‘You will be walking on eggs filled with dynamite’: The conflict between the British and the Americans in Siberia during the interventions of 1918-1920

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Introduction

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Ever since the Second World War, and some would argue long before that, the world order has to no small extent been dominated by military undertakings set up by large, powerful nations in order to determine the faith of inhabitants of weaker nations. One of the more interesting aspects of the subject of modern interventions is the relationship between two particular players: Great Britain and the United States.

In the post-1945 age of NATO, the Cold War and the War on Terror, much of the geopolitical scene has been defined by the so-called 'Special Relationship' between Great Britain and the United States. Despite the occasional tensions between the two powers, it is hard to imagine two otherwise completely independent militaries capable of operating as closely together as theirs. That is why it is very interesting to focus on the times when this might not be the case. Like in Siberia in the period of 1918-1920. This thesis will therefore explore the relationship between the British- and Americans on the ground in Siberia during this timeframe.

Case: the Allied Intervention in Siberia of 1918-1920

After the February Revolution and the fall of the Czar in March 1917, the new Dual Power government made the faithful decision to continue Russian participation in the First World War. At this point the Russian army was disintegrating, shortages in the country were becoming more and more severe, and the war itself was incredibly unpopular. Nevertheless, the government in St. Petersburg believed that only by honoring pledges made to the rest of the Allies and concluding the war with a victory, could Russia return to the world stage as an independent, strong and democratic nation.[1]

However, already in November of the same year, this government was itself taken out by revolutionaries. The Bolsheviks came to power, for no small part due to Russia's continued disastrous involvement in the First World War. Already on November 8th, a day after the coup, the Bolshevik government led by Lenin and Trotsky released their "Decree on Peace", abolishing secret diplomacy and signaling a willingness to put an immediate end to what they saw as an imperialist war.[2]

American President Woodrow Wilson had initially been glad with the removal of the Czar, as now the First World War could be seen as a fight between the autocratic Central Powers and the democratic Allies. But, when after Lenin's takeover Russia suddenly pulled out of the war, the Allies considered their cause betrayed. With the Western Front already under severe strain, and the war hanging in the balance, the Allies had a plethora of concerns regarding the Bolsheviks. Could they, or perhaps other Russian factions, be motivated to restart the Eastern Front? Who were these Bolsheviks even? And could it be that they were potentially even in league with the Germans? According to historian Spencer Tucker, this was when the Allies already began to first consider intervening in Russia.[3]

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[1] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York 1991), 104-107.
[2] Borislav Chernev, *Twilight of Empire: The Brest-Litovsk Conference and the Remaking of East-Central Europe, 1917–1918* (Toronto 2017), 14-16.
[3] John W. Bohon, "Allied Intervention in Russia". In Tucker, et. al. *The European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopedia* (London 1999), 608.

While a separate intervention force was sent to Northern Russia, several nations, such as Britain, the United States, Japan and France started sending troops to Siberia in the late summer of 1918. The reasons put forward (or deliberately kept silent) by the various Allies differed, and were at times conflicting. The Americans had major misgivings about the operation, and troops were not sent until events on the ground took their own course. The rising of the Czechoslovak Legion, and the risk of supply depots falling into the hands of Bolsheviks and armed German- or Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war influenced the different nations that took part in the intervention to make their move.[4]

This multinational group of Allied forces soon found themselves pulled into the chaos of the Russian Civil War. Despite Germany and the other Central Powers signing an armistice with the Allies in November 1918, the members of the expeditionary forces found themselves at war for much longer than that. The last British forces would leave Siberia in February 1920, with the Americans leaving only a few months later. After them, it was only the Japanese who stayed for another two years by themselves. While the various Allies each had their own goals, none of them managed to successfully realize them, and all of them ended up worse for having partaken in the intervention. Losses had been suffered, relations between the Allies were more strained than before, and the tone of diplomatic relations between the waxing Soviet government and the Allies could hardly have gotten off to a poorer start.[5]

Research question and structure

Particularly striking is the dynamic between British and American forces, which will be the main focus in this study. Were these normally steadfast allies among the groups who had conflicts on the ground in Siberia? This will be primary question this thesis seeks to answer; *What motivated Britain and the United States to send troops to Siberia in the period of 1918-1920, and how was their cooperation during the intervention impacted by their different goals?*

In order to properly answer this question, this thesis will analyze the British as well as the American side. It is also important to consider that there is a vast difference between strategic goals set out by key individuals in national governments, and their interpretation by commanders on the ground. This is not only because of personal biases by individual commanders, but also because communication was no way near as fast as it is in present day. Decision makers in London and Washington simply did not have as clear of a picture of the situation on the ground as contemporary strategists, and at the same time commanders in Siberia could not quickly ask for interpretations of orders in specific situations like their modern counterparts can.

Therefore, this thesis is divided in the following chapters:

1. What were the strategic goals of the British- and the American governments of the intervention?

2. What were the orders given to the British- and American commanders and how were these interpreted and implemented?

3. How did the differences in understanding the strategic goals by commanders affect the situation on the ground in Siberia?

The structure, the red line running through the chapters above, is a carefully selected number of strategic goals put forward by decision makers respectively in London and Washington. These goals were put forward either publicly- or in private, and the list changed throughout the duration of the intervention (a process otherwise known as ‘mission creep’).

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[4] John M. House, *Wolfhounds and Polar Bears : The American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, 1918–1920* (Tuscaloosa 2016), 23-26.
[5] Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill’s Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia, 1918-1920* (London 2007), 297.

The first chapter will dive into what motivated the British- and the Americans to send troops to Siberia, what they felt they could achieve there, and finally how their strategy differed on a number of key topics.

The second chapter will take a close look at what orders were given to the respective commanders of the British- and American forces, and how they interpreted them. Equally important is how they implemented their instructions when confronted with fast changing situations, and whether they perceived these orders to be meant purely for their own troops, or for the great Allied intervention force.

In the third chapter, it is shown how the different interpretations of the orders given to the commanders resulted in obstacles to each other's operations, and a hindrance in cooperation between the two forces.

Methodology

The research method of this thesis is the study of ego documents, and the comparison between British and American sources. The reason for this method is twofold. First of all, certain very real strategic goals of British and American policymakers were not stated publicly. Their opinions and misgivings on certain matters can be found in private communication between various individuals, but were not necessarily shared openly with their Allies. Similar material can be found in books published by these men years later (albeit in a sanitized form). Secondly, official government policy as intended by the two respective governments was often secondary to the interpretation and implementation of the men leading the expeditionary forces in question, who often had to make judgement calls without a complete overview of the available information.

What policymakers believed was happening in Russia (and Siberia specifically) when the idea for an intervention started forming is far more important for this study than what actually happened. An example of this is how individuals thousands of miles away from Russia were constantly overestimating or underestimating the military strength of different factions. The personal attitudes of key individuals in Washington and London towards different Russian leaders and factions was certainly more important than any official diplomatic relations. At the same time, the attitudes of individual commanders on the ground towards certain groups was often more consequential than any standing orders as well.

Simply put, if the strategy set out by policy makers of two nations is the same and local commanders agree on a course of action, then cooperation between two expeditionary forces will most likely be at least decent. As this was clearly not the case between the Americans and the British in Siberia of 1918-1920, it is necessary to research the frustrations of the people involved. The personal touch of comparing the way British and American policymakers- as well as ground level commanders talk about various individuals, groups and events is the key to answering our main research question.

Corpus: Ward and Graves

The corpus of this thesis will be the primary accounts of the commanders of the ground forces in Siberia on both the British- and American side. These have been chosen for the most part due to the amount of emotion expressed in them about certain topics, events and individuals.

The first major work is written by John Ward, who was the British lieutenant-colonel in charge of the Middlesex Regiment, the British army component that was deployed to Siberia. His book, which he published himself in 1920, is a diary he originally kept in Siberia for his sons to read

in case he would not return. Ward himself was a staunch supporter of both the British Empire, and the concept of law and order, and harbored a strong dislike for anything that would potentially threaten its stability. What makes his work especially interesting is that Ward only slightly edited it his book, something he almost seems to apologize for. In his introduction he reflects on how he did not want to edit too much of his work, as it would take away from the value of his diary as a source.

I wrote of things as they occurred, and recorded the reasons and motives which prompted the participants. Many things have happened since which seem to show that we were not always right in our estimate of the forces at work around us. Things are not always what they seem, and this is probably more evident in the domain of Russian affairs than in any other. It would have been comparatively easy to alter the text and square it with the results, but that would have destroyed the main value of the story.[6]

The second key work that makes up the corpus of this thesis is *America's Siberian Adventure* by William Sydney Graves. Graves was the general in charge of the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia. He wrote his book in 1931 explicitly as a reaction to the British version of events as told by John Ward. Graves intended to set the record straight about the reasons for intervention, the nature of the orders given to the American soldiers, and to defend against – what Graves deemed as deliberate – attacks on the conduct of the troops under his command. The true value in his work lies in the palpable disillusionment with the motives for the intervention and how events played out on the ground.[7]

Another work of interest is written by American diplomat DeWitt Clinton Poole, who was stationed in Moscow during the buildup to the intervention. He saw closely how the Bolshevik government developed itself diplomatically, and what the American response was. The memoirs of the then British prime minister, David Lloyd George, prove vital insights into the British view on Bolshevik Russia as well. Finally, a number of journalistic sources are used, which include newspaper coverage of the intervention itself, and the eyewitness account of the events in Siberia written by journalist Carl Ackerman.

Relevance and historical debate

The Allied intervention in Siberia is not a popular subject in western historiography. Between the First World War, the fighting over how the new borders of Eastern Europe would look, and the grander scheme of the Russian Civil War, the campaign in Siberia seems small and insignificant. Less than two hundred British- and American soldiers died, and most of the actual fighting was between Russian factions. Its military consequences were relatively insignificant, and even as a study on British-American cooperation it is but one of many events one can choose from. All this led to a lack of academic and popular interest in the story over the years. The intervention was even designated as a "forgotten war" by historian John House.[8]

However, in Russia this piece of history is certainly not seen as inconsequential. The intervention, plus the material support for the White factions undoubtedly lengthened the Russian Civil War, causing more death and destruction to a country that had already suffered much. As we will see in this thesis, many people in Siberia fell victim to crimes committed by the troops of Admiral Kolchak and affiliated Cossack warlords, supported by the Allies, or directly to Japanese forces. On a local level, this resulted in generations of people mistrusting the west. On a macro level, this was the sign for the Bolshevik leadership that the ultimate goal of the Allies was to destroy the Soviet

[6] John Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia* (London 1920), 2-3.
[7] William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure, 1918-1920* (New York 1931), 6.
[8] John M. House, "America and Russia's Civil War: The Unknown Intervention", in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Volume 32, Issue 4 (Abingdon 2019), 560-563.

government, if given the chance. Therefore, it is important that we understand the Siberian intervention, and all its aspects, a little better. The relationship between the British- and American units partaking in the intervention being one of those aspects.[9]

In academic circles the impact on Soviet-Western relations is the most focused on aspect of the interventions. Professor Frederick Lewis Schuman went so far as to call the interventions of the Allied powers into the Russian Civil War a significant contribution to the origins of the Second World War, as well as the starting point of the Cold War.[10]

When it comes to the intervention in Siberia as a subject on its own, the first ones to write about this event were those who played key roles in it themselves. The military commanders William Sydney Graves and John Ward wrote their memoirs respectively in 1920 and 1931, relatively soon after the intervention was concluded. In their works they mostly hotly debate whether or not their forces behaved honorably, and assign blame to individuals and groups that they consider guilty of various moral failures. However, apart from Soviet propagandists and niche Western military authors, there was not a lot of academic interest in the intervention in Siberia. World War One, the much larger conflict, was considerably more popular under historians. Not the least because the Allied powers had actually been victorious there.

