1918: ALLIED INTERVENTION AND THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

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In the year 839 AD the Frankish Emperor resided in the town of Ingelheim, just east of modern day Frankfurt. On May 18, Emperor Louis I greeted messengers from the land of Rhos for the first time. Today we identify this land as Kiev Rus.1 The messengers stood out from the Greek companions with whom they had arrived and the Frankish emperor was immediately suspicious of his unfamiliar guests. For fear that they might be spies, the emperor detained them. Russian historian Vladimir Plougin relates this story as the first documented incident of representatives from the future Russian state making contact with Central European powers. Plougin acknowledges that it is impossible to determine if the emperor’s suspicions were justified as it is unknown if the guests were actually intelligence officers. However, Plougin speculates that “a ‘get acquainted’ mission would not have been unthinkable.”2 At any rate, Plougin’s stated aim in telling this tale is simple: this was the first documented contact between Russians and Europeans, and the Europeans had a reaction which was indicative of the future relationship between these two peoples. The Europeans were frightened by the Russians.3

An attempt to establish a consistent thread of fear between Russians and Europeans throughout their respective histories’ is beyond the scope of this work. However, it is notable that the European Emperor’s first reaction to Russian representatives is one of fear. Fear of the Russians would become a primary factor in the circumstances which dominate the relationship between Russia and the West from the time of the Bolshevik revolution, and throughout the twentieth century. In the preface to his chronicle of the Allied intervention into the Russian Civil War, historian John Silverlight illustrates that fear. “During the first months of the Paris Peace Conference the Allied statesmen were haunted by nightmares of Bolshevik hordes… sweeping westwards across Europe.”4 This fear contributed to the perception of Bolshevism as a major threat to the Western powers throughout the twentieth century. Once the Bolsheviks took power in Russia, in 1917, and Bolshevism was established as a threat, the Allies engaged in a policy that attempted to counter that threat. The policy that was developed to counter the threat of Bolshevism became a policy of containment. Along with this fear, the policy of containment was also established at the end of the First World War.

Fear had been the term by which the relationship between Russia and Central Europe was established and fear would be the West’s reaction to the success of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. Even as the German problem was still being resolved at the end of WWI, fear of Bolshevism was being perpetuated by members of the British government as the principal concern for European diplomacy in the coming future. The man who would announce the official opening of the Cold War era by delivering his “Iron Curtain” speech on March 5, 1946, was beginning to make himself known in British politics at this time. This was, of course, the future Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill.

Fear of the unknown led to a reactionary response toward Bolshevism. The Allies were unsure exactly what type of threat they were facing, and therefore were unsure how to respond. After the fall of the Romanovs and the end of Tsarist Russia, a conflict emerged between the “Red” forces of the Bolsheviks and the conglomerate of “White” forces which constituted the opposition to Bolshevik rule. The aim of the Bolsheviks, once they had taken power, was to end Russia’s participation in the imperialist war and to create a better society under the principles of Marxism and Leninism. The aim of the White forces was to keep Russian forces fighting in the war against Germany, or to prevent the Bolsheviks from retaining power so that a more cooperative leadership might emerge. To this end, Allied forces from the US, Great Britain and France, as well as other nations, aided the White armies with weapons, manpower, and financial assistance.

The evidence will show that British leaders Winston Churchill and

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2 Ibid., 12-13.
3 Ibid., 13.
David Lloyd George were largely responsible for what historian Michael Ja-bara Carely calls “the early Cold War which the West and Soviet Russia had waged since the Bolshevik Revolution in November of 1917.” As the First World War was coming to a close, Lloyd George was already concerned that the complete destruction of the German Army could allow the nightmare of Bolshevism to spread freely across Europe. Winston Churchill summarized the Prime Minister’s concerns as follows: “It was important...that we should not attempt to destroy the only police force maintaining order in Germany. We might have to build up the German Army, as it was important to get Germany on her legs again for fear of the spread of Bolshevism.” Despite the fact that the soldiers of Russia had recently suffered innumerable losses in order to halt German aggression, the ideology of Bolshevism was seen as the greater threat than that which was posed by a viable German Army. Churchill and Lloyd George were, at least rhetorically, willing to re-establish the German Army in order to contain the threat of Bolshevism despite the seemingly more apparent threat posed by recent German aggression.

Only an extremely limited definition of the Cold War, one which defines the conflict strictly as a struggle between the US and Soviet powers, could support the argument that there is not a clear connection between the events of the Allied intervention in 1918 and the Cold War. Whether one defines the Cold War as an ideological struggle between the Western model of Capitalism and the Communist model of Marxist-Leninism, or as an effort in the West to contain Communist expansion, then the first time the Western powers invest blood and treasure to combat the spread of Communist ideology must be viewed as the seminal event of the Cold War. Fear of the spread of Communist ideology would, in the later stages of the Cold War, become embodied in the “domino theory” which would be used to justify the policy of containment. In the coming Cold War, Western powers would invest substantial human and financial resources to support this policy of containment against the spread of Communism. The first time that the Western powers made this investment of blood and treasure was during the Allied intervention into the Russian Civil War, which began in 1918.

