the chance for democracy within the country. He believed that American foreign policy toward Russia was a mistake and a total failure. He stated at one of the sessions,

The forces were doing no good. They did not know for whom or what they were fighting. They were not assisting any promising common effort to establish order. They should be removed immediately.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Wilson never changed his mind after this. He continued to push for an immediate withdrawal of all forces and a return to non-intervention of internal affairs within Russia by all powers. As the conference continued, it became increasingly apparent there would be no workable decision reached on Russia. It was here that the Americans informed Britain that American troops in north Russia would be withdrawn when feasible. With the conditions in Russia, it was the April of 1920 before the last American troops finally left Russian soil.

ENDNOTES

---

1Arthur Walworth, Woodrow Wilson (New York: W.W. Norton Inc., 1986) pp. 344-351.

2Harry G. Summers Jr., On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 1982) p. 115.

3Author Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 50 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986) p. 541.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

---

Kennan, George F. Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920: Russia Leaves the War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Provides detailed descriptions of the events leading up to Russia's final departure from the war in March, 1918. This is the detailed and complex account of those events that led to the communist takeover of Russia. It is an explicit and accurate account of America's role in the affair. The foreign policy decisions made represent the attitudes and aspirations of the Wilson Administration in a time of crisis and concern. The book blends the decisions of statesmanship with the ambitions and hopes of the wartime leaders of America. This book does provide an accurate description of Russia in the throws of revolution. Recommended for both the general reader and the reader concentrating on World War I American foreign policy.

Kennan, George F. Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920: The Decision to Intervene. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

This volume continues from Russia Leaves the War. It is an excellent examination of America's foreign policy decision to intervene in Russia.

The book discusses the North Russian and Siberian operations and the events that led to the decision to intervene. The book provides a critical examination of the influences on Wilson and his cabinet in the light of the decision to intervene in Russia. The book provides an accurate account of the political decision making process that led to the recommendation by senior officials to intervene in Russia. Recommended for both the general reader and the reader concentrating on World War American foreign policy.

Link, Arthur S. The Papers Of Woodrow Wilson. Volume 46. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986.

An excellent examination of the life of Woodrow Wilson from January 16th to March 12th 1918. This volume contains all of the letters and notes written by him or addressed to him during that period. It is a comprehensive study of Wilson's directing the American government in a critical period. The book covers Wilson's thoughts on Russia and his solution for the crisis on the Eastern Front. An outstanding source on Wilson as first source material. With regard to Russia, the book centers on Wilson's reaction to the

Brest-Litovsk treaty and his reaction to Japan's interest in Siberia.

Link, Arthur S. The Papers Of Woodrow Wilson. Volume 47. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

An excellent examination of the life of Woodrow Wilson from March 13th to May 12th 1918. This volume contains all of the letters and notes written by him or addressed to him during that period. The book covers Wilson's transition to a wartime running of the American Government. Wilson's opposition to Russian intervention and the mounting pressure from the Allies is discussed in detail. The volume also covers Wilson's political problems with the Senate and House over his direction of the war effort.

Link, Arthur S. The Papers Of Woodrow Wilson. Volume 48. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

An excellent examination of the life of Woodrow Wilson from May 13th to July 17th 1918. This volume contains all of the letters and notes written by him or to him during that period. This volume consists almost entirely of the Russian problem and how Wilson reacts to the deteriorating situation there. The Czech uprising coupled with the German Friedensoffensive compels Wilson to take

action on the question of Allied intervention in Russia. The Supreme Council's Joint Note 31 is given to Wilson in order to add pressure on the general situation in Russia. Wilson makes the decision on intervention even though he believes that it is wrong to intervene in Siberia.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. A History of Russia. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

An excellent general history of Russia from the creation of early Kievan Russia through Imperial Russia to the present Soviet State. This book describes the complexity of the development of the Russian nation. It is a superb account of the 1917 Communist Revolution that led to the founding of the modern Soviet State. The text conveys to the reader a sense of loss over the history of Russia and the debate which ensued. This book addresses the entire spectrum of events that make up the history of Russia. Strongly recommend for any reader concentrating on Russian affairs.

Trask, David F. The United States and the Supreme War Council. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978.

One of the best books written about political-military events during the First World War. This book discusses the details of America's first attempt at coalition warfare. It is an

incisive account of how the military became involved with and participated in the political decision making body that provided a unified war effort for the Allied cause. Trask defines and expands the history, role and influence of the Council on the American and Allied Governments. His account is factual, complete, and well organized. Recommend this book for anyone examining military influences on the political decision of coalition warfare in the First World War.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Baker, Newton D. Why We Went To War. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938.

Baker, Ray S. and William Dodd. The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson. New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1925.