It wasn't until 1956 that a larger body of work focused on intervention in Siberia. George Frost Kennan's two volume *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920* presents an exhaustively detailed report of discussions and decisions made in Washington during the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless, Kennan's works focus mostly on how the intervention came into being, and how it affected Russia and diplomatic relations with the Bolsheviks. The role given to the British is relatively minor, and the relationship between the two Allies on the ground is hardly touched on.

More interesting in that regard is Robert John Maddox's *The Unknown War With Russia: Wilson's Siberian Intervention* from 1977. Maddox argues that President Wilson was primarily motivated by a desire to destroy Bolshevism, and to prevent British- and Japanese imperial ambitions in Siberia. Maddox his book is a little convoluted and at times contradictory, but it does open the door to the subject at hand, which is the dynamic of the relationship between the British and the Americans. Unfortunately, he stops with the diplomatic relations between the two, and does not dive deeper into the cooperation between the Allies during the intervention.

Another interesting work on the British side is Clifford Kinvig's *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia 1918-1920* which was published in 2006. He argues convincingly that Winston Churchill was the driving force behind the intervention from the British side. While others in the British government showed support for the idea of trying to reinstate the Eastern Front, it was Churchill that really defined the intervention as an attempt to root out Bolshevism, while Lloyd George toke a more moderate position. Here, however, the Americans are mostly absent again.

The most recent addition of note to the historical debate is John House's *Wolfhounds and Polar Bears: The American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, 1918-1920,* which was published in 2016. His book, which focusses mostly on the American side, lays out the various reasons given for intervention by various British and American actors, and convincingly determines whether or not they are based on truth. House has a strong military understanding, and demonstrates where the two Allied forces failed to cooperate successfully, but he mostly focusses on whether or not the original strategic goals were legitimate. Lacking here is how the differences in those goals resulted in the poor cooperation he mentions.

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[9] Robert J. Maddox, *The Unknown War with Russia* (San Rafael 1977), 137.
[10] Frederick L. Schuman, *Russia Since 1917: Four Decades of Soviet Politics* (New York 1957), 109.

The main debate that can be identified when looking at all these works is what exactly the motivations were of the British and the Americans to send an intervention force into Siberia. A primary driver in this discussion is whether or not the American leadership was motivated by Japanese incursions into the region, and if Moscow and Washington were covertly trying to destroy Bolshevism at an early stage or not. What this thesis seeks to do is not just determine what the Allies wanted to achieve, but also what they considered to be attainable goals or not. The degree of commitment to a cause, which is often impacted by how realistic it is perceived to be, is often as decisive as the nature of the goal itself. And specifically in the case of the Siberian intervention, the degree of commitment is often missing from the current historiography.

A second debate that is noticeable when analyzing the secondary literature available on this subject is that British authors usually limit themselves to the British side of the intervention, while the American historians usually only analyze the U.S. contribution. Ironically enough, the same debate that Ward and Graves started a century ago appears to still be ongoing. American authors mostly blame the British for any failures in Siberia, while they do vice versa. The overall relationship between the British- and American forces itself seemingly appears to be absent from the historical debate, however.

What this thesis does is fill that gap, and go beyond the blame game that has been going on for about a century. By contrasting the goals of both sides, and showing how their differences led to obstacles in the cooperation of the British- and American troops, we get one step closer to understanding the Siberian intervention itself.

From a literary viewpoint the goal of this work is capture the atmosphere of the time by analyzing what the relevant actors themselves in fact believed. To find out what the British- and American interaction was like in Siberia, it is necessary to dive into the contrast of the stated reasons for intervention by both parties, as well as the interpretation thereof by men on the ground, using the works written by them during- and right after the fact. What decision makers and commanders believed to be true at the time is therefor far more important than any objective facts that can be found about the time period itself.

Toponyms, dates and translations

For geographical locations in Russia, this thesis will use the commonly used modern names in English. The exception is when the name of a city, town or other location is given in a quote. If it is unclear which location is meant in a quote, due to a strong deviation between an old and a new name, for instance, the modern English name will be added between brackets.

With regards to dates, it is important to note that Russia moved from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in February 1918. This means that dates before that do not necessarily match in Russian- and Western sources. All dates noted in this thesis will be Gregorian. If a Julian date is used in a quote, then the Gregorian will be added between brackets.

All translations are my own, unless explicitly stated that this is not the case.

Chapter one

What were the strategic goals of the British- and the American governments of the intervention?

Introduction

The decision on whether or not to intervene in Siberia was explicitly linked to global events. Between 1914 and 1918, the First World War raged through Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. On the one side were the Central Powers, led by Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Opposing them were the Entente or Allies, of which the most important members were France, Great Britain, Imperial Russia, and from April 1917 onwards, also the United States. Throughout the war it was unclear which side would come out on top, and a German victory was considered a possibility well into 1918. In March 1918 Russia, now ruled by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks, signed a separate peace with the Germans, much to the dismay of the other Allies.

This chapter will demonstrate how political- and military events in both Russia and the rest of the world led to the decision of Britain and the United States to send a military intervention force to Siberia, and what they hoped to achieve. The chapter will chronologically discuss these events, and end in a conclusion that shows what the strategic goals of the governments in London and Washington were of this intervention.

Fighting the Central Powers

Siberia is thousands of miles away from France, but events happening on the Western Front of the First World War played a significant role in the decision making process behind the Siberian intervention. At several points in the war the British- and French positions came close to a breaking point, and Russia's help was needed to save France. Russia repeatedly launched offensives to relieve pressure of the desperate situation on the Western Front. These offensives resulted in catastrophic losses for the Russian armed forces and would contribute significantly to the fall of first the Tsar, and later the Provisional Government. As an example of the terrible losses suffered by the Russian army, in the second half of 1916 alone, they suffered a million casualties dead or wounded, and another million deserted. In July 1917, the Russian army, now under the Provisional Government, virtually disintegrated after the Kerensky Offensive fell apart. Sir Basil Henry Liddle Hart, military theorist, historian and veteran of the gruesome Battle of the Somme, remarked that during this final offensive "for the last time, Russia had sacrificed herself for her Allies".[11]

In November 1917, the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin took over power in Russia. They immediately made it clear that they would move towards peace with the Central Powers as soon as possible. However, the coming into power of the Bolsheviks did not mean that British urgency for the existence of the Eastern Front to relieve pressure on their own positions had become any less. In the first three months of 1918, the British had to reduce the size of forty-eight divisions due to manpower shortages, followed by another ten later on. There were also calls for significantly more British troops on sections of the French- and Italian fronts. In the fall of 1917, the Germans still had over eighty-five

[11] Charles R.M.F Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War, 1914-1918* (London 1934), 430.

divisions on the Eastern Front. Whoever ruled in Russia, it was vital for the British that as few German troops could be transferred to the Western Front as possible.[12]

POWs and supply depots

One thing that made the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement with Germany in February 1918 such a disaster for the Allies was the presence of vast quantities of weapons and munitions in Russian harbors. In Vladivostok alone, the Allies believed that there were well over 600.000 tons of supplies and munition left virtually unguarded. One of the biggest fears that especially the British government had was that freed and rearmed POWs in league with the Bolsheviks would capture these depots and use them to further the cause of the Central Powers with disastrous effects for the Allies.[13]

It turned out that this fear was completely unwarranted. After the peace deal was signed, the Bolsheviks had only armed a very small number of prisoners for security reasons, and had in fact not succeeded in recruiting any significant amount to their own cause. Once given the option to return to their homelands, the vast majority did so. Important to note here is that a mission including American- as well as British representatives investigated these claims in Siberia, and reported to both Washington and London that there were no signs of large numbers of armed POWs.[14]

Skepticism from the Allied side towards reassurances from the Bolsheviks that there were no armed POWs in Siberia is not wholly unwarranted. Earlier, the Bolsheviks had promised British diplomats that they would not allow German troops into Moscow. The German troops were nevertheless allowed entry, on the promise that they would not wear their uniforms, something which especially the British found extremely deceptive. The American consul DeWitt Clinton Poole blamed a lack of trust for the new government in Russia on the Bolsheviks.

…the fundamental reason for the failure of all attempts of the Allies to maintain working relations with the Bolshevik government, namely, complete bad faith on the part of the latter. The impossibility of depending upon the accuracy of any statement on the commissar for foreign affairs, the absence of any assurance that a promise once given would be fulfilled, undermined the structure of even our informal relations and foredoomed to failure all attempts at practical cooperations.[15]

The idea that the Bolshevik government could not be trusted on any statement involving the Germans was considered common knowledge within the U.S State Department. This opinion was also shared by Winston Churchill, who would become the lead architect of the intervention from the British side. However, an important detail is that the Bolsheviks had given the Allies permission to inspect POW camps in Siberia anytime they wanted. Statements that rumors about armed POWs were untrue did not come from Russian sources, but directly from British- and American representatives on the ground. American general and later commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, William Sydney Graves, was puzzled why his government was still even talking about a rumor proven to be false by American representatives. He was also keenly aware that members of the British military mission in Moscow knew that there was no real threat to supply depots in Vladivostok from armed

[12] Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, 5-8.
[13] Idem, 53.
[14] House, *Wolfhounds and Polar Bears*, 24.
[15] Poole, Lees and Rodner, *An American Diplomat in Bolshevik Russia* (Wisconsin 2015), 116-117.