The Allied intervention into the Russian Civil War was originally intended to maintain the Russian forces’ ability and desire to fight German forces in the First World War. It became a conflict against Bolshevism due to three principle factors. The first was a general confusion in the West regarding how to deal with the Bolsheviks as they took power in Russia and withdrew Russia from the war with Germany. This confusion led to an intervention without clear objectives which, as will be demonstrated further, was destined to become anti-Bolshevik in nature. The second major factor that turned the Allied intervention into an anti-Bolshevik affair is the question of recognition. Failure to recognize the Bolsheviks as the legitimate government in Russia, as well as attempts to prop-up oppositional governments led by military leaders in Omsk and the Ukraine, contributed to the conflict becoming an anti-Bolshevik instead of an anti-German endeavor. Finally, a series of contingencies in the two primary locations of the intervention, Archangel and Vladivostok, turned the efforts of the Allies against the Bolsheviks; this eventually led American forces to become involved, despite the hesitations of Secretary of State Robert Lansing and the President Woodrow Wilson. The aim of this work is to analyze in greater detail how all of these factors defined the nature of the Allied intervention and planted the seeds for the Cold War conflict, which became one of the dominant factors in global politics throughout the twentieth century.

5 Michael Jabara Carley, 1939: The Alliance that Never Was and the Coming of World War II (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 256-258.
6 Silverlight, Dilemma, 1.
7 Silverlight, Dilemma, 83.
However, it did not begin that way, at least not openly. The spoken objective of the initial endeavor of intervention was, as previously stated, to keep Russia fighting Germany. Tsarist Russia had been entangled in alliances, primarily with the French, adherence to which required participation in the First World War. Upon seizure of power, the Bolsheviks were disinclined to honor these obligations. All of the Allies felt betrayed by Russia’s decision to leave the war, as well as the Bolshevik decision to repudiate Russian war debts. When the Russians and the Germans signed a peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk in March of 1918 it became clear that the new Bolshevik government maintained no allegiance to the international commitments of the Provisional Government or the Tsar. The British and the French saw this separate peace as signing away “all that was demanded”. The impression was that the Russians had handed “one third of Russia’s agricultural land, over half of the country’s industrial undertakings, and nine-tenths of its coal mines” to the enemy. Furthermore, Russia leaving the fight meant that German troops could reduce their forces on the Eastern Front. As the treaty was being negotiated in the winter of 1917-1918, the Germans were transferring entire divisions to the Western Front. These actions led to a ferocious spring offensive by the Germans on the Western Front and an upsurge of anti-Bolshevik sentiments in the US and Western Europe.

This sense of betrayal would contribute greatly to the disorganized policy which caused the Allies to stumble into intervention. Historian Michael Jabara Carley points out that, “the Russian Revolution of 1917 had for a time shaken the foundations of European capitalism...In 1918 the Soviet nationalization of private investments and the denunciation of Tsarist foreign debts, worth billions, struck at the heart of capitalism.” It may not be surprising that for the capitalist nations of the West, profit and loss were primary factors that shaped their perception of Bolshevism.

Due to this sense of betrayal, the Allies refused to acknowledge the Soviet regime. French Prime Minister Clemenceau stated in January of 1919, in reply to the suggestions of making a settlement with the Bolsheviks, “the French Government will make no contact with crime.” Lloyd George disagreed. The British Prime Minister pointed out that, in order to combat Bolshevik authority and attempt to keep Russia in the war, the Allies had supported the White forces in Southern Russia and the forces in Omsk under General Kolchak, “although none of them were good.” If the governments of the West had considered collaborating with the White forces, despite their lack of virtue, one must ask why they would be so unwilling to collaborate with the Bolsheviks. The answer may rest in the Central European powers’ feeling of having been played false by Germany and their fear of Bolshevik ideology.

The question of recognition developed as one of the historical ironies that becomes relevant to this examination. Determining which government was to be recognized in Russia was critical for deciding who would fill the Russian seat at the table during the Paris Peace Conference. None could imagine that a nation which had suffered so many casualties and lost so much wealth in the effort to defeat the German war machine could be left out of the reconciliation process. Unfortunately, due to the failure of the Allies to officially recognize any Russian government, this is exactly what occurred.