\_\_\_\_\_. Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1939.

\_\_\_\_\_. Woodrow Wilson and world settlement. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922.

Bailey, Thomas A. America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to our Day. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950.

\_\_\_\_\_. Wilson and the Peacemakers. New York: Macmillan Co, 1947.

Beals, Bruce S., MAJ. "Coalition Warfare During the Allied Intervention in North Russia, 1918-1919." MMAS thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1981.

Brinkley, George A. The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia 1917-1921. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

Brislawn, Mark G., CPT. "Allied Intervention in Russia." Individual Research Paper #17, US Army Command and General Staff College, FT. Leavenworth, KS, 1932.

Bunyan, James. Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918. Baltimore: The Johns

Hopkins Press, 1936.

Chew, Allen F., Dr. Fighting the Russians in Winter:  
Three Case Studies. Leavenworth Papers Number 5. Fort  
Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff  
College, 1981.

Cohen, Stephen F. Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution.  
New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1974.

Coates, W.P. and Coates, Zelda K. Armed Intervention in  
Russia: 1918-1922. London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd.,  
1935.

Daniels, Josephus. The Wilson Era. Chapel Hill: The  
University of North Carolina Press, 1944.

Dulles, Foster Rhea. The American Red Cross. New York:  
Harper and Brothers, 1950.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Road to Teheran. Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 1944.

Dupuy, R. Ernest. Perish by the Sword. Harrisburg, Pa:  
The Military Service Publishing Company, 1939.

Ferrell, Robert H. Woodrow Wilson and World War I  
1917-1921. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985.

Francis, David R. Russia from the American Embassy:  
April, 1918-November, 1918. New York: Charles  
Scribner's Sons, 1921.

George, Alexander and Juliette L. Woodrow Wilson and Col.  
House. New York: Dover Publications, INC., 1956.

Goldhurst, Richard. The Midnight War: The American  
Intervention in Russia, 1918-1920. New York:  
McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978.

Gordon, Dennis. Quartered in Hell. Missoula, Mt.: The Doughboy Historical Society and G.O.S., Inc., 1982.

Graves, William S. America's Siberian Adventure 1918-1920. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931.

Kennan, George F. Soviet-American Relations, 1918-1920: Russia Leaves the War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

\_\_\_\_\_. Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920: The Decision to Intervene. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Kennedy, Paul M. International Power Systems and the World War. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Kettle, Michael. The Allies and the Russian Collapse March 1917-March 1918. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.

Klecanda, Vladimir, LTC. "Operations of the Czechoslovak Army in Russia During the Period 1917-1920." Translated by CPT. Jerry V. Matejka. Journal of Military Science (1921).

Lasch, Christopher. The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Lewis, S. J. American Military Attachés in Russia 1914-1917. To be Published in 1987.

Link, Arthur S. The Papers Of Woodrow Wilson. Volumes 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, and 53. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. Wilson Confusion and Crisis 1916-1918. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Luckett, Judith A., CPT. "The Siberian Intervention: Military Support of Foreign Policy." Military Review 64 (April 1984): 54-63.

Palmer, Frederick. America at War. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. Bliss, Peacemaker. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. John J. Pershing, General of the Armies. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1948.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. A History of Russia. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Seymour, Charles. The Intimate Papers of Colonel House. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

Smith, Daniel M. American Intervention, 1917. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Strakhovsky, Leonid. The Origins of American Intervention in North Russia (1918). New York: Howard Fertig, 1972.

Trask, David F. The United States and the Supreme War Council. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978.

Tuckman, Barbara W. The Guns of August. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

Unterberger, Betty M. American Intervention in the Russian Civil War. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1969.

U.S. Government. Final Report of John J. Pershing. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922.

U.S. Government. Foreign relations, 1918, Russia, Volume  
1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926.

U.S. Government. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations  
of the United States, 1917. Washington: Government  
Printing Office, 1928.

U.S. Government. Paper Relating to the Foreign Relations  
of the United States, 1917, Supplement 1, The World  
War. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931.

U. S. Government. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations  
of the United States, 1918, Supplement 1, Vol.I.  
Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933.

Vandiver, Frank E. Black Jack The Life and Times of John  
J. Pershing. College Station and London: Texas A&M  
University Press, 1977.

Walworth, Arthur. Woodrow Wilson. New York: W.W. Norton  
& Company Inc., 1985.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

Combined Arms Research Library  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

Defense Technical Information Center  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dr. Larry Yates  
Combat Studies Institute  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

Dr. Jerry Brown  
Combat Studies Institute  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

LTC William M. Connor  
Combat Studies Institute  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

LTC Larry Woode  
Center for Army Tactics  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027