POWs. He suspected the British from the start to have ulterior strategic motives, such as wanting to stop the spread of socialism in the Far East.[16]

Restarting the Eastern Front

The firmest believer on the British side in the need of keeping the Eastern Front open was the then Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill. He did not trust the Bolsheviks as allies, and thought of them as (at least partly) in league with the Germans. When the Eastern Front started collapsing and a peace between Russia and the Central Powers became even more likely, he was the man who pushed the hardest for an intervention to restart the Eastern Front. In December 1917 he described the Bolshevik coupe in Russia during a speech.

It is this melancholy event which has prolonged the war, that has robbed the French, the British and the Italian armies of the prize that was perhaps almost within their reach this summer.[17]

During a meeting of the British War Council in that same month, Churchill first mentioned to the rest of the British government that there were several senior Russian officers who were committed to continuing the fight against the Central Powers. He wanted to keep them together so they could potentially form the nucleus of a new force. In the same time period, he was winding down the support of war materials to Russia, while keeping the basis of the production running. The reason for this was so that full production could be restarted if the Eastern Front would become a viable theater of operations again. It is clear that a key group in London was already getting ready for an intervention in Russia using former Tsarist officers to continue the war even before a peace deal between Russia and Germany had been formally signed.[18]

Despite wishful thinking from decision makers in London, to most British observers on the ground it was very clear that a restart of the Eastern Front would be impossible. Russia had suffered tremendously, and its economy lay in ruins. The desire of the Russian people for peace was large enough that both the Romanoff dynasty and the Provisional Government had fallen over their failure to stop the war. The head of the British mission in Moscow reported to the Foreign Office even before the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk Agreement that there was no significant faction left that was serious about continuing the war with the Central Powers.[19]

No group in Russia was both capable and willing to restart the Eastern Front by themselves. If the Allies wanted this to happen, they deemed it necessary that a core formation of foreign soldiers be deployed for Russian anti-German forces to coalesce around. As the British and French did not have the manpower to organize a large enough force to start the Eastern Front by themselves, they needed to pull these forces from somewhere else. In January 1918, a number of British and French politicians tried to persuade their ally Japan to send significant forces as part of a rather unpractical plan to advance from Vladivostok to the Urals. Most serious military planners quickly recognized this idea as being logistically impossible. Russian troops, remembering the humiliation of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, would also be extremely unlikely to side with Japanese troops.[20]

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[16] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 19-22.
[17] Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill Volume IV: 1916-1922, The Stricken World* (London 1975), 219-220.
[18] David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union* (Manchester 2000), 5.
[19] John Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (London 1968), 19.
[20] Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade,* 52.

The solution to this problem was found in the so-called Czechoslovak Legion. Around seventy thousand Czechs and Slovaks who were either previously living in Russia, or had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian army fought with the Russian army. Their goal of an own independent nation had not changed after Brest-Litovsk. The Bolsheviks allowed this unit to go to Vladivostok by train, so that the Allies could ship them to France to continue their fight on the Western Front. However, in early 1918 White anti-Bolshevik factions were already forming through Russia. The Bolsheviks, afraid that the Czechs would join such forces in Siberia, attempted to disarm and arrest the Czechoslovak Legion after an incident in Chelyabinsk at the end of May 1918. From here on out the Legion found itself in open war with the Bolsheviks along the vast stretches of the Siberian railroad.[21]

The British developed a new idea. The Czechs were seen by decision makers in London as a disciplined fighting force, as well as a natural Slavic brother people to the Russians. They could potentially be used as the core of an army that anti-German and anti-Bolshevik Russians could form around. The following quote from Major General Charles Maynard reflects a popular view on the shutting down of the Eastern Front in the spring of 1918.

(a) Many more German divisions would have been withdrawn from Russia and employed against the Allies in France – possibly with decisive results.

(b) Germany, being free to draw on the immense resources of Russia and Siberia, would have been enabled to establish her national industries once again on a prosperous footing, and to supply the pressing needs of her civil population. The effect of our maritime blockade would thus be annulled.

(c) North Russian ports would have been converted into enemy naval bases, submarines operating from which would have circumvented our North Sea minefields and found our Atlantic commerce open to their attack. This, too, when the safe transport to Europe of America's armies was all- important.

(d) The chance would be lost of employing to any useful purpose either the army of Japan or the equivalent of several divisions of Czecho-Slovak troops of high fighting value, and full of enthusiasm for our cause.

(e) The anti-German movement at that time beginning to gain a hold in Russia would, if unsupported by the Allies, be quite unlikely to achieve any tangible result.[22]

As demonstrated by the quote above, a significant number of British decision makers felt that the Allies had to move quickly and use the Czechoslovak Legion to restart the Eastern Front, as otherwise the Western Front may collapse as well.

The American view

The Americans, who had joined the war in April 1917, felt that the collapse of the Eastern Front was not as urgent as a problem as the British did. This is partially explained by the fact that the Atlantic Ocean separated their homeland from Germany, but also because they believed that the Central Powers did not have the manpower to break through in France anyhow. This made them a lot less hawkish on the idea of interventions in Russia than the British. President Wilson and secretary of state Lansing also did not seriously believe that armed POWs posed a threat in Siberia, although they would use this as an argument to defend the intervention later on. Neither did they think that the Bolsheviks were in league

[21] Idem, 52-55.
[22] Charles Maynard, *The Murmansk Venture* (London 1928), 8.

with the Germans, which was another big fear of the British. The American decision makers were well aware that documents that were circulating that tied the Bolsheviks to Germany were forgeries, and that the German leadership itself was furious over the idea that the Bolsheviks would arm and recruit German POWs.[23]

Most of the support for American intervention in Russia came from the State Department. Newton Baker, then secretary of war, opposed the intervention in general, just like most of the military did. They believed that the Western Front should be the full priority for the Allies. An intervention in Russia would be unlikely to restart the Eastern Front, possibly push Russia into a German corner, and be a considerable waste of manpower and material. They also did not believe that the Eastern Front was strictly necessary to achieve an Allied victory. Nevertheless, the British put considerable pressure on Wilson and his military advisors in the first half of 1918. One note from presidential advisor Tasker Bliss to Baker shows irritation over this:

British and French general staff bureaus and their ministries of foreign affairs give out nothing but that which is favorable to the idea of this intervention… I note a feeling of irritation… I do not believe that the question can be considered in this unbiased light anywhere except in Washington.[24]

The American leadership did recognize the need to save Allied stores from being robbed by Bolsheviks, and expressed a desire in rescuing the Czechoslovak Legion. The Americans made clear that there would be no large skill operations designed to restart the Eastern Front, but something did have to be done to protect Allied stores and the Czechoslovaks. In the summer of 1918, partially to appease the British, Wilson signed off on sending a seven-thousand strong force to Siberia.

Developing a policy towards the Bolsheviks

The British saw the Bolsheviks enemies from the very start of their rule in Russia. This was not only because of the separate peace deal with Germany, but also because of the revolutionary way of thinking inherent to the Bolsheviks. They were seen by many in London as so dangerous to the stability of the whole world, that their existence could not be tolerated. There were a number of British political- and military leaders who argued in favor of treating the Bolsheviks as pure hostile in early 1918. However, that would force the Bolsheviks straight into the German corner, making the First world War that much harder to win.[25]

Priority for the British government was that Germany would not be able to transfer too many forces to the Western Front, nor be able to access the resources of Russia. Because of this, it was vital not to drive the Bolsheviks into the arms of the Germans by formulating a policy towards them that was overly aggressive. The British strategy would be to act purposely ambiguous. The Bolshevik government was not to be recognized officially, while there would not be any formal break in relations either. The idea was that Russia could still be used to stall the movement of German troops from east to west, while the Allies could land troops as they saw fit. The Bolsheviks could simultaneously be supported in one place and fought in the other, depending on what served the war against Germany best.

[23] Carl J. Richard, *When the United States Invaded Russia: Woodrow Wilson's Siberian Disaster* (Plymouth 2013), 18-22.
[24] Idem, 29-30.
[25] David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George V1-2* (London 1938), 1545-1547.

However, it was clear in London that the Bolsheviks were an illegitimate and dangerous government, that should preferably be removed from power as soon as given the opportunity.[26]

The Americans struggled with the question of how to treat the Bolsheviks as well. Lansing believed in late November 1917 already that Russia under Lenin would fall into anarchy, civil war and possibly further German occupation. Interesting is that he correctly predicted the international dimension the Bolshevik uprising would take. Lansing believed that if not checked, the revolution would seek to establish proletarian dictatorships in every country. He thought it would be prudent to wait until "the dust had settled", and that a new leader could at some point restore Russia to democracy. Where he mainly differed from Churchill was that he did not see any suitable candidates for leadership in Russia, while the British relied on a pool of old Czarist officers.[27]

For Churchill and several other high ranking members of the British government, it was clear that the Bolshevik government should be replaced with a friendly White strongman. Even after the signing of the armistice between Germany and the Allies in November 1918, this remained in their eyes a necessity for stability in the world. The Americans, on the other hand, had only ever committed troops to Siberia to provide regional security for Allied stores and the Czechoslovak Legion. Wilson would have been very happy with the fall of the Bolsheviks and a restart of the Eastern Front, but at no point did Wilson think that the domestic support existed for the assistance that would be necessary to guarantee a White victory. Unlike the British, the Americans did not find any of the White leaders either suitable, or popular enough to validate significant support.[28]

After the armistice, the American troops in Siberia did stay a while longer. This had little to do with Wilson realistically thinking a White victory over the Bolsheviks was possible, and more with the troops already being there anyway. In his mind, they might as well stay a little longer on the off chance that the Whites ended up winning after all. Historian Carl Richard described the reason for the longer stay in similar words.

Had there been no war, it is highly unlikely that Wilson would ever have sent troops to Siberia. But having sent them, it became easier to justify their presence there, even after the armistice.[29]

Support for Kolchak

On paper it seemed like the strategic differences between the British and Americans on what to do in Siberia seemed small enough. Both sides would have liked to see the Eastern Front restarted, even if the Americans did not think it was feasible. Neither had any love for the Bolsheviks, and their removal from power would be welcomed. However, the most devise difference was undoubtedly that the British were actively attempting to replace Lenin's government with a White one led by Admiral Alexander Kolchak. The Americans undoubtedly preferred Kolchak over the Bolsheviks, and helped him where they could, but never saw full support for his Siberian reactionary movement as desirable.

Kolchak first offered his services to the Allies in late December 1917. He considered it his duty to continue the fight against Germany, as well as against the Bolsheviks. The admiral developed a close friendship with British Major General Alfred Knox, who was the former military attaché in Petersburg. They shared the opinion that Russia should be set to rights by a staunch autocrat with British help. In

[26] Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921,* Vol. 1 (London 1961), 30-33.
[27] George Frost Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations: Russia Leaves the War,* Vol. 1 (Princeton 1956), 156-157.
[28] Richard, *When the United States Invaded*, 32-28, 128-129.
[29] Idem, 47.