Konstantin Dimitrievich Nabokov was the Russian ambassador in London at the time of the Civil War. Nabokov was a devoted royalist and spoke out against the “Bolshevik anarchy” in fear that, without Allied assistance, it might “achieve its aim.” Nabokov was certain that the Bolsheviks were “inspired by their German masters” and that Russia had “lost her fighting spirit and...succumbed to the poison of German-made anarchism.” Nabokov was far from alone when levelling this accusation against the government established by Lenin and Trotsky. He praised the British for supplying Russia with “colossal stores of war materials” in Murmansk, despite “tremendous difficulties” and shared the sense of betrayal felt by the British. Further-

9 Silverlight, Dilemma, 22.
10 Thomas J. Knock, To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 155
12 Ibid., 137.
13 Ibid., 138.
14 Konstantin Nabokov, The Ordeal of a Diplomat (London: Duckworth and Company, 1921), 236.
15 Ibid., 167.
16 Ibid., 174.
more, Nabokov felt that the Bolshevik’s ascension to power in Russia was not a result of any skill or effort by the Bolsheviks, but rather was a result of the failure of Kerensky’s Provisional Government to arrest and hang Lenin.17

As 1917 drew to a close, shortly after the Bolsheviks took power, Maxim Litvinov was sent to London in the capacity that Nabokov refers to in quotations as “Ambassador.”18 In his memoirs Nabokov goes to great lengths to disparage Litvinov, a man who proceeds to become a widely respected diplomat, by referring to him in as “Litvinov-Finkelstein”. This emphasis on Litvinov’s Jewish heritage was clearly meant by Nabokov to be demeaning. Nabokov expresses great remorse regarding the British Governments unofficial recognition of this “Ambassador” of the Soviet Government which, in Nabokov’s view, was demonstrated by the British allowing Litvinov to enjoy certain privileges “such as the right to cipher and to send diplomatic couriers.”19 Nabokov seemed to despise Litvinov and the Bolsheviks and not only discouraged the British Government from recognizing the legitimacy of the Soviet Government but also actively encouraged the use of British military forces to overthrow the Bolsheviks. Nabokov wrote to the British diplomat Lord Robert Cecil in April of 1918. He begged for support on the Russian front and suggested that, “if the British were to send a small force of a few thousand well-disciplined and well-equipped troops…tens of thousands of loyal able bodied (Russian) soldiers and officers would flock to the point where this contingent would land.”20 He apparently labored under the impression that the Allied forces intervening in Russian affairs would be greeted as liberators.

Meanwhile, British Ambassador R.H. Bruce Lockhart was adamantly encouraging the British government to recognize the Soviets.21 Since he was on the scene in Russia, Lockhart, unlike Nabokov, was able to see that Soviet power was a fact that was not going to be altered in Russia without a tremendous effort. It is due to his observations in Russia that Lockhart not only encouraged recognition of the Soviet government but saw the futility of an armed intervention with the aim of continuing the fight with Germany. Lockhart felt from the beginning that there was little hope that the intervention would remain focused on the German problem. Lockhart stated in his memoirs:

I could not believe that a bourgeois Russian government could be maintained in Moscow without our aid. Still less did I believe that we could persuade any number of Russians to renew the war with Germany. In the circumstances the intervention was bound to assume an anti-Bolshevik rather than an anti-German character.22

Lockhart felt that the anti-Bolshevik nature of the intervention was inevitable. He also felt that the Allies needed to either accept a Bolshevik Russia or “mount a massive military expedition” to overthrow it. According to British historian Richard Ullman, Lockhart preferred the later.23 Lockhart also differed from Nabokov in his perception of the influence and longevity of the Bolshevik government. While Nabokov was certain that the Bolshevik government was comprised of German agents and would not last more than a few days, Lockhart described himself as unable to share the belief “that the Lenin regime could not last more than a few weeks.”24 Furthermore, Lockhart “futilely sought to combat the firmly-rooted conviction that Lenin and Trotsky were German staff officers in disguise.”25

In an attempt to resolve the complicated issue of recognition, and in order to determine Russian representation in Paris, the Allies proposed a meeting of the contestants for Russian leadership. The meeting was to take place on the island of Prinkipo, a small Turkish island in the Sea of Marmara approximately twelve miles from Constantinople. Lloyd George’s stated purpose of the conference was “to invite all of the different governments now at war within what used to be the Russian Empire, to a truce

17 Nabokov, The Ordeal of a Diplomat, 175-176.
18 Ibid., 189.
19 Nabokov, Diplomat, 189.
20 Ibid., 233-236.

22 Lockhart, Memoirs, 310.
24 Nabokov, Ordeal, 182.
25 Lockhart, Memoirs, 196-197.
of God, to stop reprisals and outrages and to send men here to give, so to speak, an account of themselves." 26 Lloyd George and the leaders of the Entente overlooked the fact that the Russian leaders of both the Red Bolsheviks and the White counterrevolutionaries failed to understand why they were expected to hold themselves accountable to the Allied powers.