September 1918 Kolchak had secured significant backing from the British in terms of money and military materiel, and had moved to Omsk. Here, a weak anti-Bolshevik had already been set up, which was swept outside by a coup on the 18th of November 1918. From here on out, Kolchak was considered to be the leader of not just the White government in Siberia, but ostensibly of all anti-Bolshevik forces. His reign, which lasted only until January 1920, is mostly remembered for its lawlessness and the incredible violence shown to anyone even suspected of not being pro-Kolchak. Of the announcement made after his coup to the people of Omsk below, nothing came true.

On November 18th 1918 the All Russian Government collapsed. The Council of Ministers took all power into its own hands and then bestowed it upon me — Admiral of the Russian Fleet, A. V. Kolchak. Having taken up the heavy cross of power in the exceptionally difficult circumstances of civil war and the complete disruption of the life of the state, I declare: I will follow neither the path of reaction nor the fatal path of party politics. I set as my chief aims the creation of a battleworthy army, victory over Bolshevism and the establishment of law and order, so that the people may freely choose for themselves the form of government that they desire and realize the great ideas of freedom which are currently being advanced the entire world around. I summon you, citizens, to victory, to the struggle with Bolshevism, to labour and sacrifice.[30]

After the First World War ended, Britain struggled with formulating an official policy towards Russia. While Churchill and a number of military leaders were agitating for escalation, Prime Minister Lloyd George was searching for a way out. Several plans were formulated, which can be grouped into three distinct categories. The first idea, preferred by the Prime Minister, was to pull out British forces and form a cordon sanitaire around Bolshevik controlled Russia along with new border states like Finland, Poland, the Baltic Countries and the nations of the Caucasus. Even staunch supporters of this idea did not think that it was politically possible, as many in parliament would see it as a betrayal of Russia (read: the Whites). The second plan, favored not just by Churchill, but by the French as well, called for a massive invasion of Russia to kick the Bolsheviks out and replace them by a White government headed by Kolchak. This plan completely ignored the fact that the British- and French armies in late 1918 were already close to mutiny, and had zero desire to continue fighting in Russia after four years of extremely bloody warfare. The Czech forces in Russia, which had done most of the fighting against the Bolsheviks in Siberia, was also clamoring to go home to their newly independent country. The plan presumed that the French, British and local allied forces could scrape enough men together for a drive on Petersburg and Moscow, something the Germans could not do with millions of troops. The end result was a compromise where there would be no large skill British military operations, but training missions and materiel support for Kolchak and several other White leaders would increase. This would not be enough to prevent a Bolshevik victory over the Whites.[31]

While the British never officially recognized Kolchak's government as the legitimate Russian leadership, support for him started even before his coup in Omsk in November 1918. Vast quantities of British weapons and uniforms had been shipped to Siberia with the explicit intent of arming his troops. British officers also played direct roles in leading his forces into battle. Lansing and Wilson took a different approach. They considered in September 1918 that the primary goal of American aid to Russia should be to help the Whites in fighting Bolshevism. However, they knew already late September that not many Russians were willing to fight for Kolchak. Wilson wanted American troops only to guard the railways so supplies could reach the Czechs and the Whites, and did not want them to get involved directly in the fighting. Via a construction with the Russian embassy, rifles and funds were supplied to

[30] Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918-1920* (Cambridge 1996), 72-81, 105-107.
[31] Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade,* 77-105, 149-154.

Kolchak. However, in early 1919 Washing was aware that Kolchak's government was weak, corrupt, violent, unpopular and would most likely fall quickly if not supported by massive amounts of Allied aid and troops. Wilson wanted the Bolsheviks to lose, but he never saw Kolchak as a decent alternative. At least not one with a serious chance of defeating the Bolsheviks. His primary concern was not to get the United States dragged too deeply into a conflict he did not believe was winnable, for a cause that was morally uncertain. In this he differed from the British, who were willing to aid Kolchak far more directly with military means than the Americans were. In August 1919, Wilson decided no more troops would be sent to Siberia, and Kolchak would not be recognized as the legitimate Russian leadership.[32]

Conclusion

After the Bolsheviks came to power, and signed a separate peace with Germany, the primary concern of the British was the survival of the Western Front. In their mind, it was vital that a faction in Russia should be used to restart the Eastern Front. For the Americans, this was a lot less pressing of an issue, as they did not think Russian help was a prerequisite for an Allies victory.

When the British sent forces into Siberia, they did so explicitly to assist admiral Kolchak and other Whites in crushing the Bolsheviks. Initially so they could continue the effort against the Central Powers, but after the armistice because they felt that the Bolsheviks were a threat to global stability. The Americans had no love for Lenin's government, but they did not see a restart of the Eastern Front, or for that matter a White victory, as realistic. Similarly, the Americans preferred Kolchak over the Bolsheviks, but that does not equal enthusiastic support, such as was the case with the British.

At first glance, the strategic goals of the Americans and the British with regards to Siberia seem small enough. Both would like a restart of the Eastern Front and a Bolshevik defeat. However, the Americans were absolutely not prepared for anything more than a limited commitment. The British did not have the means to support Kolchak with the necessary amount of aid required, but definitely thought his victory over the Bolsheviks was vital for the world, even after the armistice.

[32] Richard, *When the United States Invaded*, 76-93, 125-132.

Chapter Two

What were the orders given to the British- and American commanders and how were these interpreted and implemented?

Introduction

After the decision was made to send British- and American troops to Siberia in the fall of 1918, two men were selected to lead the respective expeditionary forces in the area. These men were lieutenant-colonel John Ward on the British side, and general William Sydney Graves for the Americans. Both men knew very little about what was going on in Siberia when they arrived within a month of each other in Vladivostok. The orders they were given by their governments were limited in detail, cryptic, and very much open to interpretation. This resulted in a completely different outlook between the two on what the goals of the Allied intervention in Siberia actually were.

In this chapter, the instructions for the commanders of the British- and American army troops in Siberia will be discussed at length. Equal importance is given to how they each interpreted their orders, and how they implemented them on the ground. Five major discrepancies between the insights of the British commander and the American commander become clear, which would ultimately make any serious cooperation between the two allies impossible.

The British land

The British army troops that were sent to Siberia belonged to the 25th Middlesex Regiment, which had for the last two years fulfilled garrison duties in India and Hongkong. The unit was made up of so-called B1 forces, meaning they were older, convalescing from wounds or otherwise unfit for service on the Western Front. This was not deemed to be a problem, as the official mission statement for Siberia was one of "arming and training" Russian troops friendly to the Allied cause. This was communicated to Ward in a short telegram, which described his mission as vital in the greater Allied struggle against Germany. In this communication he was warned that there were large numbers of armed German- and Austrian prisoners of war in the area. Nothing was said about the Bolsheviks, but Ward made the assumption that these would be his enemies in Siberia as well. The mission was officially, simply a matter of arming and training White forces in Siberia, and was not meant as a combat operation. However, the same day that the Middlesex men landed in Vladivostok (the fifth of August 1918), a large battle was fought between Bolshevik forces and badly equipped Czechs and White formations. The British troops under Ward were rushed to the front, and pushed back the Bolsheviks together with the White Forces, Czechs and Japanese troops.[33]

Ward's orders after this battle had not been further specified than a telegram from London describing the need to defend Allied stores against the Germans and their local agents (be it armed POWs or Bolsheviks). There were no further limits placed upon his command, and virtually the entire content of the mission was left up to him. After his troops were used almost immediately as frontline infantry alongside forces of several other nations, he understandably believed that his deployment was part of a large interallied plan to fight the Germans. Ward believed that after making peace with the Bolshevik government, the Germans would be able to move at least half a million forces to the Western

[33] Damien Wright, *Churchill's Secret War against Lenin : British and Commonwealth Military Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1918–20* (Warwick 2017), 314, 319-320.

Front. He was convinced that if the Allies had intervened earlier, the morale of the Russian population would not have sunk so low, and the October Revolution in its entirety could have been prevented. The Bolsheviks themselves were perceived by the Allies, according to Ward, as totally subservient to their German master. That they should be seen as two sides of the same coin is exemplified by the following quote:

The Allies looked upon the Bolshevik power as a mere hireling branch of the autocratic German menace, and a such the enemies of British and Russian democracy alike. We came to help, resurrect and reconstruct the orderly elements of Russian life, and promised that if they would join us in this crusade, we would never cease our efforts till both our enemies were utterly defeated. And here the soldiers of the two nations made their pact, and though it was not an official utterance it had official sanction.[34]

Especially noteworthy here is how Ward seems to make no distinction between 'Allied' on the one hand and 'British' on the other. At the same time, 'Russian soldiers' is to be understood strictly as those fighting against the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks themselves are categorized more as a part of autocratic Germany, than as Russians. This shows an interesting comparison to the Canadian contingent that was sent to Siberia as part of the British intervention. A good number of them, among whom many of Russian descent, were vehemently against using violence against any faction that was not the Germans themselves. The Bolsheviks were seen by Ward as inherently part of the worldwide enemy of the Allies, and little room for nuance was given.[35]

General Graves mission

Ward was sent into Siberia without much in the way of official orders, but seemingly with a very clear idea of the strategic goals of the intervention. Almost the opposite could be said about his American counterpart. General William Sydney Graves, who would command the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in Siberia. Graves wanted to serve in France on the Western Front, but on the second day of August 1918 he was summoned by the secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, and told he would go to Siberia instead. Baker handed him seven pages of instructions from President Wilson and told him the following:

This contains the policy of the United States in Russia which you are to follow. Watch your step; you will be walking on eggs filled with dynamite. God bless you and good-bye.[36]

The instructions from Wilson to Graves were vague and often contradictory. Wilson stresses the very close cooperation with the other Allies, but also adds that this document is purely the policy of the United States and not of the other Allies. He states that military intervention in Russia would be counterproductive and that there are no troops available for it, before adding that a small force is to be sent to Siberia under the command of general Graves. The main aim of American foreign policy was the defeat of Germany, according to Wilson, but how the Siberian intervention connects to that goal is not explained anywhere in the instructions given to Graves. Wilson makes clear in the text that only Russia can decide its own faith, and that the United States cannot allow any foreign nation to dictate its future, but then instructs Graves to use his troops to guard the rear of the Czechoslovaks while they provide aid to their "Slavic kinsmen" and help them form their own government. The U.S. troops were not to get involved in local politics, and were only there to guard military stores, and aid the Russians in their self-defense. No mention is made of either the Bolsheviks or the Whites, and Wilson makes very

[34] John Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia* (London 1920), 11-12.
[35] Wright, *Churchill's Secret War*, 314.
[36] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 7-8.

clear that these instructions are only the policy of the United States. Any limitations set on Graves' his troops are not meant to be condemnations of the actions of any of the other Allies.[37]

It is not surprising that general Graves was more than a little confused on what his instructions regarding the troops of other nations were. At no point was he instructed what the official mission statements of the British, or any of the other nations, were. In fact, the instructions from Wilson only briefly mention the Japanese troops, and do not mention any of the other Allied nations at all. Historian Carl Richard even calls his doubtful that Graves was aware that there would be British troops in Siberia before he landed in Vladivostok on the 4th of September. The general resolved to follow his instructions to the letter, and have his troops stay out of any direct conflict with any Russian faction, except to defend themselves, military supplies or the local population. From the start he was unhappy with his instructions, as the following quote shows.

After carefully reading the document and feeling that I understood the policy, I went to bed, but I could not sleep and I kept wondering what other nations were doing and why I was not given some information on what was going on in Siberia.[38]

The Armed POW question

Lieutenant-colonel Ward had been specifically instructed by the War Office before his departure that the main threat in Siberia would come from armed German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. As discussed in the previous chapter, this threat turned out to be largely fictional, and the upper echelons of the British military were aware of this. However, there is no evidence that Ward, who was stationed in Singapore and then later in Hongkong, ever received any information that the risk coming from armed prisoners was greatly overblown. In his book, which was published in 1920, he writes with great confidence of the existence of armed POWs. This is not surprising, seeing that on the very day he arrived in Siberia he was warned by a Czech general by the name of Detriks during a council of Allied commanders of the threat posed by these troops. According to Ward, Detriks reported on a critical situation developing on the Ussuri Front, north of Vladivostok.

The Allied force, now reduced to about 2,000 men, could not hope to hold up for long a combined Bolshevik, German and Magyar force of 18,000 to 20,000 men. The Bolshevik method of military organization,- namely, of "Battle Committees," which decided what superior commands should be carried our or rejected- had been swept away and replaced by the disciplined methods of the German and Austrian officers, who had now assumed command.[39]

It is interesting where this notion of a large force of armed POWs keeps coming from. The overall leader of the Czechoslovaks, Thomas Masaryk, was perfectly aware that there was no truth behind these rumors months earlier already. One explanation is that for soldiers of the various Allied nations, it may not be easy to discern who is and who is not a Russian during a pitched battle, especially when potentially captured Germans have a vested interest in not being discovered. This is supported by how Ward was able to participate in a battle against Red Guard units while remaining completely under the impression that the troops opposing him were a mixture of Russians, Germans and Austro-Hungarians. The other explanation, is that a major rumor mill was present in Siberia itself. Ardent anti-Bolsheviks, be they Russian, Czech, French or British, in places like Irkutsk and Vladivostok had a vested interest in trying to get Allied governments to commit more soldiers and materiel, which was more likely if they thought that there was actual German military presence in Siberia. Note that these

[37] Idem, 9-11.
[38] Richard, *When the United States Invaded Russia*, 58-59;
Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 7-12.
[39] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 9-10.

two explanations are not mutually exclusive, and a mix is very likely. In any case, Ward was convinced that there was a significant amount of armed POWs present in Siberia, and that he was authorized to fight them. His original mission was one of arming and training friendly White factions, which was explained to Ward as an important part of defeating the Germans. It was clear to him that the situation demanded more aggressive involvement from his troops. He requested authorization from London to use his troops for direct military involvement, which was given to him

About 2 P.M. Commodore Payne, R.N., came to my quarters and showed me a paragraphed cable he had received from the War Office. The cable authorized the immediate dispatch of half my battalion to the front, subject to the approval of the commanding officer.[40]

The instructions that General Graves received before going to Siberia differed starkly. While he was ordered to defend Allied stores against German attempts to capture them, nothing was mentioned about any armed POWs. On August 4th 1918, the New York Times published Wilson's policy on Russia after a formal announcement by secretary of state Frank L. Polk. It was almost word for word the instructions that Graves had received before being sent to Siberia, with one important difference. The American troops were supposedly sent to Siberia to help the Czechoslovaks against armed German and Austrian prisoners. This addition was there strictly to appeal to any anti-German sentiment of the American population. American decision makers were well aware that there was no risk from armed POWs, and therefore did not instruct Graves to take them into account. If they had any doubts, they would not have removed this part from the instructions given to the general.[41]

General Graves, after arriving in Vladivostok on the 2nd of September 1918, was briefed by an American colonel named Styer, who had landed two weeks prior. His troops had taken part in an Allied action against "armed German prisoners and Bolsheviks" who had set out to capture Allied stores. Graves believed that this fell within the confines of his instructions, and approved. A day later, general Otani, the commander of the Japanese forces in Siberia, warned Graves that a significant number of Bolshevik- and German troops were planning on overrunning Vladivostok. After doing his own rounds over the part of the Siberian railroad in Allied hands, he came to the conclusion that Otani must have been misinformed. He telegraphed the War Department a few days after his conversation with his Japanese counterpart that virtually all organized resistance in Siberia was gone. Graves quickly came to believe that the other Allies on the ground in Siberia were purposely inflating the number of Bolsheviks- and especially the number of armed Germans and Austro-Hungarians. He suspected that the British troops present wanted to draw in more men and weapons from the Allied nations in order to overthrow the Bolsheviks, and replace them with another faction. On the 19th of September 1918, Graves cabled the War Department:

French and English are, undoubtedly, trying to get the Allied forced committed to some act which will result in the establishment of an Eastern Front.[42]

Graves, who had not been instructed at any point that armed POWs were to be a main focal point of his mission, quickly realized that they did not prove any significant risk to either the Czechs, the Russian people or to the Allied stores his troops were supposed to defend. This is the complete opposite conclusion drawn by Ward, who was under the impression that both of them were in Siberia specifically to fight the combined German- and Bolshevik forces in the area.

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[40] Richard, *When the United States Invaded Russia,* 20-24;
Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia,* 9.
[41] 'Wilson Decides to Send a Small Force to Russia', *New York Times* (4 August 1918), 1, 5.
[42] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 36-42.

Bolsheviks

Not unimportant is the question which Russians were perceived to be Bolsheviks, and what the British- and American commanders respectively thought of what their attitude towards them should be. Here you see not just the difference in how both men interpreted their mission, with Ward believing the goal of the intervention was to defeat the Germans and all their local Bolshevik helpers, and Graves believing he was ordered to stay out of any internal Russian political disputes. Equally important here is the classicist attitude of British military representatives. According to Graves, Sir Alfred Knox, the former head of the British military mission in Moscow and now liaison to White forces in the area, repeatedly used the word "swine" to describe the Red Army, the Russian peasantry, and the democratically elected local Zemstvos interchangeably. According to Graves, the British officers generally went along with the definition of who was a Bolshevik used by former Czarist officials, which boiled down to everyone opposed to the old autocracy. Graves describes this polarizing view in his memoirs.

At the time of my arrival in Vladivostok, when the British representatives spoke of Russians, they meant the old Czarist officials, who felt it was then safe enough for them to appear in their gorgeous uniforms every evening, and parade down Svetlanskaya, the principal thoroughfare. The other class was called "Bolsheviks," although, as a matter of fact, the old Czarist officials did not claim to be in favour of the reestablishment of the Czar in Russia, and the Russians called Bolsheviks, did not claim to be in favour of the Soviet government.[43]

General Graves did not believe that he had orders to fight any specific Russian faction whatsoever. Neither did he consider any Russian opposed to the autocracy as Bolshevik, and in his view, Siberia was a place with a wide variety of political factions, of which some were armed. Partisans that the Czarist Whites and the British saw as Bolshevik were suspected by Graves to be simply local self-defense forces without explicit political leanings. Even self-declared Bolsheviks, however, were not his concern. After agreeing to use American troops to guard the Suchan coal miles on the 7th of September 1918, he had to restrain his men from arresting miners suspected by the old managerial elite of the mine of being Bolsheviks. A reporter from the New York Times witnessed Graves admonishing one of his own officers for arresting someone accused of being a Bolshevik. When the officer in question answered that his orders were to arrest Bolsheviks, Graves replied with the following.

Whoever gave you those orders must have made them up himself. The United States is not at war with the Bolsheviki or any other faction in Russia. You have no orders to arrest Bolsheviks or anybody else unless they disturb the peace of the community, attack the people or the Allied soldiers. The United States is not here to fight Russia or any other group or faction in Russia. Because a man is a Bolshevik is no reason for his arrest. You are to arrest only those who attack you. The United States is only fighting the Bolsheviki when the American troops are attacked by an armed force. [44]

A note to be added here is this particular reporter, Carl Ackerman, has been described by historians such as Ivan Kurilla as a virulent anti-Bolshevik who did not always report things as factually as they happened according to other eyewitnesses. However, General Graves and Ackerman exchanged letters regularly, even after Ackerman had published the above quote in both the New York Times and in his book, which Graves read. There is no evidence that Graves ever denied that the exchange above toke place.[45]

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[43] Idem, 17, 41, 53, 185.
[44] Carl W. Ackerman, *Trailing the Bolsheviki: Twelve Thousand Miles with the Allies in Sibera* (New York 1919), 188.
[45] Ivan Kurilla, *Editor's Introduction to Carl Ackerman, Trailing the Bolsheviki: Twelve Thousand Miles with the Allies in Siberia* (Bloomington 2020), 11.

Japan

Right after their arrival, both Ward's Middlesex Regiment and Graves' Expeditionary Forces began to run into problems with the over seventy-thousand strong Japanese contingent in Siberia. American troops were often harassed and purposely delayed, and British officers on trains were at times stopped and aggressively asked when they would leave Siberia. Abuse of the local population was rife, much to the dismay of both Ward and Graves. After an incident where Japanese troops had assaulted two Russian civilians on a train platform, Ward complain to the Japanese officer present. According to Ward, the officer told him that Japan occupied Siberia, and they were entitled to do as they saw fit. A perplexed Ward responded that the Japanese were acting in alliance with the other Allied nations, which included Russia, and that they were not there as their conquerors.[46]

At the heart of the problem was a desire of elements in the Japanese military for the expansion of their colonial empire. According to historian Paul E. Dunscomb, the British only saw the events in Siberia in 1918 through the lens of the Western Front and the threat posed by Germany to Paris. The Japanese, however, were a lot more interested in the Bolshevik revolution as an event by itself, and how it impacted the strategic situation in East Asia in the period after the Russo-Japanese War. The status of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which had given Japan control over Korea and parts of Southern Manchuria, was now unclear, which was alarming. The revolution itself also provided an opportunity for extra security for Japan's colonial possessions. Weakening Russia by propping up an unstable government in Siberia would secure against any possible war of revanche from Moscow. So while the other Allies had an interest in getting Japan to commit troops for the intervention, the Japanese had an interest in actively destabilizing the region. This is echoed by an observation from Ward on Japanese policies.