The invitation to Prinkipo was sent on January 22, 1919. It included overtures of friendship, assurances of the right of the Russian people to choose their own government, and commitments to refrain from supporting counterrevolutionary forces.27 This attempt to resolve the recognition question is symbolic of the many ways in which the Allies conducted themselves disingenuously and acted under false pretenses during the period of intervention. The invitation did not acknowledge the Allied forces already in Russia fighting Bolshevik forces at this time. Nor did the Allies openly admit their unwillingness to allow the Bolsheviks a seat at the Paris Peace Conference, regardless of the potential outcomes at Prinkipo. Lloyd George never intended to allow a Bolshevik government a seat at the Peace Conference table. According to William Bullitt, he maintained significant fears that the Bolsheviks, if allowed equal representation, would convert France and England to Bolshevism.28

Lockhart had recognized that the intervention was established under false pretenses and was destined to take on an anti-Bolshevik character. However, this was not the only way in which the Allies were behaving disingenuously. In December of 1918 a series of meetings occurred in London during which the fate of Russia, in the aftermath of the First World War, was discussed at length. On December 23, the man who Lloyd George described as “the most formidable and irrepressible protagonist of an anti-Bolshevik war” would establish his position in regards to Russian affairs.29 Winston Churchill's position would end up driving the course of global politics for the majority of the twentieth century. A few days later, on December 31, the policy that would shape Western relations with the Soviet Union for the next 70 years was ushered into existence. In his recounting of the official minutes of the Imperial War Cabinet, Lloyd George notes “our general policy (toward Bolshevism) should be that, as Sir J. Cook [of Australia] expressed it of ‘wallowing off a fire in a mine.’”30 The purpose of ‘walling off a fire in a mine’ is singular and obvious: containment. Nearly thirty years before the end of the Second World War brought about the nuclear era, the policy of containment was suggested as the Allies’ principle strategy for combating the spread of Communism. After making his debut in this arena Winston Churchill would, nearly thirty years later, make the official declaration of the Cold War with his famous “Iron Curtain” speech.

Ironically, the result of this series of meetings would be that, apart from Churchill, the British Cabinet more or less agreed to condemn intervention. However, in his detailed analysis, The Victors Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War, British historian John Silverlight points out that “not one Minister is recorded as even suggesting stopping the intervention already going on.”31 This incident further illustrates the Allies’ general disconnect from reality regarding their intervention in the Russian Civil War. Despite the fact that leading politicians such as Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson were largely resistant toward interference, their indecisiveness and hesitation allowed Allied forces to blunder into the tragedy of intervention and allowed the space for more adamant and enthusiastic voices to steer the course of history. The greatest failure of the London meetings in December 1918 is that they decided little and committed to no specific action, whether it was withdrawal or escalation. However, these meetings established both Churchill's pattern of aggression and the containment of Bolshevism as two primary factors of Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War. If these two aspects of Allied Intervention are acknowledged as primary factors it then becomes difficult to argue against the assertion that Allied intervention was the seminal event of the Cold War. The period of Allied intervention establishes Bolshevism as a threat and promotes containment as the means to address that threat.

26 Silverlight, Dilemma, 138.
28 Silverlight, Dilemma, 139.
29 Ibid., 111.
30 Silverlight, Dilemma, 117.
31 Ibid., 117.
Bolsheviks was the sense of loyalty felt toward the Allied forces remaining in Russia. One of the primary factors affecting, or perhaps justifying, Allied intervention was the need to make sure that these forces were not abandoned. The Allied fear of abandoning their brothers-in-arms is, in part, what allowed a Czechoslovak legion of over sixty thousand men to contribute greatly to the shaping of world events by becoming a primary factor in the decision to intervene in Russia. The fate of the Czech forces would eventually be the factor that swayed President Woodrow Wilson to make America’s first entry into the conflict that would develop into the Cold War.

President Wilson was consistent in his hesitation regarding the proposed intervention. Wilson’s biographer, Thomas J. Knock, writes that Wilson feared, “the interventionist movement would be controlled by friends of the old Imperial regime and...[would] be converted to an anti-Soviet movement and an interference with the right of the Russians to choose their own form of government.” By expressing this concern, President Wilson demonstrated an admirable grasp of foreign relations and an impressive ability to foresee the outcome of intervention. Not only did Wilson correctly predict the results of the intervention, but he centered his argument on what would become the most important factor for U.S.-Russian relations throughout the twentieth century. For the Soviet and Russian governments, being treated as an equal power—making their own choices and not having their interests and abilities dictated by the West—was then, and remains now, a significant issue and an obstacle for achieving more fruitful relations with the West.

The fortitude demonstrated by President Wilson in his resistance to intervention is admirable, when the numerous persuasive arguments he was forced to deflect are considered. In response to the Bolshevik Revolution, representatives from France, England, Russia and the U.S. were all calling for intervention in various circles. Similar to the previously mentioned Russian Ambassador Nabokov, the American ambassador in Russia, David R. Francis, was also calling for intervention. In his memoirs, Francis reflects on Wilson’s hesitation and restraint and suggests that the situation “could have been saved” if Francis had been allowed to return to Petrograd with 50,000 troops. Francis’ estimate of the commitment required to overthrow the Bolsheviks was optimistic when considered in contrast to Lloyd George’s estimate of 150,000.