During my stay in the maritime provinces I never saw or heard of a single act or order from the Japanese administration which would help in the slightest degree in the administrative reorganization of the country. On the contrary I saw many things which convinced me that the Land of the Rising Sun was at that time more concerned in maintaining disorder as the surest way to fostering her own ambitious designs.[47]

An interesting difference between the attitudes of Graves and Ward towards the Japanese troops in the area came from their initial instructions. Ward was under the impression that all Allies in Siberia were part of the same mission to defeat the Germans and their supposed Bolshevik underlings. This is exemplified by the conversation Ward had with a Japanese officer after he witnessed Russian civilians being assaulted. Because of Ward's misunderstanding of the role of the Japanese in the intervention, it is not surprising that the British lieutenant-colonel was perfectly fine with placing troops under Japanese command when the higher ranking General Otani requested this. Graves, on the other hand, interpreted his mission as being a purely American engagement, with the other Allies having their own goals. When asked to place American troops under Japanese command so they could be used against presumed Bolshevik formations in the area, he promptly refused. It is very likely that the following telegram he received just prior to arriving in Siberia influenced his decision.

Up to the time of my arrival in Vladivostok, I had received no information as to the military, political, social, economic, or financial situation in Russia. Just before I left San Francisco, I received a dispatch from Washington, stating in expect, that information seemed to indicate that Japan's policy would be to keep the various Russian forces apart and oppose any strong Russian central authority, but

[46] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia,* 39-42.
[47] Paul E. Dunscomb, *Japan's Siberian Intervention, 1918-1922 : 'A Great Disobedience Against the People'* (Plymouth 2011), 32-34;
Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 42.

to support a number of weak Russian forces which could not form more than a screen for Japanese actions.[48]

Kolchak

Shortly after the arrival of Allied troops in Siberia, the First World War came to an end on the 11th of November 1918. News reached lieutenant-colonel Ward of the Armistice signed between the Allies and the Central Powers on the 16th of November, when he was visiting the front lines alongside admiral Kolchak. They drank champagne with a French colonel to celebrate, and Ward promised Kolchak he would have his continued support. One day later, Kolchak's faction violently overthrew the government of the Social Revolutionaries in Omsk. Ward claimed that he did not believe Kolchak himself had anything to do with the coupe, but at the same time did not condemn the act itself. He referred to the Social Revolutionaries as "useless charlatans" and "unmitigated failures". Ward describes trying to save the leaders of the Social Revolutionaries from being summarily executed, and shows communication to back up his claims. However, he did nothing to stop the coup from happening, and makes sure that at no point in his memoirs it seems like Kolchak himself had anything to do with the brutal repressions that followed the establishment of his dictatorship in Siberia. Ward himself was convinced that it was official Allied policy to organize a new Russian army under the strongest leader that presented himself. In his mind, the armistice with Germany did not mean a fundamental change in Allied policy in Siberia, as the Bolsheviks had not surrendered alongside their German masters. Throughout the existence of Kolchak's dictatorship, Ward continues following his assumed orders of arming and training Kolchak's army. The following quote demonstrates how he reconciled the Allied wish for democracy with his obvious favor of Kolchak's regime over any rival factions.

The state of affairs was such that only by dictatorship could the most rudimentary order be maintained. I, a democrat, believing in government of the people by the people, thought I saw in the dictator the one hope of saving the remnants of Russian civilization and culture.[49]

While it was clear for Ward what Allied policy was in Siberia after the armistice, this was a more problematic subject for Graves. The American general requested additional guidance after word reached him of the Armistice. He was advised that his present orders stood, and that no government would be officially recognized. However, American officials were from this point on allowed to give aid and assistance to "local authorities" along the railroad. Graves found this to be at odds with his original mission statement, as all towns alongside the Siberian railroad were in the hands of admiral Kolchak by now. On the one hand, he was asked not to show favoritism to any faction, while on the other this additional guidance would mean that only the Whites under Kolchak would benefit from this aid and assistance. As far as Graves was concerned, the original reason for the intervention was invalid now that Germany had surrendered, and he was waiting for his force to receive orders to go home. His frustration was exacerbated by the fact that he saw the presence of American troops as beneficial to Kolchak alone. Graves had an intense dislike for Kolchak's regime, which he held responsible for crimes against Siberian civilians, while doing nothing to improve the lot of anyone except the old Czarist upper class. Graves saw his own orders regarding Kolchak as being distinctively different from those of the other Allies. He had a strong suspicion that Ward's troops had taken part in the Omsk coup, and knew that the British had significant influence on Kolchak. He himself, however, held on to his official mission statement from Wilson, telling him that his troops were not to take any sides in this conflict. This would lead to significant conflict with Kolchak and the British.[50]

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[48] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 36-38.
[49] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia,* 82-94.
[50] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 58-65.

In conclusion

Lieutenant-colonel John Ward and general William Sydney Graves were the respective commanders of the British- and American army troops that took part in the intervention. Their orders, and how they understood them, was the direct implementation in Siberia of the foreign policy of their respective home countries. However, we can recognize five major discrepancies between how the two men interpreted their mission. These would result in several obstacles to the cooperation between the forces of Britain and the United States during the intervention in Siberia.

First of all, Ward was under the impression that all Allied commanders understood the same strategic goals, while Graves thought that his orders were exclusively meant for the American troops, and did not expand to any other nation. This is a significant difference in mindset, as Graves' essentially places the American troops outside of the 'Allied' concept that Ward has.

Secondly, Graves interpreted his orders to be that his troops were not to favor any specific side, and he implemented this by instructing the men under his command that there would be no open conflict with the Bolsheviks, unless they struck first. Ward, on the other hand, understood the Bolsheviks to be part of the same group of enemies that the Germans belonged to. This was logical to him, as he genuinely believed that the Red Guards were being led by former German prisoners of war. This meant that the British-, as well as all other Allied troops, were meant to fight Bolsheviks wherever they encountered them.

The third difference, on who they considered to be a Bolshevik, is key as well. The definition of a Bolshevik being in Ward's eyes far broader than what Graves believed. The Americans saw a more nuanced mix of political groups and regular people mainly occupied with self-defense, while the British held the same view as the military leadership of the White faction. This meant that anyone of the peasantry or working class not explicitly in favor of the autocracy was suspected of being a Bolshevik, whether they actively supported Lenin or not.

The fourth major discrepancy was that Graves had been forewarned that the Japanese troops in the area had their own hidden strategic goals, leading to him keeping his distance wherever he could. Ward had received no such instructions, and was fine with placing his troops under Japanese command if he felt that the situation required it, as in his mind they were part of the same intervention force anyway. A shared view from the start on how to deal with the Japanese would have been very beneficial for both forces.

The fifth major difference between the convictions of the two men stemmed from their attitude towards Admiral Kolchak. Ward saw his dictatorship as a necessary evil, and interpreted his orders to clearly mean that he should arm and train his forces whenever he could, as well as provide direct military support if needed. Graves had a much harsher opinion of the repressive means used by Kolchak, and kept his troops unaligned, which he could be justify with his mission statement telling him not to get involved in local political affairs..

It is clear that the two men envisioned completely different strategic goals for the intervention, and that cooperation between the Americans and the British would be very problematic.

Chapter Three

How did the differences in understanding the strategic goals by commanders affect the situation on the ground in Siberia?

Introduction

The British- and American troops started arriving in August 1918, and would remain in Siberia guarding the various sections of the railroad they were assigned to until the fall of Admiral Kolchak's government in the fall of 1919. From the very start of the intervention, the relationship between the British and the Americans was marked by misunderstanding, distrust and exasperation due to support -or lack of support- for certain political factions present in Russia at the time. This chapter will discuss how the differences in understanding of what the strategic goals were of the Siberian intervention between lieutenant-colonel John Ward and general William Sydney Graves affected the situation on the ground. The core will be how the deviating implementations of the plans of the two commanders resulted in a hindrance of each other's operations and an inability to work together where their goals actually aligned well. This chapter is structured by subsegments that correspond with the major discrepancies between what Graves and Ward saw as the goal of their mission that were identified in the previous chapter.

Allied orders versus national goals

From the very start of the British participation in the Siberian intervention in August 1918, Ward was under the impression that his troops were part of a greater Allied force with mutually shared goals. If the end goal of the intervention was to return Siberia to the rule of law, then that could obviously only be accomplished by the elimination of the Bolsheviks from this area. When the American forces deviated in this line of thinking from the rest of the Allied forces, he did not see this as a difference in national, strategic goals, but rather as the result of some form of deception and treachery. In his memoirs, Ward describes an event that took place in Kraevesk in November 1918, where a detachment of Red Guards had taken possession of a train station in the presence of American troops. For the U.S. troops this was not necessarily an issue, as they had been ordered not to get involved in local politics. As long as the Bolsheviks kept the trains running, and did not molest either the Americans or the local population, this did not clash with their mission statement. However, when the Russian station commandant asked help from Ward, he did not share this sentiment.

…the station-master wished to know what he was to do and whether any help could be sent to him. Imagine my utter astonishment at this message, containing, as it undoubtedly did, evidence of co-operation and understanding between the Bolshevik forces and one our Allies.[51]

After this event, Ward decided to investigate the nature of the communication between American troops and the Bolsheviks. He interviewed several American soldiers and officers, asking them about their experience in Siberia, and which orders they had received from higher up. His conclusion, which was very shocking to him, was that there was open communication between American officers and officers of the Red Guard. The smoking gun that Ward puts forward is a letter from an American Captain to a commander of a local Red Guard formation, complaining that threatening the local population with conscription was a breach of the "joint understanding" between the chiefs of the American and Red forces. Ward believed strongly that this understanding was the reason why U.S.

[51] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 159-160.

troops refused to take part in combined active combat missions against presumed Bolsheviks, which he considered to be almost treasonous. He also considered General Graves to be a part of this plot, as is exemplified by the following quote.

I learnt from these American troops that their officers and officials, from General Graves downwards, had been in actual correspondence with Red Guard officers, and that more than one understanding had been arrived between them; that for a time the ordinary American soldiers thought the understanding between the two forces was so general and friendly in character that no further hostile acts were to be contemplated between them.[52]

After landing in Siberia in September 1918, Graves quickly came to the realization that he was the odd man out during meetings with the other Allied commanders. More often than not during these councils he found himself without support, with Ward and the other Allied leaders standing together on most propositions. Graves rather naively believed that the principal of non-intervention in Russian political affairs, which was theoretically supported by the British government, would actually be put into practice by Ward. This resulted in tense situations when Graves attempted to remind the British of their official stance.