Francis also shared Nabokov’s optimism regarding a Russian uprising in support of greater Allied intervention believing that “it would have inspired the Russians with some courage to organize and depose the Bolshevik-Soviet Government.” Meanwhile, American Secretary of State Robert Lansing was unsure how to proceed but felt quite strongly that “something ought to be done.” Lansing had seen the possibility of civil war in Russia on the horizon, yet in 1917 had hesitated to suggest any action due to his belief that Lenin and Trotsky were likely to be German agents, rather than Russians acting in the interest of the Russian people. By July of 1918, Lansing’s shift to the position that something should be done can perhaps be attributed to the consistent pressure placed upon him by British and French diplomats. This exchange of pressure and resistance is thoroughly chronicled in the three volumes of the Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, which deal with the topic of Russia in 1918.

French Marshal Ferdinand Foch was one of the voices exerting this pressure on American leaders. At a meeting of the Supreme War Council in July of 1918, the British and the French made their final decisive efforts to sway President Wilson toward intervention. First, Lloyd George and the War

32 Knock, All Wars, 156.
33 Andrei P. Tsygankov, Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 1.

34 David R. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy: April 1916-November 1918 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 348.
35 Silverlight, Dilemma, 141.
36 Francis, Russia, 348.
39 Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Volumes 98-100, 1918, Russia, Volume 1, 2, & 3, (US Department of State; Office of the Historian. Online). The citation is intended as a general comment on the contents of the FRUS documents, not in relation to a specific piece of correspondence.
Cabinet made their “proposal for assistance of the Russian people in their present unhappy situation.” Then Foch’s message was conveyed to Wilson, in which the French commander stated that “…in the interest of military success in Europe, I consider the expedition to Siberia as a very important factor for victory, provided action be immediate.” George Kennan refers to these efforts as the British and French introducing “their largest guns.” And yet these efforts would still not be able to sway the American President. The factor that eventually led Wilson to approve of intervention was the plight of the Czechoslovakian Legion and their struggles with the Bolsheviks along the Trans-Siberian railway.41

Wilson’s hesitation delayed early efforts to intervene in Siberia. But after months of pressure from Allied leaders, Wilson gave in. Thomas J. Knock cites two primary factors in regards to Wilson’s acquiescence. The first was a fear of Japanese expansionism. The second was his concern for the Czech legion, which had become the vanguard of Allied forces in Russia.42 To address these concerns, Wilson permitted, in August 1918 the landing of five thousand troops in Murmansk and another ten thousand at Vladivostok.43 The Siberian forces were sent to monitor the Japanese and support the Czech forces on the Trans-Siberian railway. The US forces landing in Murmansk were sent to join the British already in control of Archangel. The avowed purpose of the Archangel mission was to protect the British military stores which had been sent to the region, to the great pleasure of Ambassador Nabokov, in order to support the Russian’s ability to continue to fight Germany. Although never short of manpower, the Russians were often short of weapons with which to arm their forces.44 Among the many reasons the Russian forces were disheartened and “voted with their feet” for revolution, was the fact that many soldiers were sent to battle without rifles and expected to procure weapons from their fallen comrades once the battle was joined. This obviously did not contribute positively to the morale or the effective capability of a fighting force. The fact that the British had supplied the Russians with these arms and the Russians had then decided to abandon the Allied cause was, in the British view, again a form of betrayal caused by the Bolshevik coup.

On August 2, 1918 Allied forces, under the command of British General Fredrick Poole, landed at Archangel. In March, when British forces had first arrived at Murmansk, Trotsky, perhaps overestimating the capabilities of the White forces, had ordered the Soviets there to “accept any and all assistance from the Allied missions” (In the coming years Stalin would see fit to remind the Soviets of this order on a number of occasions).45 As a result, when the Allied forces arrived at Archangel in August of the same year, their initial intention was cooperation with the Bolsheviks. This would change come September. On the evening of September 5, a coup d’état would occur at Archangel. According to David R. Francis, “Americans would call it a plain case of kidnapping.”46 Under the initiative of a Russian naval officer named Chaplin, who was working with the staff of British General Poole, all but two of the ministers of the northern government were taken from their homes in the night and shipped off to a monastery on Soliovetki Island. According to Francis, Chaplin instigated the coup because the ministers were Socialists.47 In his memoirs, Francis describes the following exchange between himself and General Poole on the morning of September 5. Poole: “There was a revolution here last night.” Francis: “The hell you say! Who pulled it off?” Poole: “Chaplin.” Francis: “There is Chaplin over there now… Chaplin, who pulled off this revolution here last night?” Chaplin: “I did.”48 Due to the historical implications of this one man revolution, the casual nature of this exchange, and Chaplin’s matter-of-fact justification, is somewhat astounding.