It soon became evident at these Allied meetings, that I was an unknown quantity, and their principal darts were fired at me, when any differences arose. There were basic differences in our policies which could never be reconciled as long as my instructions remained. England, France and Japan always had as their objective to do all the damage possible to Bolsheviks, while I was trying to keep out of trouble with any Russian party. The principle of non-intervention had been broadcast throughout the world and everyone in Siberia, Russian and foreigner, knew of this promise before Allied troops entered Siberia.[53]

Already in October 1918. Graves started to get the idea that the British, recognizing that the Americans could not be persuaded to attack the Bolsheviks directly, were exasperated with him. British officers at dinners described their U.S. counterparts as "stupid and stubborn", and one came to see Graves to tell him that he "was getting a reputation of being a friend of the poor and didn't I know they were only swine". Throughout late 1918 and early 1919 the British made attempts to bring all Allied forces under one command. There was military need for this, as only the Americans and the Japanese had enough forces in the area to properly guard the railways which were so vital for supplying Admiral Kolchak's forces as well as for feeding the local population. However, the distrust between the Americans and the British was so large that Graves refused to bring any of his troops under British command. He specifically believed that the British would engineer situations where American troops would be forced into direct combat with Russian factions in order to pull them more firmly into the anti-Bolshevik camp.[54]

Graves' determination to strictly adhere to the policy of non-interference caused a lot of problems for his command. Graves' wrote on the fourth of May 1919 to Washington that he feared a physical confrontation with White forces supported by the British would be unavoidable if they would continue their neutral stance in Russian affairs. On the 19th of the same month, the British foreign office requested that Graves' his orders be altered to directly side with Kolchak and fight the Bolsheviks. They added that Graves' held an "unsympathetic" view to the British Government, and produced a long list of instances where troops under Graves had failed to come to the aid of their allies against Bolshevik aggression. Historian Carl Richard called the list of deserving a "Pulitzer prize for fiction".[55]

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[52] Idem, 161-162.
[53] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 48-49.
[54] Idem, 51-53, 74.
[55] Richard, *When the United States Invaded Russia*, 145-147.

Historian and former Colonel in the U.S. Army, John M. House, concluded that success is very hard to define for a mission with such vague goals as the Siberian intervention. However, he does note two very important things. First off, whenever combat did occur, both the Americans and the British performed better than their various adversaries. Secondly, the British- and American commanders were initially determined to cooperate with each other. However, Graves' determination to hold strictly to Wilson's aide memoire poisoned their relationship completely, even if that was legally and morally the right thing to do. With both the Americans and the British favoring a Bolshevik defeat over a victory, it is clear that the manifestations of the differences in policy on the ground at the very least prevented the Allies from effectively supporting any alternative candidate.[56]

Bolsheviks

Another major point of contention between the British and the Americans was the view of who was or was not a Bolshevik. As discussed in chapter two, the British definition was far broader than the American one. Where Ward saw a Bolshevik in every Russian who did not openly support the Kolchak government, Graves' was more realistic. He correctly saw that a significant number of the 'Bolsheviks' were no more than peasants who had organized themselves in militias to defend their villages against the brutal attacks of the Cossack chiefs and other warlords that sided with Kolchak. Graves saw it as part of his mission to defend the local people, even if they resisted against the Whites. In areas controlled by American troops there was some guarantee for the safety of these villages against outside molestation, even if the inhabitants were armed to some degree. This infuriated Kolchak's government and the British, as they saw this as a safe zone for Bolsheviks to organize themselves. Ward described the zone set up by the Americans in late 1918 as a breeding ground for Red Guard forces, which had undone all the hard work of the Whites and their foreign allies in the previous months.

There was not a single band of Red Guards one thousand strong in the whole territory. After nine months of Allied occupation the Reds organized, largely under American protection, two divisions (so called) of 5,000-7,000 men, and numerous subsidiary units of a few hundred, who murdered and robbed in every direction, and destroyed every semblance of order which the Supreme Governor and the Allies had with so much labour attempted to set up. Thus this huge province in a short time descended from comparative order to sporadic disorder, simply because America had no Russian policy of her own, and rejected that of her friends.[57]

An important note here is that the disorder that Ward refers to simply means that an increasing number of Russians resisted the 'Supreme Governor's' rule. This was not because the Bolsheviks had won them over, but rather because of the brutality of the Whites, and the fact that by this time period, the late summer of 1919, the Kolchak government was starting to fall apart. There is no evidence that a significant amount of peasants in the so-called American protection zone were members of the Red Guard. Graves understood their motivations, and stated in his memoirs that anywhere in the world "the inhabitants would take such steps as they could to protect themselves from such inhuman atrocities". However, in the view of the British and the Whites this armed resistance simply made them Bolsheviks.[58]

The worse things went for Kolchak's government in the fall of 1919, the more bitter the approach of the British and the Whites towards anyone who was perceived to be aiding the Bolsheviks became. On the 19th of October 1919, word reached Graves that Cossacks had killed over three-thousand Jews in Ekaterinburg. The local White controlled press was constantly publishing fabricated stories of

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[56] House, *Wolfhounds and Polar Bears*, 165-167.
[57] Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 188-193, 327-329.
Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 165.
[58] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 94.

how the Jewish population was assisting the Bolsheviks. This extended to the U.S. forces, as well, who were said to consist for the majority of Jews from New York. These Jewish elements in the U.S. force were claimed to be arming the Bolsheviks with American weapons. This was completely false, but nevertheless did result in attacks by White forces on Americans, often with help from the Japanese. The attackers explicitly used anti-Semitic and/or anti-Bolshevik language against their American targets. The British were well aware of this, but did not nothing to intervene. British advisor to Kolchak, General Knox, even outright accused Graves of helping the Bolsheviks.[59]

Kolchak

Probably the most serious policy difference was in the attitude of both sides towards the government formed by Admiral Kolchak. After the November coup in Omsk, Kolchak soon became arguably the most serious challenger to Bolshevism in Russia. At the zenith of his power, in March 1919, his territory covered three hundred thousand km2 and held give or take seven million people. But after April of that same year, his White forces were pushed back more and more. Not just because of the actions of the Red Army, but also because of local uprisings against his government. This was for a large part due to the fact that the Admiral's commanders would forcibly conscript the local population, and terrorize them when the men of military age would hide. Thousands were summarily executed. The local population in Siberia mainly saw Kolchak as a puppet of the Allies, and foremost of the British. This did not help the legitimacy of his Omsk government, where British troops were very likely to have been part of his coup, according to historian Jamie Bisher. Equally problematic was that the Allies were seen by the local population as actively meddling in Russian internal affairs, despite promises not to, and as being complicit in Kolchak's harsh repression.[60]

General Graves, who was keenly aware of how the Omsk regime reflected on the Allies, and had an intense dislike for Kolchak and his government. Graves' line of thinking was that if his troops guarded the railways that were used almost solely to bring Kolchak supplies and weapons, then they would indeed be complicit in the crimes committed by his government as well. Graves was also highly suspicious of any promises of liberal reforms made by Kolchak to secure Allied support, seeing as all his senior commanders were either British- or old Czarist officers, like the two mentioned in the following quote.

Ivanoff-Rinoff and Horvath recognized Kolchak's authority and he could have stopped these excesses of the White Russian troops if he had so desired. The fact of the matter is, it is rather unreasonable to expect the practice of centuries to be stopped suddenly by the Czarists and especially, when there was only a slight chance that the ruthlessness practiced would be published to the world. The Allies in Siberia had become so enmeshed in Siberian affairs, in their determination to destroy Bolshevism, that they could protest only feebly against Czarist Russian excesses, if they protested at all.[61]

Graves' was infuriated by attacks on American soldiers by troops under the command of admiral Kolchak. When weapons meant for the Whites manufactured by the United States moved through Siberia, he repeatedly refused to give them up, citing anti-American activity by Kolchak agents as the reason why. In his mind, this was perfectly in line with his orders, as sending weapons to one faction could be construed as taking a side in Russian affairs, especially if that side was using those weapons against both the local population as well as American troops. As Kolchak's forces fighting in Western Siberia against the Red Army were almost always critically short of weapons and supplies, this was taken very seriously. The British were furious over what they saw as a purposely act of sabotage against

[59] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 150-154.
[60] Jamie Bisher, *White Terror: Cossack Warlords of the Trans-Siberian* (London 2005), 86-90, 147, 238.
[61] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure,* 86.

the White government. When on September 16th 1919 Graves' refused to send on a shipment of gold and rifles meant for Kolchak, he was directly accused by the British of holding up weapons with the intent of weaking the White government in Omsk.[62]

Ward and the other British officers did their best to support Kolchak, whom they greatly respected, as much as possible. The admiral himself complained to Ward in March 1919 that the Americans were not helping his position, secretly supporting the Bolsheviks, and that Graves himself was being controlled by Jewish elements in his force. Ward replied that he was certain that the American government was doing all that it could to support Kolchak (although this was certainly not the case), and that all the faults were with American command on the ground. It is clear from the following quote that Ward was convinced that it was Graves' wrongful interpretation of his orders that were causing trouble.

The business of the American command is to secure order in those districts which have been placed under its control by the Council of Allied Commanders. There is another self-evident and obvious duty, namely, to shape their conduct in such manner as to create friendly relations with such elements of Russian authority and order as are gradually appearing here and there, under the influence of the Supreme Commander [Kolchak], and also provide as little space and opportunity as possible for the collection and reorganization of the elements of disorder. The policy of the American command, has been quite the reverse… That some sinister underground influence has deflected American policy from this straight and honest course is quite obvious.[63]

Japan

One of the points where the British- and American forces found themselves in a similar position, was in their relation with the Japanese troops in Siberia. While Japanese Prime Minister Hara Takashi was often willing to compromise with the other Allies, the Japanese military was a political force in its own right. In order to reach their goal of turning the Russian Far East into a part of Japan's economic sphere, they needed the British- and American troops gone. Both were perceived as economic- and colonial rivals in the region, and especially the British were seen as propping up Admiral Kolchak. After the armistice with Germany was signed in November 1918, the Japanese thought it would be easy to force a withdrawal, as they correctly assumed that domestic support for the intervention would wane in London and Washington. Intent on destabilizing Siberia for their own gain, they covertly supported Cossack warlords with money and weapons. Throughout 1919, Cossack chiefs Semenov and Kalmykov, nominally part of Kolchak's force, robbed and murdered their way across Siberia in an effort to strengthen their own position. This included kidnapping and harassing Allied personnel, as well as hijacking weapon shipments. Often with full support of local Japanese commanders.[64]

General Graves describes several instances where his troops were attacked by Cossacks, who were then sheltered by the Japanese. In one case on September 3rd 1919, Cossacks under Kalmykov's command captured an American corporal near Iman. When his fellow soldiers gathered to free him, Japanese troops made it clear that if fighting were to break out they would side with the Cossacks. When an American major made clear that they would attack regardless, the Cossacks released him, but not before whipping him in front of Japanese officers. Graves was well aware that these events were organized by the Japanese specifically to force an American withdrawal from the region.