Francis felt that this naval officer had done “very good work against the Bolsheviks.” Chaplin described his actions and motivations: “I drove the Bolsheviks out of here, I established this government…the ministers were in general Poole’s way…I see no use for any government here anyway.”49 Chaplin organized his coup by allying with the remnants of the loyal officers of the

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40 Kennan, Decision, 391.
41 Ibid., 391.
42 Knock, All Wars, 156; Silverlight, Dilemma, 39.
43 Knock, All Wars, 156.
45 Kennan, Decision, 46.
46 Francis, Russia, 269.
47 Ibid., 269.
48 Ibid., 270.
49 Francis, Russia, 270.
Tsarist army and Navy who remained in charge due to the Bolsheviks “lack of experts.”50 This one man coup was part of a major shift in the circumstances of the intervention. At this point the Allies were no longer in the Russian north supporting the Bolshevik’s ability to renew the fight with Germany. With Chaplin’s coup at Archangel, the Allied intervention in the Russian north became an anti-Bolshevik affair. It would remain so until the Allies eventual departure.

Chaplin’s coup at Archangel was the turning point at which the British and American forces in the north became a force in opposition to the Bolsheviks. The Siberian detachment sent to Vladivostok under American General William Graves was entering Russia in order to support the Czech forces which were essentially stranded there. Once the Czech forces were opposing the Bolsheviks, the American forces who were aiming to support the Czechs began opposing the Bolsheviks as well.

Graves records his involvement in the Allied intervention in his book “America’s Siberian Adventure.” On August 2, while in route to Siberia via San Francisco, the General stopped for the night in Kansas City where he received an aide memoire detailing US policy in Siberia. The memoire was lacking in terms of specific directives. However, it offered the following condition for justifying military intervention: “Military action is admissible in Russia, as the Government of the United States sees the circumstances, only to help the Czecho-Slovaks consolidate their forces and get into successful cooperation with their Slavic kinsmen…”51

Graves was also instructed that the purpose of the American mission was to guard the rear of the Czech forces, as well as protecting the military stores that the Russians would need to organize their own defense.52 The nature of the orders which Graves was provided further illustrates that US forces were not instantly or inherently predisposed to confront Bolshevism. Graves was not directed to confront Bolsheviks. However, supporting the Czech forces eventually came to mean supporting them against the Bolsheviks. Also, the military stores that may have been needed for defense were only valued in their ability to defend against German aggression. The Russian forces that still may have wished to fight against the German forces were the Tsarists, not the Bolsheviks. While their instructions were too vague to be interpreted as anti-Bolshevik, the de-facto mission of Graves in Siberia, and Poole in Archangel, became fighting the Bolsheviks—i.e. protecting the Czechs from Bolshevik violence and preventing the Bolsheviks from acquiring arms (which had been sent by the Allies in order to fight against Germany). The one-man coup initiated by Chaplin was a key factor in turning the British forces in the north against the Bolsheviks. In Siberia, turning the Czechs against the Bolsheviks can also be credited to one man; however, history has not recorded his name. The man was immediately and brutally punished for his actions. He was a Hungarian prisoner of war. While his train was stopped near the Czech forces on the Trans-Siberian railway, he threw what may have been a stove pipe at a Czech soldier, seriously wounding him. This one action by an unknown, disgruntled Hungarian, changed everything for the course of events in Russia at this time and perhaps changed the course of history.

The confusion and happenstance by which the Czech forces became embroiled in the struggle against Bolshevism is somewhat typical of the Allied intervention. Like the other Allied forces, the recently freed Czech prisoners who had been set loose in Russia by Kerensky’s provisional government were there for the purpose of fighting Germans, not Bolsheviks. After the fall of the provisional government and the peace of Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks were unsure what to do with the Czechs. The Czechs simply wanted to get out of Russia as soon as possible.53 It was decided that they should be allowed to leave Russia. That decision was then reconsidered. The result of this indecision was that the more than sixty thousand Czech soldiers were delayed indefinitely along the Trans-Siberian railway heading toward Vladivostok. The Czechs had been fighting alongside the Bolsheviks in early March of 1918. But by May of that same year a series of unfortunate coincidences would turn the Czechs against the Bolsheviks for good.

Czechs and Slovaks, at this time, did not hold Hungarians in the highest

50 Silverlight, Dilemma, 58.
51 William S. Graves, America’s Siberian Adventure (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 7.
52 Ibid, 7-8.
53 Silverlight, Dilemma, 32.
regard. While stagnating along the Trans-Siberian line in May of 1918, a train full of Hungarian prisoners pulled up next to the Czech forces. John Silverlight recounts the story: “The Czechs even shared their rations…Then as the Hungarian train began to move off, an argument broke out.” A heavy metal object was thrown at a group of Czech soldiers, one of whom was injured severely. The Czechs halted the Hungarian train and attacked the offender. The local Soviet responded by disciplining the Czech soldiers who had lynched the Hungarian. The situation escalated and as a result the Bolsheviks, feeling threatened, decided that the best course of action was to divide the Czech forces. The Czechs did not approve of this decision. “On 23 May they decided that, if necessary, they would shoot their way to Vladivostok.” On May 25 Trotsky ordered that all armed Czechs be shot on sight. “Twenty-four hours later clashes between Czechs and local Bolsheviks broke out at half a dozen points along three thousand miles of the Trans-Siberian Railway.” The Czechoslovakian Legion was one of the largest fighting forces in Russia, matched only by the Japanese forces. From this point on, the Czechs would fight for the Allies.

On many other occasions during this time period the Allies stumbled into tragedy and escalation. Lloyd George, as early as 1915, repeatedly pleaded to send more aid to the Russians. He expressed his regret for his failure to respond appropriately to Russian needs at the end of the First World War. He felt that if “half of the shells” and “one-fifth of the guns” that had been used to such futility on the Western Front had been sent to Russia, Russian defeat could have been averted. In November 1918 an official at the US state department acknowledged that “Kerensky fell…partly because the Allies and the United States did not take his appeals for material and spiritual aid at anything like their face value.” Analyzing these regrets further illustrates how confusion and hesitation by Allied leaders contributed to the tragedy of intervention and the longevity of the Russian Civil War.

Further blundering was demonstrated by the Allied landing at Archangel, a mere 1,200 men, which was so insignificant that the 200 Allied officials and their families, who had been arrested as a result of the invasion, were soon released once it was realized how small the force was. In November 1918, French forces decided to access the Russian theater by way of the Ukraine. Silverlight points out that “the land that the French were so lightheartedly preparing to invade in November 1918 was seething with violence and bitterness, the most troubled in all of Russia.” Yet, no individual blunder can be held more thoroughly accountable for the error of intervention than the false pretense under which intervention began. American historian Richard Ullman disregards the suggestion that the intervention was ever aiming at maintaining an Eastern Front against the Germans. The “implicit (if not avowed) purpose was the overthrow of the Soviet government in Moscow.” Ullman lays the blame squarely at the feet of Churchill, claiming that, “in large measure he was to be responsible for the transformation of intervention into an operation avowedly anti-Bolshevik in purpose.” Churchill was certainly the most vocal advocate against the Bolsheviks. However, his desired policy differed little from that of Lockhart and Lloyd George. Churchill felt the allies were wasting their efforts with intervention by “small contingents” and that the Allies must interfere “thoroughly, with large forces, abundantly supplied with mechanical appliances.” Winston Churchill’s anti-Bolshevist fervor would play a principal role in global politics for many years to come. What was announced in the “Iron Curtain Speech” was a policy that began in the Allied intervention of 1918.

The question of whether or not the Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War begins the Cold War requires an accounting for the Allied-Soviet alliance during the Second World War. Historian Michael Jabara Carley addresses this issue in his work 1939: The Alliance that Never Was and the Coming of WWII. Carley sees the beginnings of the Cold War in 1917, and assigns a portion of the blame for the coming of WWII to the prevalence of interwar

54 Silverlight, Dilemma, 37-38.
56 Silverlight, Dilemma, 125.
anti-Communism. It is well documented that the strategy of appeasement was a deliberate strategy designed to let the fascists and the communists kill each other off until one force or the other became too powerful. In 1937, when British Ambassador Lord Halifax met with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Halifax praised Nazi Germany as “the bulwark against Bolshevism.” In his memoirs, Lord Halifax recounts how he praised Hitler for his achievement of keeping communism out of Germany. Halifax also discusses the possibility of a peaceful settlement between the four nations who were engaged in “special contacts”. These nations were Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Soviet Russia was not included in this consideration of peaceful resolution.

In his work *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-2006*, historian Walter LaFeber presents the far more conventional position that the Cold War began in 1945. However, LaFeber is forced to acknowledge that Soviet suspicions of the West in the 1940's were not based on pure paranoia. The fears were justified by the fact that “the West had poured thousands of troops into Russia between 1917 and 1920.” In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, historian David Engerman acknowledges the Cold War as a struggle founded in the Universalist ideologies of American Capitalism and Soviet Communism. Engerman notes that the alliance of the Second World War did not resolve these ideological differences but merely set them aside in order to focus on the common aim of addressing Nazi aggression. The conflict of ideology that defines the Cold War remained in place throughout the so-called alliance of the Second World War and is a principle factor in determining the outcome of this conflict.

The Allied intervention into the Russian Civil War was critical in shaping the relationship that would exist between Soviet Union and the

West throughout the twentieth century. When visiting the U.S. in 1959, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev pointed out that the Soviets had valid reasons to fear capitalist aggression from the West. The Soviet leader recalled: We remember the grim days when American soldiers went to our soil... All the capitalist countries of Europe and America marched on our country to strangle the new revolution... Never have any of our soldiers been on American soil, but your soldiers were on Russian soil. Those are the facts.