I am sure this arrest and whipping of the American corporal was not only permitted by the Japanese, but the whole miserable act was engineered by them, although I am unable to charge any

[62] Idem, 144-146.
[63] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 160-163.
[64] Dunscomb, *Japan's Siberian Intervention*, 84-85, 93.

Japanese higher in authority than the major at Iman with this cowardly and dastardly act. I make this charge because Kalmykov and his soldiers formed a part of the Japanese command, and the Japanese commanding officer was in command of these Cossacks when this insult was directed against the United States. As Iman was not in the sector of the railroad assigned to Japan to guard, the Japanese troops had no responsibility at this town. They were there for some purpose, and the real purpose is shown by the arrest of the Americans.[65]

The British found themselves with similar problems. Ward shared Graves' suspicions that the Japanese were out to bring parts of Siberia into its colonial possessions, and was using Semenov and Kalmykov as puppets to do so. The British considered the two Cossack chiefs as deserters of the White cause, who were openly undermining the Kolchak regime in order to benefit the Japanese. British soldiers often found their trains stolen by Cossacks or the Japanese, and had to endure insults and threats from both. Ward was also acutely aware that the American troops in Siberia routinely found themselves under attack by the Cossacks. Interestingly enough, rather than approach the Americans to make a common cause, he blamed Graves for the obstacles formed by the Japanese and their puppets, by allowing what Ward considered to be Bolsheviks roam free. In his eyes, there would not even be any Cossacks in the areas controlled by the Allies if the Americans would fight the Bolsheviks in their sectors.

The lack of Allied cohesion produced by the defection of American policy from that of the European Powers may change completely the status and future of Siberia. America has transformed a friendly population into at least a suspicious, if not a hostile, one. Japan, on the other hand, has steadily pursued her special interests and taken full advantage of every American mistake.[66]

Graves, on the other side, also did not feel like he could trust ward too far with regards to Japan. He believed that the Japanese had only joined the intervention due to British requests that went back as early as March 1918. Graves writes that the British had originally intended the Japanese to occupy the Trans-Siberian railroad for the express purpose of giving aid to anti-Bolshevik movements throughout Russia. Graves was also alarmed by a statement made by British representatives at the Supreme War Council that Japan might use the opportunity to annex parts of Siberia.

If Japan demands some compensation for her efforts it may be necessary to acquiesce in her occupying a small portion of Eastern Siberia. It is probable that in any case she will take part of Siberia, but this may prevent her from looking for expansion elsewhere.[67]

This was an offhand remark, and certainly not meant as official policy, but Graves interpreted this comment rather more as an agreement between two colonial periods to carve out a piece of Siberia for Japan as a reward for military assistance against the Bolsheviks. In Graves' mind, both Britain and Japan were heavily interfering in Russian affairs despite promising not to. Even more important, from Graves' point of view they were both openly supporting murderers, be it in the form of Kolchak, or in the form of Semenov and Kalmykov. On the 2nd of March 1919, a group of women came to see him in Vladivostok after the editor of a newspaper and several other civilians were arrested by Cossacks, and would likely be murdered. They asked the Allies to follow "their policy of non-interference" if the local people would rise up against the reactionary government. After this request a British officer visited him, trying to figure out what the American position would be in case of a revolt against Kolchak's representatives and the British supporting him. His reply shows how at this point he had no further desire to work with either the British or Japan in Siberia.

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[65] Bisher, *White Terror*, 242.
Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 141-142.
[66] Ward, *With the "Die-Hards" in Siberia*, 165-170.
[67] Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 40-41.

I finally told Sir Charles, after some more words, that I was well aware that he wanted to know my attitude towards protecting Ivanoff-Rinoff and Horvath and that I could answer his question, and that the answer would be that he knew this was a cold blooded murder, and the United States had never been in the habit of protecting murderers, and that I did not intend doing so now and, so far as I was concerned, they could bring Ivanoff-Rinoff opposite American Headquarters and hang him to that telegraph pole unit he was dead, and not an American soldier would turn his hand. This seemed to satisfy Sir Charles and he immediately left my office. I have always believed that the British and the Japanese knew these arrests were going to be made.[68]

Conclusion

The situation on the ground in Siberia was severely impacted by the differences in how the British- and American commanders understood their mission. General Graves, sticking to his orders not to get involved in Russian political affairs, saw no problem in communicating with Bolsheviks, or in allowing them access to areas his troops were providing security for. Ward did not see this as the result of different policies, but rather as a nefarious betrayal of the common Allied cause. The result of this stance was a rift between the two interventionist powers, with the British formally complaining about Graves to his superiors, and the Americans refusing to take part in any shared command.

What made the situation even worse was the fact that Ward and Graves held completely different views of who were in fact the Bolsheviks. Ward went with the typical view of the Whites that anyone not actively supporting Admiral Kolchak was a Bolshevik. Graves, on the other hand, had a lot more nuanced position, and recognized that quite a number of armed peasants were simply resisting against the brutality of White agents, instead of card carrying Bolsheviks. Unfortunately for the Americans, the White definition meant that they themselves were considered Bolshevik sympathizers, which resulted in attacks. The British, who had considerable influence in White circles, did nothing to stop these attacks. From their point of view, the American stance had resulted in areas their enemies could use to regroup.

Arguably the biggest point of contention between the British and the Americans in Siberia was their respective opinions on support for Kolchak's government. The British considered the admiral the best candidate for leadership in Russia. They felt that full Allied support for Kolchak was perhaps not explicitly made clear to all commanders, but definitely an implicit part of their mission. Ward makes it clear that he does not doubt the commitment of the American government to Kolchak's cause, but rather that he has problems with Graves' interpretation of his mission. Graves, who considered Kolchak anti-democratic, responsible for attacks on American troops, and a murderer of innocent Russians, repeatedly held up desperately needed weapon shipments meant for the Omsk regime. Graves believed that this was will within his mission statement to do, but the British considered this to be nothing short of purposeful sabotage of the White cause.

What is interesting is that the British and the Americans ran into a similar obstacle in the form of Japanese involvement in Siberia. Their efforts to destabilize the region, either directly or through the use of bribed Cossack chiefs, was a serious nuisance for Kolchak, as well as the British- and American troops in the region. However, instead of working together to solve this shared problem, the distrust between Graves and Ward ran so high that this was by now impossible. Ward and the other British officers blamed the Japanese ability to create havoc in Siberia on the American lack of anti-Bolshevik activity. Graves was under the impression that the British and the Japanese were working together a lot more closely than was actually the case, and as both directly supported men he considered to be criminals, he did not seek for common cause with the British.

[68] Idem, 89, 98-99.

Conclusion

The British and American Siberian interventions of 1918-1920 were deemed total failures by the men who led them. After the departure of the Allied forces, the Bolsheviks rapidly toke over power in Siberia. The various White formations fell one by one, and Russia would for almost seventy years be under communist control. For the British, this meant nothing short of defeat. The Americans might have succeeded in evacuating large amounts of military hardware and the Czechoslovak Legion, but were no happier than the British with the Bolshevik victory. The local population had been terrorized, and Lenin's regime had all the propaganda material it would ever need to condemn the western Allies.

In this thesis it is shown what motivated Britain and the United States to deploy troops to Siberia, and how their cooperation was impacted by the differences in their strategic goals. From the very start, the aims of the British and the Americans did not align. After it became clear that Russia would sign a separate peace with Germany, the British were obsessed with the idea of somehow restarting the Eastern Front. For the Americans this was simply not such a pressing need, and neither did they think it was a realistic possibility anyway. While the Americans saw the necessity to deploy some troops to guard Allied stores and help the Czechoslovak Legion, at no point did they want to seriously commit to operations in Siberia like the British did.

From the British viewpoint, the Bolsheviks first stood in the way of a victory against Germany, and after the armistice in November 1918 persisted as a threat to global stability in a world that was otherwise returning to peace. Their man to restore Russia to what they considered to be stability and order was admiral Alexander Kolchak, who came to rule in Siberia after his Omsk coup in November 1918. However, president Wilson and the rest of the leadership in Washington never saw Kolchak as a viable alternative to the Bolsheviks. While they undoubtedly preferred him over Lenin, they did not want to expand huge efforts on a cause they considered morally dubious and practically impossible.

This strategic understanding of what was to be done in Russia translated into the orders given to general William Sydney Graves. The American commander was warned not to take any sides in the internal political struggles of Russia, and was only supposed to use his force to guard supply depots, railroads and the civilian population. He was not to fight the Bolsheviks directly, nor overtly support Kolchak's Whites, and was warned that the Japanese had ulterior motives for being in the area. His orders were also understood as strictly applying to the American forces. Now, contrast this with British lieutenant-colonel Ward, who believed that all the Allies were there together to help Kolchak defeat Bolshevism, and the problem is starting to become clear.

What this resulted in was a situation where Ward saw Graves' tolerance of what the British perceived to be Bolsheviks in American controlled areas as pure treachery, and his withholding of weapons meant for Kolchak as willful sabotage. Graves, on the other hand, saw the British as being complicit in atrocities committed against the Russian population he was trying to protect, through their support for the admiral's regime. The mutual distrust between the British and Americans in Siberia led to the British refusing to use their influence on Kolchak whenever White troops attacked American forces. Similarly, the Americans refusing any form of unified command structures with the other Allies. Even when their goals aligned, such as when dealing with the Japanese and their local Cossack troops, they were unable to work together due to the poisoned nature of their relationship. In short, their cooperation in Siberia was virtually nonexistent.

It is hard to say in the end how much an impact the obstacles the British and Americans faced in their cooperation had on the intervention overall. In the end, the failure of Kolchak and the other

Whites to defeat the Bolsheviks had more to do with their own policies than any bickering between the British and the Americans, although it undoubtedly did play a role. The Russian population of Siberia had suffered terribly, and certainly did not appreciate 'Allied efforts' in the region. After the withdrawal of both intervention forces from Siberia, the governments in London and Washington seemingly preferred to forget about the whole ordeal. General Graves described this in the final chapter of his memoirs.

The absence of information from the United States and the Allied governments, about military intervention in Russia, indicates that the various governments taking part in the intervention take very little pride in this venture. Who can blame them?[69]

[69] Ward, *America's Siberian Adventure,* 194-195.

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