Khrushchev's facts are not in dispute. They illustrate the point that the Soviet Union had a legitimate reason to fear capitalist aggression, a fear perhaps even more valid than the Western fear of communist expansion. This fear, which finds its origins in the Allied intervention, contributes to the siege mentality that was felt by the Soviets throughout the Cold War. While the West's fears focused on the threat of communist expansion, the Soviets were primarily concerned with capitalist encirclement. Furthermore, the aggression displayed by the Allies during the 1918 intervention contributed to the security issue within Soviet Russia leading to increased power in the Cheka, the secret police which eventually evolves into the KGB. There were economic consequences as well. The need to respond to the outbreak of civil war with foreign intervention undermined the goals of Lenin and Trotsky and contributed to the development of War Communism. This situation contributed greatly to the Soviet Union becoming a state planned economy, rather than a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which was originally the goal of the Bolshevik revolution. Trotsky cites the foreign intervention into the Russian Civil War as the primary reason for the ability for the White forces to put up any real fight against the Bolsheviks. In his autobiography, *My Life*, Trotsky expresses this belief. He states that the Allies, in 1918, were “forcing a civil war on us, supposedly in the interest of victory over the Kaiser.” However, Trotsky points out that by 1919, “Germany had long since been defeated. Yet the Allies continued to spend hundreds of millions to spread death, famine and disease in the

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62 Carley, 1939, 7.
66 LaFeber, *America, Russia, 23*.
67 David Engerman, Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Ame Westad eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 1, Origins* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21-31
country of the revolution.”\(^{70}\) In a letter to President Wilson in October of 1918, Litvinov illustrates the confusion faced by the Russian people when trying to understand the justification for intervention. “The Russian workers and peasants fail to understand how foreign countries, which never dreamed of interfering with Russian affairs when Tsarist barbarism and militarism ruled supreme, and even supported that regime, can feel justified in interfering in Russia now.”\(^{71}\) The letter continues as Litvinov outlines the ideological goals of the Bolshevik system. After explaining the ideal upon which the Soviet system was founded, Litvinov continues, “One may believe in this ideal or not, but it surely gives no justification for sending foreign troops to fight against it, or for arming and supporting classes interested in restoration of the old system of exploitation of man by man.”\(^{72}\) Essentially, Litvinov was saying that the behavior of the Allies was both immoral and irrational. When the factors are viewed objectively, it becomes difficult to argue against this position. Furthermore, when Stalin took power after Lenin’s death and eventually sentenced Trotsky to exile, the Bolshevik goal of permanent revolution gave way to Stalin’s policy of Socialism in one country. From this point on the fear of Communist expansion was most likely both irrational and unsubstantiated.

The scope of this work is certainly not broad enough to account for all the factors involved in Allied intervention, or to achieve a full understanding of all of the issues relating to the Cold War. The aim has been to establish a few major points which may perhaps re-shape how the Cold War is interpreted and analyzed. First, I have aimed to establish the fact that indecision, miscalculation and hesitation by the Allies developed out of a reactionary and irrational fear of Bolshevism and played a major role in the accidental descent toward intervention. Second, I have tried to demonstrate that the early Cold War was a conflict primarily instigated and perpetuated by the British leaders Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George who, from as early as 1918, proceed to pressure the US to become involved. Finally, I have attempted to demonstrate how the policy of containing Russian Bolshevism, the primary policy of the Cold War, began in Siberia and northern Russia in the spring of 1918. The Allied intervention established the major policies that become the emphasis of the Cold War. In closing his memoirs, David R. Francis illustrates how the seed of fear that perpetuated the Cold War was planted at this time. “The issued [sic] joined by Lenin is one the whole world will have to meet, that true democracy and sound economic development must either conquer Bolshevism or be conquered by it.”\(^{73}\) Francis certainly did not have the influence or the longevity to dictate U.S. foreign policy for the duration of the Cold War, yet his characterization of the conflict would become the predominant interpretation for the majority of American politicians, whether inspired by him or not. The Allied intervention created the fear of encirclement that is still an issue in U.S.-Russian relations today. Prior to 1945, it was clearly the British who took the lead in the effort to contain Communism. After 1945, the baton got passed to the Americans. The figurative baton can be characterized as a real world item. The baton that put America in the lead for the second stage of the Cold War is, of course, atomic weapons.

\(^{71}\) Silverlight, Dilemma, 135.
\(^{72}\) Ibid., 135.
\(^{73}\) Francis, Russia, 342.
Gregory Sherman received a Master’s Degree in Modern European History from San Francisco State University in May of 2015. He hopes to pursue a PhD and obtain a teaching position at a university. He would like to continue his investigation of some of the ideas developed in this work, particularly the relationships between revolutionary movements, foreign intervention, and conservative backlash. An abbreviated version of this work was presented at the international academic conference, ‘World War I Centenary. World at War. 1914-1918”, at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia in St. Petersburg, on December 5, 2014.

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